

# Bike shops struggling to meet high demand during pandemic

By **ETHAN MYERS**  
The Astorian

Ivan Gonzalez gestured to a brand new mountain bike he was assembling.

"This thing right here will be gone by what, Friday?" he said to Scott Lee, the owner of Bikes and Beyond.

"He builds this bike today, it will be gone tomorrow," Lee said.

When the coronavirus pandemic arrived last year and lockdowns were put into place, bike shops were hit with an instant wave of demand.

A year-and-a-half later, many shops on the North Coast and across the country are still struggling to keep up. On top of high demand, supply chain issues have prevented retailers from being able to satisfy customers.

"I have been in the business for 30 years and I have never seen anything like it," Lee said.

Lee said he would often spend time late at night searching for bikes online for his Astoria shop. Thanks to good connections, he was able to acquire a fair amount of bikes, but they would sell almost instantly.

"We sold every bike we had and every bike we could get our hands on," he said.

Lee said he receives calls from all over the country and gets people driving down from other states in order to get their hands on a specific bike. When he isn't able to supply a customer with the bike they are looking for, he encourages them to call around and hope to get lucky.

## National sales

The Oregonian reported that national bikes sales from May 2020 to this April grew 57% and that March bike sales were the highest ever recorded, according to Dirk Sorenson of The NPDP Group.

While demand has varied over the past year, Lee said it never fully died off



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Scott Lee of Bikes and Beyond in Astoria.

like it typically does in the wintertime.

"It came early in spring and it's really never let up," Lee said. "It smoothed out a bit in the summer and was steady all through the winter, more than any other winter."

While the increase in sales was slightly more gradual, Prom Bike Shop in Seaside had a similar experience.

"Everybody decided they wanted a bike, or they wanted to fix their bike that had been sitting in their garage, barn or whatever for the last five to 10 years because — I'm assuming, anyway — it was the only thing you could really do," said Debbie Clark, the shop's co-owner. "As a group, you were socially distanced and it was outdoors and fun. Everybody could do it."

While Clark understood why demand was so high last year, she did not expect it to continue into 2021.

"Demand has stayed pretty good. We have been fairly impressed with it," she said. "Honestly, we have been somewhat surprised, we thought it would drop this year because everyone bought bikes last year."

As new and returning customers come knocking for new bikes and seeking repairs on old ones, manufacturers are struggling to ship deliveries on time, leaving bike shops in a tough spot.

Lee said the bikes arriving this month from manufacturers were ordered in May and June of last year.

Ed Jones, the owner of Bike Envy in Warrenton, said he isn't expecting some orders to arrive until the end of 2022.

Clark said there is little rhyme or reason to when orders are arriving at Prom Bike Shop.

"We don't have a clue," she said. "The two suppliers that we use are giving us on-the-water, maybe dates and that is it."

"We just roll with the punches," she added.

## Parts are a challenge

Since the availability of new bikes dwindled during the pandemic, Lee said many people came in hoping to repair old bikes.

But a shortage of parts has made repairs slow and often impossible without the right pieces.

"People are repairing their old bikes if they can, but parts are a problem, too," Lee said. "We are two weeks out on repairs right now because we are so swamped."

In addition to the disrupted supply chain, Lee said, there is a skilled labor shortage.

"Staffing is always an issue, but I have a good crew and we have stuck together and made it through it," he said. "We have good people

who are just thankful to have jobs."

Clark's husband, Les, who has owned Prom Bike Shop since 1975, said they loaded up on parts in anticipation of the shortage.

"If you had a good inventory, which we had, it was not really a big deal for us," he said. "Over the winter, I had accumulated a backlog in my parts inventory, so I have not had a lot of shortage problems when it comes to repair work."

But Debbie Clark said for certain bikes, they are unable to take care of chains, derailleurs or cassettes.

Although having to turn interested customers away is difficult, Lee and the Clarks said people have been considerate of the challenges.

"People understand what is going on and they're fairly patient," Lee said. "Everybody has been inconvenienced and hassled and so we are just used to having to wait for things and have the anxiety that goes along with that."

While they have not had any issues with upset customers, Clark said she recognizes there is some frustration.

"I would say (there is) a frustration level of not having product, but even more so, of not being able to give you a two-month window of when you might be able to see that product," she said. "I would think that in this day and age, you should be able to have a better grasp on when things are coming in."

Bike shop owners are not sure what to expect in the next few months.

Lee, who moved his shop from 11th Street and Marine Drive to a smaller location on 9th and Astor streets in May, has ordered the same amount of bikes as he did last year in anticipation of demand remaining high.

"I don't know what is going to happen," he said. "It is very fluid. We don't know how the economy is holding. It just depends on so many factors, it is hard to predict."

# Winners of 'Break the Chain' run

Seaside Signal

Zander Moha, a member of the Warrenton High School cross-country team, had the fastest time in completing the fourth annual Seaside Run to Break the Chain 5K, with a time of 19 minutes and 39 seconds.

The race was held Aug. 14, beginning at 12th Avenue and Prom to Avenue U and back at low tide to complete the 5K.

The goal of the run was to raise awareness and benefit the Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District and Operation Underground Railroad, an organization to rescue children from sex trafficking.

Two winners in each age group were selected:

Kids under 12: Travis Ahearn and Sylvia Hamilton.

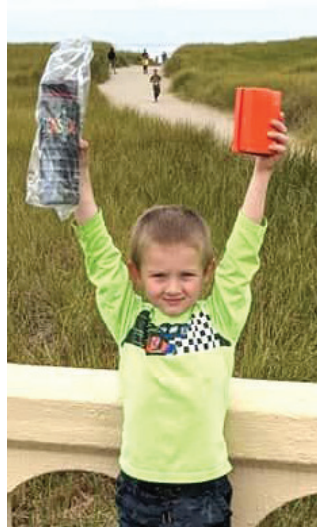
Youth, ages 12 to 17: Zander Moha and James Roehr.

Adult: Brett Duer and Destiny Kastener.



Photos by Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District

LEFT: Kids under 12 winner Sylvia Hamilton. RIGHT: Adult winner Brett Duer.



Kids under 12 runner Travis Ahearn.



LEFT: Youth runners James Roehr and Zander Moha. RIGHT: Adult winner Destiny Kastener.



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