

Make this a great National Bike Month on Aquidneck Island

READERS' LETTERS

May 1 can mean many things to many people: there's International Workers' Day, May Day, the ancient rites of Beltane, and according to the internet, National Chocolate Parfait Day. For most Aquidneck Islanders, May 1 is both celebrated as the beginning of spring and dreaded as the first day of enforced metered parking in downtown Newport. But for my fellow bicycle advocates and me - on the island and around the nation - May 1 means the start of National Bike Month.

Each May, bicycling organizations and local communities celebrate Bike Month with bike events, classes and rides - all to encourage more people to choose cycling for everyday transportation and recreation. Not only a means of healthy exercise, bicycling for commuting and errands also benefits the environment and personal finances, as well as combating stress - no more traffic or parking woes.

Here on the island, the Aquidneck Island Planning Commission is busy planning for a bike-friendlier transportation system, and Bike Newport has a full calendar of bike happenings throughout May for people of all ages and experience levels. We're offering New Rider Nights for newbies, Ladies Nights at the Bike Garage for women, Full Moon Rides for night owls, City Biking classes for would-be commuters, and much, much more. We'll be celebrating Bike to School Day on May 10 at Thompson Middle School, and Bike to Work Day on May 19 with a full day of events on the grounds of Newport City Hall.

With our Open Garage program now running four days a week, it's never been easier to earn, with three volunteer hours - or adopt, with a suggested donation - one of our restored bicycles. For the month of May, we're also giving away bikes to kids ages 4-10 for free, as available. All you need to do is come to Bike Newport headquarters at 62 Broadway to check out the scene and all our offerings.

There's never been a better time to ditch the car and explore the possibilities of life by bike. Last week, the city of Newport accepted the state Department of Environmental Management's award of \$1 million to build the First Mile bike path, and more infrastructure improvements are on the way. On an island so small and densely populated, everywhere is reachable via your own two legs and lungs.

I hope you join me in celebrating the simple power of bikes all May long. See you on the streets!

For a full calendar of Bike Month events, visit bikenewportri.org/events/ bike-month-2017.

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