

Chautauqua Watershed Notes
From the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy
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More Bike Racks, Please

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*Cycling can be a win-win situation for a number of reasons.
(Photo courtesy Chautauqua County Visitors' Bureau.)*

I am the one with the rose colored glasses. Accentuating the positive rather than fixating on the negative agrees with my personality. Recently though, it's been difficult to be optimistic, especially when I pull into a gas station. Gas prices balloon faster than mushrooms can sprout on a dung pile. Feeling helpless, I decided I needed to do something about it. So, I parked the car and started riding my bike.

Bike riding is one of my favorite pastimes. I usually ride for the fun of it and to tell the truth, it never occurred to me to use my bike for short trips instead of the car. Classic example - I would drive my car to the YMCA to exercise, park as close as I could, and then drive home to go for a bike ride. Sounds silly doesn't it? Now, with my new enlightenment, spawned from high gas prices, I combine a three-mile bike ride with my 30-minute workout.

Cycling to places I need to go is definitely a win-win situation. Not only am I getting more exercise, but I am also spending more time outside enjoying beautiful Chautauqua County. I see, hear and smell things that I would miss in the car. On one gorgeous morning this summer, I was riding along Summit Avenue, in Lakewood, by Crescent Creek. Out of the corner of my eye I caught a glimpse of a deer. Quickly and quietly, I turned around and re-approached the creek. A small spotted fawn was getting a drink. He saw me, but did not run. His ears twitched and he moved his head from side to side, trying to figure out what I was. Then, I saw him use his right hoof to strike the ground several times in succession. He repeated this a couple of times and then I saw why. From

out of the brush on the right side of the creek, another fawn about the same size tentatively emerged. The second fawn looked my way, then immediately crossed the creek and sprinted into the bushes at the other side. I thought, "Wow! That was neat," when all of a sudden, a third fawn came sneaking out. Triplets! I sat still thinking the doe would be next, when the first fawn flicked his tail, looked at me once more, and disappeared into the underbrush. It was a wonderful encounter with Mother Nature and another benefit of riding my bike.

You might be wondering, what are the other benefits of riding a bike? According to Dean Forster at ezinearticles.com, "Bike riding...is one effective way of staying fit." He says that when biking "almost all parts of the body are exercised." Great benefits and reasons to ride, but I enjoyed more self-affirmation when I came across an article by David Fielder.

David Fielder is an experienced cyclist, an award-winning writer and a year-round bike commuter. He lists his "Five Top Reasons to Bike" on About.com. Reason #1 is obvious, bike for your body and health benefits. Reason #2: Bike riding improves your state of mind. After a ride, he claims people feel relaxed, energized and happier. Bike to improve your community is Reason #3. When you ride a bike, there is one less car on the road, less noise and less pollution. Plus, when you ride through your community, it is easier to stop and visit with your neighbors. Convenience fills the bill for Reason #4. On a bike, you get front row parking, traffic jams don't slow you down and you can zip in and out of places. For next reason, David and I didn't collaborate, but we could have. Reason #5 to bike is for your pocketbook, to save money. When it costs you 20-30 cents or more a mile to operate your car, bike riding makes sense.

Biking is fun. It saves you money and improves your physical and emotional wellbeing. But, if you decide to dust off the old two-wheeler, just remember to be safe. Always wear a helmet and obey the rules of the road. Then, if more and more people show up at the bank, the store and the coffee shop on their bikes, maybe we'll see a few more bike racks, please!

The Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy is a private, not-for-profit, 501(c)(3) organization with a mission to preserve and enhance the water quality, scenic beauty and ecological health of the lakes, streams and watersheds of the Chautauqua region. Its urgent focus is to conserve the endangered natural shore lands of Chautauqua Lake, which provide fish and wildlife habitat and pollution filtering functions essential to a healthy lake. Only four miles (10%) of the lake's shoreline remains in a natural, undeveloped condition. The Conservancy is funded primarily through membership donations. Its 2008 annual membership campaign is currently underway. It is presently raising funds to conserve the Chautauqua Lake's most important remaining natural shoreline habitats, undertake programs to address the root causes of the conditions that fuel lake plant growth, and manage its preserves. It is the only local organization conserving lands in perpetuity for these purposes. Please contact the Conservancy at 664-2166 to join for 2008!