

## NEWS

## SPECIALS

# Pedal Power

**Nicole Basil, 12, has recycled more than 1,000 bicycles for a good cause.**

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MELISSA BASIL

Nicole Basil, 12, started Pedal Power in 2008. The charity donates bikes to students in Chicago public schools.

Riding a bike is good exercise and great fun. But what do you do with a bike after you outgrow it? Nicole Basil, 12, from Wilmette, Illinois, has a terrific answer to this question. When she was 8 years old, she created Pedal Power. It is a charity that collects bikes that kids have outgrown and donates them to Chicago public schools.

## Safety First

Every November, Nicole gears up for a bike drive. She held her first drive in Wilmette in 2008. She passed out flyers in her school to spread the word. Her friends helped add two more donation locations in Northbrook and Park Ridge, Illinois.

Since 2008, Nicole has collected and donated more than 1,000 bikes. In addition to the bicycles, Pedal Power supplied riders with 400 helmets last year. "It is important to ride safely on a bike, and helmets are a big part of that," Nicole says.

The Wilmette Bicycle & Sport Shop helps to make sure all donated bikes are safe to ride. Each bike receives a five-minute check-up by the shop's employees. Broken bikes are given to high school students to be fixed.

Larry Versino is the co-owner of the shop. He said he is happy to help a charity that benefits the community. "This is just tremendous," he said. "We need more people like Nicole that will do things just to help people."

## Grade A for Bikes

The bikes are given as rewards to students who have good grades and perfect attendance. Nicole has collected more than 250 bikes each year. "Some kids aren't as lucky as others, but they still do well in school," she says. "And I think they should be rewarded for that."

Barton Dassinger is the principal of César E. Chávez school, in Chicago. Students in his school have received bikes. "It's been a great way to motivate students to do their best," Dassinger says. "They work hard to try to make it happen."

Nicole attends school assemblies in which honor-roll students are rewarded with bikes. She has received e-mails and phone calls from parents and teachers that say test scores and grades are improving. "Bikes can take you far," she says. "Good grades can take you even further."

Basil hopes to collect between 300 and 350 more bikes this coming November.

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