

Synergy across the miles!

The bicycle as a vehicle for social change unites Arizona and Seville

Seville, March 17, 2011 – What do a bunch of students and their teacher of Prescott College, Arizona have in common with the city of Seville, in far away Spain? In short, their motto! “The Bicycle: a Vehicle for Social Change”.

In Prescott Arizona, the course “The Bicycle: a Vehicle for Social Change” not only teaches students to retool old and rusty bikes; it also teaches them that a bicycle can actually be a mode of transportation. As the course progresses students become aware of transportation habits and the bicycle-accessibility of their community. At the end of each semester the students give their rejuvenated bicycles to someone in need of a vehicle of transportation, they quickly learn that this can actually be a life-changing event.



A novel idea in Prescott, as Sue Knaup, the instructor of the course and executive director of the international bicycle advocacy organization One Street explains: “If you ride a bike in Prescott people think you are of your rocker!”.

With Prescott in mind, Knaup is impressed with the accomplishments of Seville, this year’s host city to the international Velo-city conference. Only three years ago, Seville had no active bike culture. Now, only three years later Sevillians have managed to put their city on the map as the capital of urban cycling in Spain. The numbers are impressive indeed, Seville’s bicycle usage has ten-folded from 6.000 to 60.000 bicycle trips each day.

Next week Knaup and her students will travel to Seville so that they can experience this bicycle friendly city first-hand. Courtesy of a cooperative effort between One Street and the organizer of Velo-city 2011, the European Cyclists’ Federation (ECF).



Attending the Velo-city conference provides these students with an opportunity to meet and exchange ideas and experiences with officials and bicycle advocates from all over the world. They come to Seville to fulfill their ultimate goal: finding ways to increase bicycling and to improve bicycle accessibility in Prescott.

The students of Prescott would be inspired if they were to meet the founders of another project - Bici4city.

This project is the brainchild of two passionate Sevillian girls who firmly believe that it is never too late to learn how to ride a bike. Milagros Rossi and Ana Ramirez Hidalgo realized that the bicycle could function as a vehicle for social change. Bici4city offers Cycling Courses to those people that have never had the opportunity to learn how to ride a bicycle. They reach mostly female participants between the ages of 25 to 60 yearsand up!! The Bici4city courses are aimed at overcoming the fear of riding a bicycle. One of the participants Maria Delgado Sanchez says: "I am 68 years old and this is the first time I sit on a bike. When I was young cycling was for boys only. Now that Seville has such wonderful bike lanes I can safely and confidently learn to cycle, so that I can take my grandchildren to the park by bike."

Bici4city courses do not only teach how to ride a bike, they also teach the rules of traffic and what's most important the participants lose their fear of cycling and gain self-confidence.



Rossi and Hidalgo are pleased to see that their project is successful: "These ladies actually make a great effort, many attend the courses after work, sometimes even exchanging shifts with colleagues so they can participate. They also put up with the often none too flattering comments from friends and family. To see these ladies ride a bike for the very first time truly means a lot to us! And while Bici4city may not be a very profitable project; it most definitely is a valuable project and worthy of our time and effort. You

should see the happiness on the faces of these women....now that is absolutely priceless!"

Bici4city rocks! Once again the numbers speak for themselves: Out of the 107 participants in 13 courses so far, 104 use their bicycle regularly.

Bici4city also offers guided tours through the city of Seville to the many European tourists that visit the city. Economically sensible and far easier to get around by bike; what's more you get to see places that you wouldn't have access to in a car.

The two Sevillian girls from Bici4city are very proud that Seville has been chosen to host the 2011 edition of Velo-city that will start in only six days. As Bici4city continues to grow, new bicycle related projects are already on their mind – always according the motto: "The Bicycle: a Vehicle for Social Change" of course!

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For more information on One Street and the Prescott College Project please go to:

<http://www.onestreet.org>

<http://www.prescott.edu/studentlife/organizations/bicycle-ambassadors/index.html>

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=117714388253461>

For more information on Bici4city please go to:

<http://www.bici4city.com>

<http://www.facebook.com/BICI4CITY>

About Velo-city

The Velo-city conference series is the premier international cycling planning conference series in the world, organized by the European Cyclists' Federation (ECF) and select host cities.

Velo-city conferences serve as a global communications and information platform and target to influence decision makers, and improve the planning and provision of infrastructure for the daily use of the bicycle in an urban environment.

The conferences traditionally involve experts, representatives of associations, institutions, policy-makers and social agents, universities and companies.

More information www.ecf.com

Velo-city 2011 Seville – The Cycle of Life

The city of Seville, which was just awarded a UN-Habitat Best Practice Award, has been chosen to host the 2011 edition of Velo-city as a result of its successful establishment of a complete system of cycling infrastructures.

Velo-city 2011 expects to welcome more than 1,000 visitors from all over the world who – during the three-day conference – will highlight cycling as a means of urban sustainable transport. The conference will look into a breadth of subjects on Health, Education, Efficiency of public investment, Economic impact and employment.

Out of the more than 250 submissions that were received from 27 countries, 120 entries will be selected, to be presented and discussed in plenary and sub-plenary sessions, workshops and round table sessions. An exhibition related to urban cycling will supplement and compliment the conference.

The conference slogan, “The Cycle of Life”, refers to the bicycle as a part of everyday life and a source of health for people of any age, contributing to more inhabitable cities and urban regions.

This year's Velo-city Conference will take place in Seville from March 23–25, 2011.
The official languages during the conference will be Spanish and English.

For more information: www.velo-city2011.com

For a selection of images and logos go to
http://www.velo-city2011.com/eng/informacion_interes.php or
<http://sevillacyclechic.blogspot.com/>

Feel free to contact us for further information or images.

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