

## **DID YOU KNOW???**

### **LET'S RIDE BIKES**

If you're over 60 and reading this article you most likely rode your bicycle all over town when you were a kid. Other than walking, it was your only way to get around – parents didn't drive their children everywhere back then. However, times have changed, and we need to get back to when almost every kid rode their bikes daily, except in the winter. Interestingly, winter biking is common in bigger cities like Montreal and Ottawa, where there are dedicated bike lanes.

According to the Sports & Fitness Industry Association, the number of children ages 6 to 17 who rode bicycles regularly—more than 25 times a year—decreased by more than a million from 2014 to 2018. That includes both casual rides around the neighborhood and more serious cycling for fitness or competition.

A very interesting article last month by Jason Gay, writer for the Wall Street Journal, promoted riding bicycles as one of the best decisions you'll ever make. Gay points out there are a million reasons why. We can start with the fun of riding a bike, what it's like to put a pedal over a pedal and propel yourself down a roadway, or a dirt path, he writes.

There are other reasons, healthy ones: how a bike is both transportation and exercise, especially when you really get cranking up the hills. The better you feel on a bike, the better you feel as a person. It will do these nice things for your body, but it will do even nicer things for your head. A bike ride will clear the noise in your brain like nothing else. Since you're a person living in 2019, surrounded by screens and drama, there's a lot of noise in your brain, writes Gay.

Last year, when the basketball great LeBron James was opening up a public school in his hometown of Akron, Ohio, he gave every student who enrolled a bicycle. When I asked him why, notes Gay, he said riding a bicycle was the first time he'd ever seen parts of the city outside his own. It had literally opened his world. "If you had a bike, it was a way to let go and be free," he said.

Unfortunately, Malone is not really a "bike friendly" community. We don't have any bike paths or bicycle lanes on any of our streets. Saranac Lake isn't much better, although there are bike lanes on River Street. However, vehicle and traffic law gives bicyclists the legal right to use any of our streets and roads (with the exception of limited access highways). Drivers have a legal requirement to respect other users, including farm vehicles, bicyclists, and even pedestrians where sidewalks are unavailable.

But, Malone, and the rest of Franklin County will become a better and safer place to ride. Discussions are currently underway to consider bike lanes on Main Street in the village; also, Franklin County may soon adopt the concept of "Complete Streets". The Village and Town of Malone already have done so as has Saranac Lake I believe. This concept requires consideration for bicyclists, pedestrians, and persons with mobility issues whenever any street or intersection undergoes improvements. This will insure the needs of all users will be considered. Hopefully this will encourage more of our youth, and even our older adults, to forgo the car in favor of walking or biking. If so, we will all benefit.