

# Annual Bike Rodeos Teach Healthy, Lifelong Skills

## Events Reinforce Safe Bicycle Riding and Handling

Biking is often mistakenly assumed to be something that everyone learns and masters at a young age. In fact, many children in our communities have not had this opportunity, and others may not have the skills and knowledge that keep biking safe and enjoyable. PartnerSHIP 4 Health (local public health and community partners in Becker, Clay, Otter Tail, and Wilkin counties), supports community bicycle safety events for kids called “bike rodeos.” These events begin with a bike inspection and helmet-fitting, modeling the importance of safety and maintenance to young participants and parents. The rodeo continues with a series of stations with various obstacles that teach specific aspects of bike handling.

In 2017, PartnerSHIP 4 Health (PS4H) supported bike rodeos in Fergus Falls, Detroit Lakes, Perham, Ottertail, and Henning. Over 100 volunteers guided 345 children and 190 parents through skills courses and completed minor (and sometimes major) bike repairs. Local businesses and organizations provided funding for 253 helmets to be given to any child who needed one. A total of 42 bikes were given away through drawings at each event.

## Rodeos Have Become Established Community Events

Starting with Detroit Lakes and Perham in 2011, area residents have helped organized annual bike rodeos for children in their respective communities. These events have reached a total of 4,215 kids, volunteers, and parents across nine local communities. Donations of approximately \$28,000 funded 328 bikes and 1,190 helmets for kids in Becker, Clay, Otter Tail, and Wilkin Counties.

Perham holds the attendance record, drawing 142 participants to their 2013 rodeo. The local Boys and Girls Club hosts the annual event, providing an opportunity for approximately 60–70 of their members to experience the skills course whether they have their own bicycle or not. In 2016, the name of one of the 2015 winners was drawn for the second year in a row. Without the knowledge of event organizers, this young man placed his name in the drawing for an adult women’s bike, hoping to win the bike and give it to his mother. After winning, he did so—just in time for Mother’s Day.

At the 2014 event in Detroit Lakes, one local family hit the two-wheeled jackpot. Grace Manning, Faith Manning, and David Arthur, three foster children, attended the rodeo and completed the skills course. At the end of the event, each

one had their name drawn for a new bike. “The kids are still talking about it,” said their foster mother. “And as they promised, they are diligently wearing their helmets.” In Detroit Lakes in 2017, the last winner to pick up a bike was a local 5<sup>th</sup> grader who had only recently learned how to ride. Local organizer Dotz Johnson was present when the winner received his bike. “I want to remember that young man and that moment forever! It made my day to watch him get his bike and be so appreciative and so happy,” Johnson said.



*Nathan Flaa, one of the 2017 Detroit Lakes bike drawing winners, with Detroit Lakes Police Chief Steven Todd.*

Biking is a healthy activity for all ages, and developing safe habits and learning basic skills at a young age results in a lifelong skill. Bike rodeos are an effective way to teach and instill safe biking habits, and they help raise the profile of biking in our communities. Rodeos are a good reminder that biking, when done safely, can be a great choice for everyone for transportation, exercise, or just plain fun!

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