



Pedaling to Better Health

“Bicycling has helped us create a better response system in some cases for those we serve while also being a mechanism for supporting employee health.”

Cameron Dean,
Paramedic Supervisor

Strategy: Worksite, Active Living



A split second can mean the difference in saving a life or timely attendance to a serious medical crisis. Few would think that biking could play a serious role in making that difference.

However, bicycling to work and using bicycles as a regular part of their ambulance service has recently become institutionalized as the way that Ringdahl EMS Ambulance in Fergus Falls, MN does business.

Several staff members biked to work in the summer months and a few employees even commuted by bike year round. Staff soon noticed that there were not many other people in the community taking advantage of the benefits of bicycle commuting. They also noticed that the community was unaware of bicycles on the road making the streets somewhat treacherous for bicyclists.

After learning that another area health care provider, Lake Region Healthcare, was pursuing a Bike-Friendly Business status with the League of American Bicyclists, Ringdahl started the application process in the spring of 2012. Since making the commitment to be a bike-friendly business Ringdahl has seen bike ridership among employees increase by 50%.

Ringdahl decided to pursue the recognition for two main reasons: one was to encourage their employees to be healthy role models of active living in the community. The second was to make the streets of the community safer for everyone.

Cameron Dean, Paramedic Supervisor, states, “Patrick Hollister, PS4H staff, has been extremely helpful in our bike friendly application process. He has been encouraging us at every turn, providing other opportunities for our organization to help improve the bicycling environment of Fergus Falls, and providing us recognition for the current work we are doing. We greatly appreciate the unique bike rack that PS4H provided us.”

Ringdahl has found other unique ways to incorporate biking into their business plan that also improves service to the community. “By creating a Bicycle Response Team we are able to provide faster more effective medical care during special events in comparison to trying to weave through crowds with an ambulance,” states Dean. Ringdahl Ambulance now incorporates a Bicycle Response Team on 10-12 annual events like races, festivals and fairs.

This renewed commitment to health paved the way for Ringdahls to participate in PartnerSHIP 4 Health’s (PS4H) worksite wellness collaborative. Since joining the collaborative in November 2013 Ringdahl has made several significant changes in their work environment to support employee health. They include changes such as healthier food options at work, consistent wellness education, and incentives for employees to engage in physical activity.

Integrating bicycling into their organization has created a new and efficient way to meet the medical needs of those they serve, has encouraged employees to bike to work, and has generated a great deal of positive publicity. In addition, the League of American Bicyclists awarded Ringdahl Ambulance a Bike-Friendly Business Bronze Level Status.

But stay tuned: Ringdahl Ambulance is now pursuing Bike-Friendly Business Silver Level Status in order to continue to impact and improve both employee and community health.

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