

Networking while pedaling a bicycle

Cycling clubs' popularity grows as way to exercise, make business contacts

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There are many ways to get involved in corporate networking, with dinner events and golf tournaments normally topping the list.

But cycling clubs, the pedaling type, not the Harley-Davidson type, are growing in popularity in the Milwaukee area as more corporate executives look for new ways to stay in shape and do a little business.

Rich Tennesen, vice president of business development for Milwaukee's Eppstein Uhen Architects, is director of the firm's cycling club and has organized company rides from Milwaukee to Madison.

The obvious health benefits of cycling make it a good choice as recreational endeavor, according to Tennesen. The fact you can have a leisurely discussion while pedaling side-by-side on a quiet road makes the sport a good networking opportunity.

"It's better than corporate golf outings because it builds stronger camaraderie," he said.

Tennesen doesn't shy away from spreading the cycling gospel to others in the construction and architectural sector. Leif Nesheim, president of Berghammer Construction Corp., Milwaukee, credits Tennesen for giving him the inspiration to start the Berghammer cycling club.

"We got hooked thanks to Rich," Nesheim



JOHN PAUL GREGG

Rich Tennesen (far left) . . . "It's better than corporate golf outings because it builds stronger camaraderie."

said.

Half a dozen Berghammer employees, including Nesheim, joined the Eppstein Uhen cycling club on a ride from the architectural firm's Madison office to its Milwaukee office in 2006. Since taking the 85-mile bike trip a

year ago, Berghammer has added an exercise room to its Butler headquarters with exercise machines, elliptical machines, treadmills and bicycle trainers.

"People are not bringing in doughnuts to the office like they used to," Nesheim said.

The Bicycle Federation of Wisconsin estimates there are more than 50 company cycling clubs in Wisconsin. The majority are very informal groups with fewer than a dozen

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members. The largest corporate cycling club in the Milwaukee area is at Northwestern Mutual, Milwaukee.

The Northwestern Mutual cycling club has 104 members and took part in 32 cycling events in 2006, said Janell Lanza, an officer in the club and a training and development consultant at the insurance company.

Northwestern Mutual charges its members a \$10 annual fee which gets them discounted fees at organized events and discounts on equipment at Milwaukee cycle shops. The cycling club is one of 16 sports clubs at Northwestern Mutual, which range from men's and women's basketball and softball to golf, racquetball and tennis.

CYCLING EVENTS

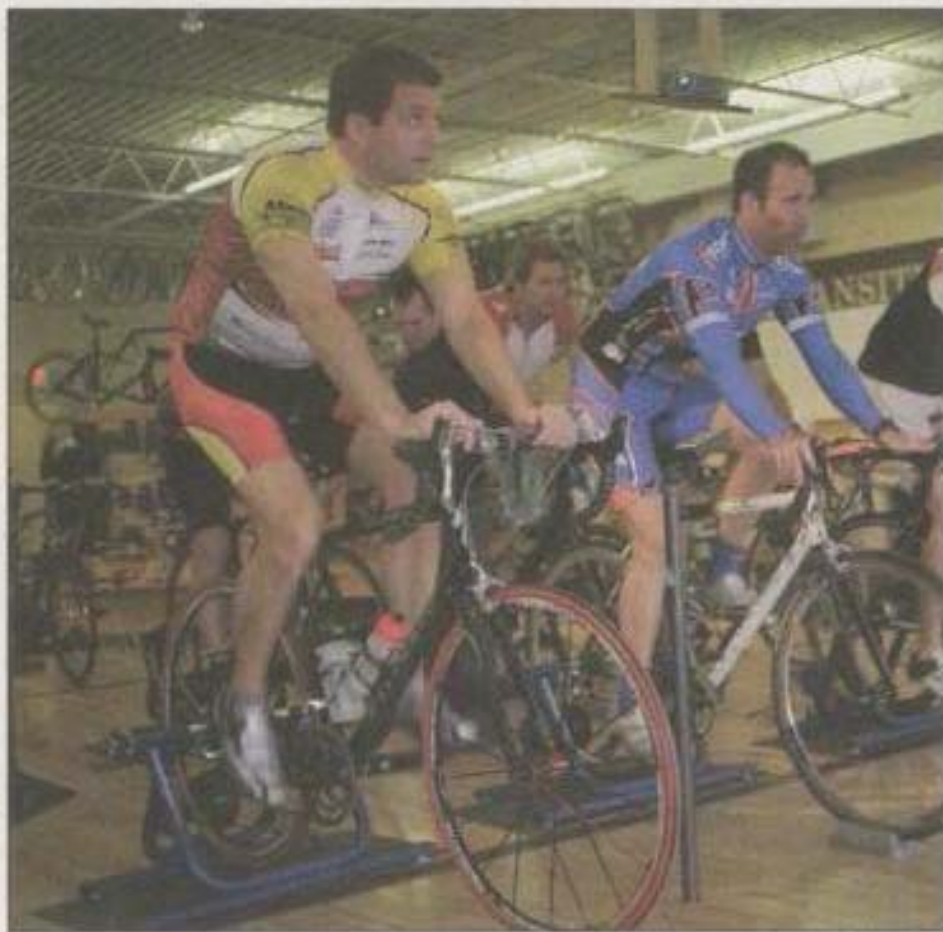
The Northwestern Mutual cycling club has a simple, modest goal of getting as many people as possible involved in the sport. Many of the cycling events are tied to the company's charitable events, such as the Miller Lite Ride for the Arts, Lanza said.

When Team Northwestern Mutual takes to the road, it is not unusual to see corporate executives riding shoulder-to-shoulder with support staff, said Lanza.

"It's good to mingle that way," Lanza said.

The real value of the club at Northwestern Mutual is that someone is researching which rides will be fun and then registering the club members who want to participate, said Lisa Miller, a Northwestern Mutual cycling club officer and a company field development consultant.

"It's nice to have a calendar of cycling events



JOSH PALL GREGG

Rich Tennessen (at left) . . . "We've had overwhelming feedback on the rides."

that support healthy habits," said Miller.

A company cycling club helps establish a routine or individual discipline for some bike-

riding members who might have trouble hitting the road if they are trying to ride alone, Tennessen said.

"Sometimes it's too easy to come up with an excuse to stay home if you are not riding with other people," he said.

BEYOND DESIGN TOUR

When Tennessen organized Eppstein Uhen's first corporate outing, called Beyond Design Tour, in 2005, he figured maybe a dozen colleagues and clients might be interested. The first outing, which went from the firm's 3rd Ward office in Milwaukee to its new Madison office, attracted more than 60 riders.

The second Eppstein Uhen ride in 2006, from the Atwood Community Center in Madison to the Milwaukee Athletic Club, drew more than 180 people.

"We've had overwhelming feedback on the rides," Tennessen said.

The Eppstein Uhen rides have proven to be a networking bonanza for architects, engineers, bankers and builders. It's also proving to be a good charity fund-raising event.

Like the people who participate in the many golf outings that occur throughout the summer, cycling enthusiasts don't hesitate to open their wallets for worthy causes, Tennessen said.

In 2006, the Beyond Design Tour raised more than \$25,000 for individuals and corporate sponsors that was shared between the Atwood Community Center and Notre Dame Middle School in Milwaukee.

This year Tennessen is organizing a 100-mile ride from Madison to Milwaukee that will help commemorate the company's 100th year in business.

"I can't imagine of a more unique way to network, promote fitness and get publicity for the company," he said.