

Focus On Fitness



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JUNE 2008
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The Pedal Pusher

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ULTIMATE CYCLING GUIDE

PROUDSTERS

BY ROB D'AMICO

PHOTOGRAPHS
BY MATTHEW
MAHON





Lance
Armstrong
and friends
open the
doors
to what
they hope
to be
command
central for
Austin's
emerging
bike
community.



ance Armstrong just spent half an hour going over paint colors for his new bike shop, Mellow Johnny's. It's at Fourth and Nueces in an old building that used to be a Pearl Beer distributorship and a homeless shelter, though not at the same time. "Oh, I'm always doing the colors, even back home," Armstrong says amid the pounding of hammers and whining of drills. Then he tells of his plans for finishing off

the walls with art from his own collection.

"Mellow Johnny," the supposedly Texan pronunciation of the French "maillot jaune," or "yellow jersey," may have been Armstrong's nickname as he raced to seven victories in the Tour de France, but that doesn't mean the store will be wall-to-wall tour memorabilia. "No, not bike stuff," he says, "stuff like Gomez Bueno and Raymond Pettibon." Hmm. Work from a pop artist who satirizes advertising while participating in it

and a guy whose dark art graced the album covers of punk band Black Flag. Not your typical bike shop.

That's the point, says co-owner Bart Knaggs, Armstrong's long-time buddy who rode at his side and helped manage him during the Discovery Channel team days. Knaggs and Armstrong want Mellow Johnny's to be a command central for the citywide push to get people to bike to work. "Austin needs help," Knaggs says. "Its cycling voice needs to be found, and we want to contribute to that voice."

The shop will have storage for commuters—or anyone who needs it—with no membership fees. "As long as you participate in a bicycle activity, you can use the facilities," Knaggs says. He makes his way through the stacks of wood and dusty Sheetrock to explain that much of the shop's function came from form, literally the layout of the cavernous old building.

Showers that were installed for the homeless long ago were a no-brainer to leave in place for customers to use because, while

Austin may be an attractive setting for cycling, it's also "hot and hilly," Armstrong points out. "No one would ride 20 miles into town and show up for work all sweaty."

A small space sectioned off in front was natural for a coffee bar serving pastries and breakfast fare. The lower level lent itself to storage and repair areas, while a dumbwaiter that formerly hauled kegs below will now bring bikes back up to their owners. The shop will also provide indoor competitive training, repair workshops and safety instruction for new riders.

Knaggs wants Mellow Johnny's to be an excuse extermi-nator, getting rid of the "hurdles" that keep people from bike commuting and, in turn, relieving the problems of traffic congestion and air pollution. "I'm going to take the shower excuse away from you," he says. "Need maps, we got 'em ... Need to know how to use the equipment, no problem."

Change doesn't have to come in big chunks, he points out. "If you bike commute once a week, you're talking about 20 percent of your commutes, and that's significant." And that's their goal: to get people biking to work once a week for five weeks. Once they try it, Knaggs says, they'll be hooked.

When he leaves to consult with the work crews, Armstrong picks up the conversation on Austin's phenomenal growth. He laments that the city isn't the cycling town it's knocked up to be. He's watched the West Austin hills turn from a racer's training mecca 20 years ago into scenic roadways so clogged "you spend most of your time avoiding cars." The hills may be a lost cause, but he knows there are still easy ways to impact areas like downtown.

Across the street, the 360 Tower high-rise condos cast a shadow over the front of the storefront, and a large vacant lot on the east side of the corner awaits similar development. A good customer base, for sure, but Armstrong wonders what it will do to downtown. "When you think of hundreds of cars pouring out of there onto the street, that's just not going to work," he says.

Without adequate bike lanes and sidewalks, Armstrong notes, he wouldn't let his kids ride to school, and he doesn't blame people for being too scared to navigate Austin's streets by bike. "There's still a lot of tension between bikes and motorists," he says. "You honk and cuss ... at bikes for riding in the road. And then a squirrel runs out in the street and you slam on your breaks to avoid him."

A year ago, Armstrong signed a joint letter with Mayor Will Wynn inviting local bicycle advocates to participate in a city

Street Smarts Task Force charged with recommending safety and infrastructure improvements. The City Council accepted the task force's report in April, and the recommendations will now be integrated in the city's bicycle plan, which is under revision and is expected to be completed in December.

But don't expect to see Armstrong at City Hall pushing bicycle causes. His focus, he says, remains on cancer. "I haven't necessarily done a lot of bike advocacy," he says. "My business is to fight the disease. But in a lot of ways, they're compatible goals ... since riding improves your health and being healthy is prevention."

There's also the issue of climate change. "The footprint of cars polluting is mainly when you start the car, so we need to get people to avoid this by taking these short trips by bikes," he adds.

Armstrong says that while bike advocacy is an important mission for Mellow Johnny's, he also wants it to be known for just being a fun place to hang out. When his hectic travel schedule permits, he plans to be at the store. "We thought it had a lot of character, this old building," he says. He turns and glances toward a neighboring building housing La Zona Rosa. "And there's a lot of what we like here, like the music scene."

"I haven't necessarily done a lot of bike advocacy. My business is to fight the disease. But in a lot of ways, they're compatible goals ... since riding improves your health and being healthy is prevention."

Mellow Johnny's will sell top-of-the-line Trek racing bikes and will stock the shop with influences from General Manager Craig Staley, who also runs athletic apparel stores Bettysport and Rogue Equipment. In addition to \$7,000 racing models, it will also sell commuter and recreational bikes and a variety of equipment for pedaling through the daily grind.

Knaggs appears around the corner with his bike, quickly transformed from his jeans and button-down shirt to his racing persona of blue spandex and a jersey. "Don't stay too long," he says, as he mounts up and pedals away. There's obviously a ride in the works. Lance lingers on, though, and tries to speak over the construction din behind him.

Before taking off to join Knaggs, Armstrong notes that he looks forward to hanging out with competitive riders and nonracing customers, whom he expects to grow in large numbers when new downtown residents find out they need a quicker and easier way to get around. "The bicycle culture will grow over the next five years," he says.



Clearing a New Path

AS AUSTIN'S POPULATION AND CONGESTION EXPLODE, A NEW BICYCLING CULTURE TAKES SHAPE

By Rob D'Amico

Chris Wolfe heads out on a 13-mile commute by bicycle from her South Austin home to her downtown office. She navigates back roads as much as possible to avoid traffic, and she reflects on her weekend, climbing in the mountains of West Texas before racing downhill to finish first place in the Fort Davis Hammerfest.

Wolfe moved here last year from Norman, Okla., with her husband, who also races, and they have found Austin to be a paradise. "Austin is a fantastic place to be a cyclist or triathlete," she says.

What does this have to do with you? Let's say you've never donned spandex and clipped your shoes into pedals to climb monstrous hills. You're like most Austinites, a commuter who is simply fighting your way into downtown for work. Traffic has always been a hassle, but soon you'll face hundreds more cars pouring onto the streets from the dozens of condo and loft projects rising from the dust in downtown.

Truth be told, there's not much anyone can do for autos in the downtown area, since there's just not much room for new auto lanes. But a legion of people are working on ways to at least give people other options, including, gasp, getting on a bike.

Competitive racing in Austin isn't going to die out any time soon, but there are rumblings that the other kinds of cycling—what many call "utility cycling," meaning for commuting and other transportation trips—will begin adding to Austin's identity more than the notoriety the city has received from racing legend Lance Armstrong.

About a year and a half ago, the city hired a bicycle program manager to coordinate a plan to add new routes, paths and facilities for cyclists. It also formed a task force to look at ways to improve safety and encourage more citizens to ride bikes instead of drive cars. Then there's the new 6-plus-mile Lance Armstrong Bikeway, a continuous path designed specifically for bike commuters that crosses downtown from Veterans Drive and Lake Austin

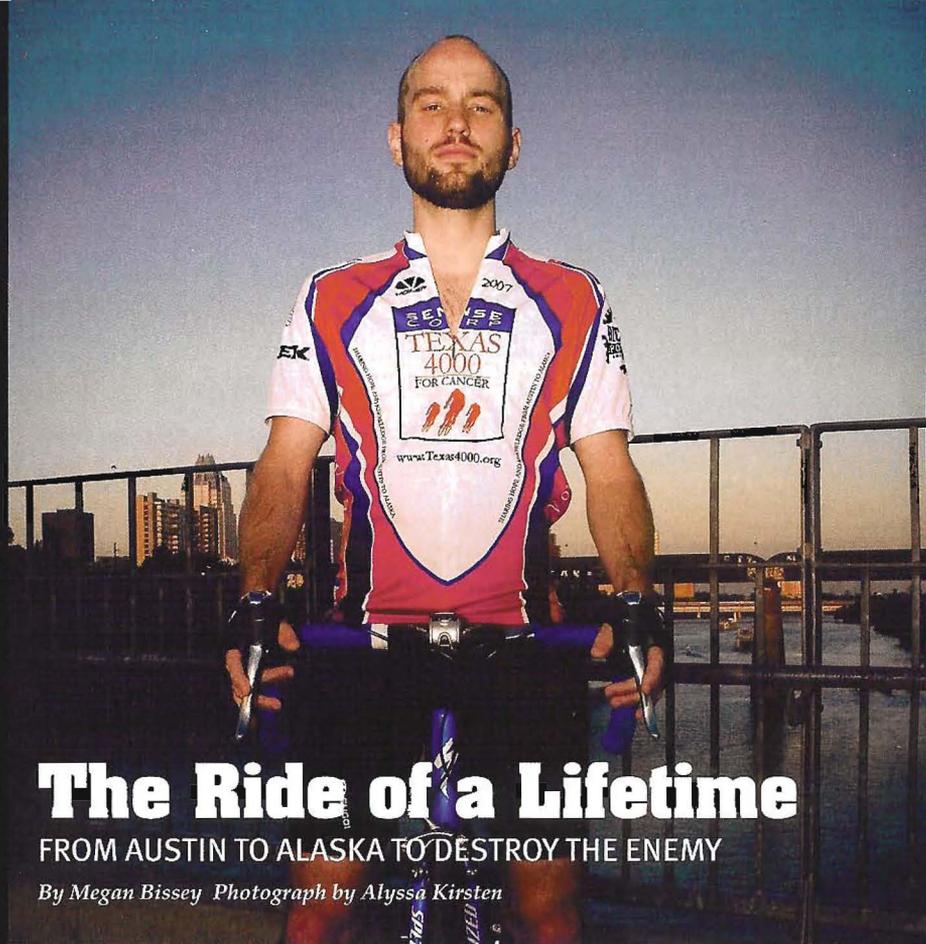
Boulevard on the west to the Montopolis Bridge at 183 on the east.

The efforts of those building Austin's bike culture are starting to bear fruit. Sales of bikes oriented to commuting have jumped, according to Hill Abell, owner of Bicycle Sport Shop, which has two large retail stores in town. So has all the gear to "help support people commuting to work, shopping, going to the farmers market, things like that."

Annick Beaudet has her hands full and gets an ear full. As the city's lead project manager for bicycle programs, she's responsible for the massive undertaking this year of revamping the city's bike plan, which designates where bike lanes, routes and other facilities for bicyclists will be implemented. And Beaudet is the point person for citizens who clamor for big-ticket items like new bikeways and bike lanes and the more mundane tasks, such as fixing potholes and installing much-needed bike racks for parking.

Things are looking up for Beaudet, because she's part of an actual team working on bike issues, something that would have been difficult in much of the 1990s, when some in town mocked calls for a bicycle/pedestrian coordinator. Much of Beaudet's work revolves around the bike plan, which under its current version has added more than 20 miles of new bike lanes since 2000.

Beaudet points to census data that shows a 60 percent increase in bicycle commuting from 1990 to 2000. "I believe that the 2010 census data is going to show an even more impressive increase," she says. New bike lanes and other facilities like the Lance Armstrong Bikeway—which cost \$3.8 million and is due to be completed at the end of this year after a decade of planning, funding fights and construction—undoubtedly will attract some new riders, but Beaudet and others say that the key is convincing people that bicycling is safe.



The Ride of a Lifetime

FROM AUSTIN TO ALASKA TO DESTROY THE ENEMY

By Megan Bissey Photograph by Alyssa Kirsten

DYLAN LEBLANC IS LOST in the cream-colored sands of a Costa Rican beach with a Dos Equis sweating in his hand. At least, that's where his mind is. He's actually cycling one of the many uphill stretches in his training for the Texas 4000 for Cancer, blankly staring at the pavement because he doesn't have the energy to look elsewhere. After recently finishing chemotherapy for testicular cancer at age 24, LeBlanc is determined to meet the 1,000-mile training requirement before leaving on this summer's 4,500-mile trek from Austin to Anchorage, Ala.

LeBlanc was diagnosed on Jan. 29, or "D-Day," as he calls it, and only one thing could make him laugh: the irony of having just joined a cancer-fighting organization before getting the news. Thanks to a persistent physician's assistant who pushed for an ultrasound, he found it early. "The cancer cells hadn't left the parking lot yet," says LeBlanc. It was stage one seminoma, a form of testicular cancer.

Since testicular cancer has a 98 percent cure rate, LeBlanc, who graduated from UT last month and plans to apply to medical school to study sports medicine or orthopedic surgery, considers himself blessed. His aunt has spent three years battling multiple myeloma, an incurable but treatable blood cancer. He'll be riding for her because, he says, it's "organizations like Texas 4000 that help fund the research to eventually find a cure." After all, he adds, it wasn't long ago that the survival rate for testicular cancer was half of what it is today.

That said, LeBlanc's treatments were anything but easy. Two rounds of chemotherapy in February and March made him so nauseated and fatigued that he "had to set life aside." He was finally able to ride again in early April, just days after his birthday. Now he's "rebuilding his muscles back up to what they were" and getting ready for the ride. While the cancer is gone, he must have a blood test and CAT scan before his doctor gives him the OK to leave on June 7.

For now, he's looking forward to the ride with his fellow cyclists, who are motivated by his perseverance. Teammate and longtime friend Daniel Culotta says that even though the "cancer made a severe impact on Dylan's personal health, he really represents the spirit of the organization by showing his resilience and getting back on the bike."

LeBlanc draws inspiration from his father, a former professional windsurfer who biked from Louisiana to California at age 21. Considering that LeBlanc rode at training camp a little less than two weeks after his surgery, it's clear he inherited his father's ambition, despite his humble protests. "I had this terrible thing called cancer, but I don't want to be portrayed as a superhero, because all of my teammates in Texas 4000 have been affected by cancer," he says, "and they all have a story to tell."



If You Build It...

ACTIVIST HELPS GROW CYCLING COMMUNITY ONE BIKE AT A TIME

By Rob D'Amico Photograph by Alyssa Kirsten

PETE WALL IS ONE OF THOSE PEOPLE who tire of one coast—in this case, the East—so they plan a grand cross-country trip to the other one to shake things up. Instead of packing up an old Honda or VW bus, though, Wall threw his belongings on a bike and headed down the road for a long-distance pedaling adventure. But he got stuck halfway. “My bike got stolen,” he says. So it was goodbye Seattle and hello Austin. Since that day in 1995, he’s been a key player in Austin’s Yellow Bike Project (YBP).

Wall can be found on many days working around the YBP shop in a warehouse space at the old Mueller Airport. The shop is a thicket of twisting chains and tires and sprockets and bins filled with every assortment of parts. On a recent Saturday, Wall wades through throngs of volunteers and amateur mechanics who come to the warehouse to teach bike repair to others or to build bikes for themselves. YBP’s concept is simple: If you volunteer to clean up or teach others or simply learn repair, you earn the privilege of using the parts to build your own bike.

“The number of volunteers now is huge,” Wall says, noting that 42 people worked in the shop that day, up from a handful who used to trickle in years ago. He sips coffee through a wiry mustache and speaks of the project’s recent success after 11 years as a fledgling non-profit. “When we were 7 or 8 years old, word-of-mouth started growing,” he says. “General environmental concern was growing, and the concept of being green was accepted.”

Fellow volunteers describe Wall as the kind of guy you can barely hear, but you know whatever he’s saying carries a lot of truth, so you listen carefully. He and his peers have been spreading the word about the merits of repairing and building bikes. YBP also offers after-school workshops, bike giveaways for kids, repair classes targeting at-risk youth and a variety of other programs aimed at getting kids interested in bicycle transportation. “It’s kind of insidious, like the tobacco companies going after kids, but on the other end of the spectrum—a beneficial way to get kids involved in bikes for life so that they and their communities can benefit from healthy and environmentally friendly transportation,” Wall says.

In April, the City Council rewarded YBP for its hard work by giving the group free city land at 1200 Webberville Road for a larger facility. Wall thinks big about YBP’s impact on Austin. “I see working on the Yellow Bike Project as something akin to me building a medieval cathedral,” he says. “It will lay the foundation for generations to come.”

The key to safety is visibility, meaning more bicyclists on the road, says Preston Tyree, Austin’s bike-safety guru, a nationally recognized consultant who teaches government agencies how to improve their infrastructures to make bicycling more accessible. “The numbers coming out of Portland are amazing,” he says. “Bike usage has gone up 200 percent over 10 years and the number of bike crashes that result in a fatality have stayed the same, so the individual cyclist is safer than they were in the past. It looks like the more cyclists you have, the better off you are.”

In order to boost safety and, in turn, increase the number of cyclists (therefore making the roads even safer), Mayor Will Wynn created a task force to find ways to make bicycling safer. Together with Armstrong, Wynn invited 39 bicycle and public safety experts to participate in a Street Smarts Task Force. The task force completed its recommendations in January, and City Council accepted them in April. Although much of the Street Smarts Task Force’s work dealt with safety, an underlying theme in its discussions was how to encourage cycling.

“How do we attract enough people?” asks Tyree, who served on the task force. “If we can get that level of people bicycling up, oh, to 6 or 7 percent of people making trips ... it really does make a difference.”

In addition to bike lanes, training is another part of the safety equation, especially getting people to feel more comfortable riding in traffic, says Eileen Schaubert, who has raced competitively and teaches a basic road safety and proficiency course offered by the Austin Cycling Association. Mellow Johnny’s, the new downtown bike shop owned in part by Armstrong (see “Pedal Pushers,” page 110), recently hired her for advocacy and training. “I really love teaching beginners,” she says. “I’m going to get out and am literally going to take them around downtown streets.”

Bikeways, lanes, new safety ordinances and an emphasis on training new riders: Sounds like a winning combination. But what is going to really push people over the edge and get them in the saddle? What's going to inspire them to dig out those bikes from the backs of their garages? Sometimes it's just a blast to ride a bike, and soon it may be cool, too.

Some 25,000 people are expected to live downtown (up from 5,000) in the next few years as the condo projects take shape and fill up. Many of those people will be close to work, and they'll need a cheaper and more convenient way to get to the grocery store or restaurants without the hassle of congested streets and scarce parking. Those living in downtown digs won't ride bikes just for utility reasons. They'll ride because it's a way to be seen on the streets and connect with the downtown scene.

Simon Evans, who works with the Austin Yellow Bike Project (see "If You Build It," left) and the League of Bicycling Voters as well as several other bicycle groups, believes new urban residents will adopt much of what the fringe has been doing. "A lot of that culture that's been around will be picked up by others, though probably watered down a bit," Bicycle Sport Shop's Abell notes.

So while you might not see condo-dwellers pedaling around on ragged bikes built out of a mishmash of parts, you will see them on store-bought cruiser bikes with stylish accessories. "As we see the downtown development, we will see more of that trendiness develop," Abell notes.

Bicycle advocates like Tyree say that trendiness is fine if it gets more bikes on the streets, but they also realize that bicycles are often relegated to the bottom of the to-do list for transportation improvements in a town still dependent on the automobile. "We've done a great job in Austin," he says, "but there's a lot of work to do." 



Caveman Collective

The Fringe

BICYCLING RADICALS BECOME MAINSTREAM

By Rob D'Amico

IT'S JUST AFTER MIDNIGHT and the thumping begins, a bass beat punctuated with staccato cymbals and howls in strange tongues. A breeze ripples the moonlight along the surface of the river below, and the mass of riders milling on the bridge above thickens. With a whoop, they ride through the Austin night. Shadows and flickers of small lights and whirling wheels whisk past the downtown skyline and wind through the dark neighborhoods. There must be more than a hundred of them, all celebrating a cycle with the monthly Full Moon Cruise.

You wouldn't think a pack of howling cyclists roaming the streets in the wee hours of the morning has anything to do with how Austin will evolve and change with its phenomenal growth and all the consternation that it brings. But, says Jason Abels, who regularly participates in a variety of "fringe" bicycle events each month and keeps tabs on them with his Web site, atxbs.com, if you look closely, you'll see the fibers connecting a network of bicycle enthusiasts into a bona fide community.

It's a community passionate in its pursuit of fun, with get-togethers like FrankenBike, where people trade parts to create unique bikes, or Alley Cat events, races inspired by bike messengers that send frenzied riders flying from point to point throughout Austin. And that growing community is adding visibility to bicycling, showcasing it as something that's creative, inspiring, increasingly fashionable and a viable way to get around town.

Jeremy Rosen, or "Bike Jeremy" as he's known, has become a symbol for the creativity sprouting from the local bike culture. While his three dogs and goat roam through dozens of strange configurations of bicycles crowding the backyard of his East Austin home, he shows off some of his favorites, such as bikes connected at the frames for two riders. But Rosen's creations are merely the guts for his most remarkable handiwork.

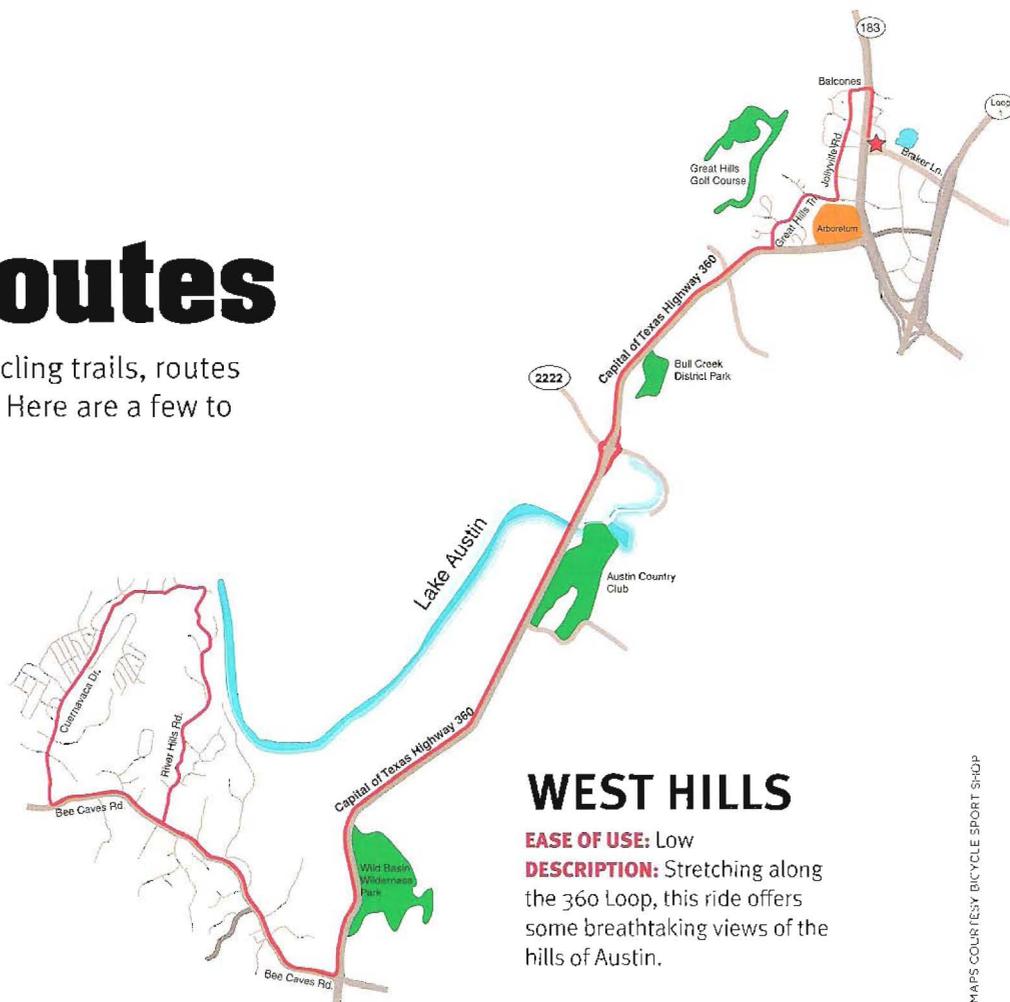
Rosen, Sachi DeCou and Juan Martinez are the principle creators of Bike Zoo, which builds the bicycle-powered puppets that take center stage at the First Night Austin parades each New Year's Eve. Now Bike Zoo is making the rounds at a variety of events and visiting Austin schools. "It inspires people who maybe are going to be thinking about bicycling to try it," says Rosen.

DeCou says the magic of Bike Zoo adds another layer to the "growing bike culture" and highlights the potential of human power. "My main goal is to push people's limits of what is possible," she says.

Bike Routes

There's no shortage of bicycling trails, routes and adventures in this city. Here are a few to get you started.

 CITY ROUTE
 TRAIL ROUTE



WEST HILLS

EASE OF USE: Low
DESCRIPTION: Stretching along the 360 Loop, this ride offers some breathtaking views of the hills of Austin.

MAPS COURTESY BICYCLE SPORT SHOP

A Dozen Ways to Celebrate Cycling

FUN AND BENEFICIAL BICYCLING EVENTS TO KEEP RIDERS BUSY FROM NOW UNTIL NEXT SUMMER

TEXAS 4000 FOR CANCER (June 7-Aug 15) Before the 45-plus cyclists set out on their long journey from Austin to Anchorage, Ala., each year, they raise money to fight cancer—a dollar for each mile of the 4,500-mile route. Throughout the five years of Texas 4000's existence, the cyclists have raised more than \$1 million. This year, they will take off on June 7 and end their trip on Aug. 15, stopping at cancer-treatment centers and cancer-awareness events along the way. 329-1908, texas4000.org.

URBAN ASSAULT RIDE (June 22) During this bike scavenger hunt around the city, participants navigate courses and stop at checkpoints to complete obstacles such as Slip 'N Slides or bike-jousting matches. Now a nationwide thrill, this event started in Austin six years ago, and 2008 marks its biggest year yet. The top winners of the race will take home New Belgium cruisers. Start at RunTex, 422 W. Riverside Drive, urbanassaultride.com.

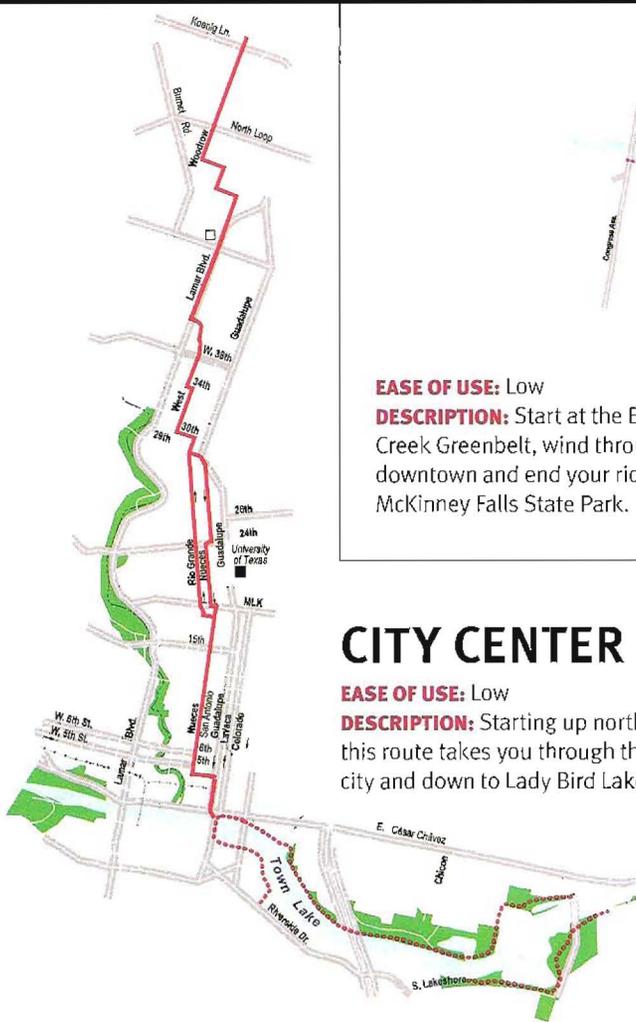
LIVESTRONG CHALLENGE (Oct. 25-26) Lance Armstrong will be riding his bike in this annual fundraising marathon, and so should you. Start in Dripping Springs, the gateway to the Hill Country, where you will ride 10, 45, 65, or 90 miles through ranches, rolling hills and riverfront views. Funds raised from this event support the Lance Armstrong Foundation's grants and programs. The goal for 2008 is to raise \$11 million to help fight this disease, which affects millions of Americans each year. Dripping Springs High School, (888) 424-2553, livestrongchallenge.org.

SWEATIN' BURNT ORANGE BIKE TOUR (October/November*) After working up a sweat biking through the Hill Country, take a stop in Luckenbach, grab a cold drink from the old general store and sit in the shade before hopping back on your bike. If you can't make it all 72 miles to Texas' favorite tiny town, try one of this bike tour's shorter routes, which start at 10

miles. This is the primary fundraising event for The University of Texas Cycling, and proceeds help the organization introduce new riders to the sport and compete at the national cycling level. texascycling.org.

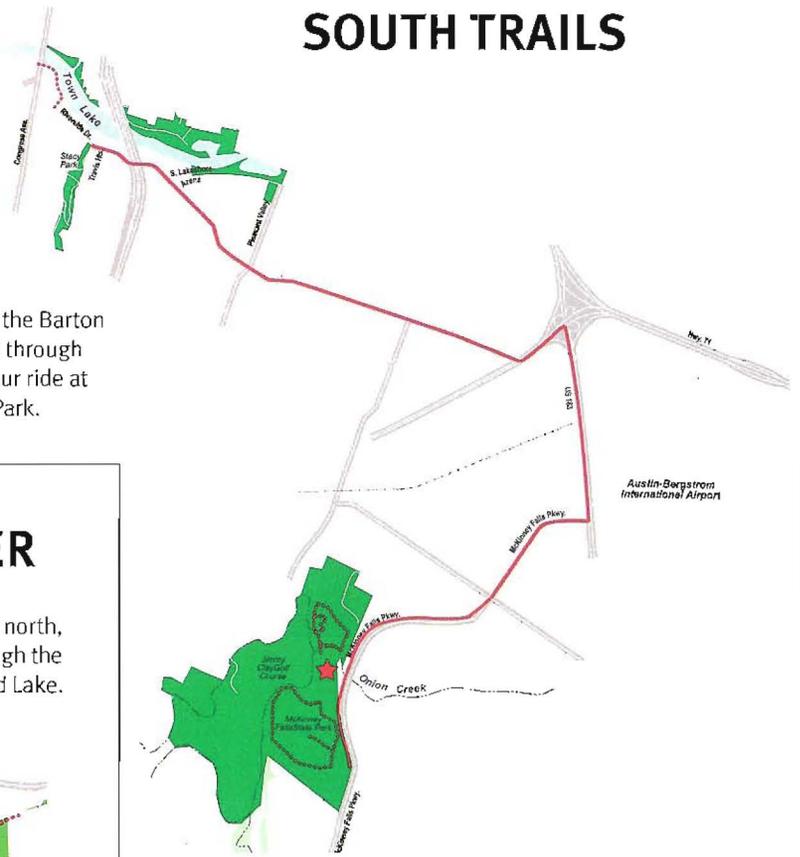
TOUR DE FAT (Oct. 18) Grab a costume, decorate your bike and enjoy a casual bike festival and some good beer. New Belgium's cycling circus is making its second stop in Austin for its eighth season. Tour de Fat, which will cruise through 11 cities, raises money for bike and environmental charities. The festival will feature a car/bike swap in which the lucky winner receives a custom Black Sheep New Belgium commuter bike. newbelgium.com.

PEDAL THRU THE PINES (March*) Pedal through the scenic piney woods of Bastrop and Buescher state parks for one of many courses ranging from 16 to 65 miles. Riders not only have the chance to view the lost woods of East



CITY CENTER

EASE OF USE: Low
DESCRIPTION: Starting up north, this route takes you through the city and down to Lady Bird Lake.



SOUTH TRAILS

EASE OF USE: Low
DESCRIPTION: Start at the Barton Creek Greenbelt, wind through downtown and end your ride at McKinney Falls State Park.

Texas, they also can help a great cause. For example, funds raised from the last race went to the Family Crisis Center, which offers services for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and child abuse in Bastrop, Fayette, Lee and Colorado counties. pedalthrupines.org.

THE ROSEDALE RIDE (March 29) Grab your bike and head for the hills for the 15th annual Rosedale Ride. Help the Rosedale School for children for multiple disabilities raise funds while winding through the countryside of East Austin. All cyclists are welcome and are able to choose from 20, 42 or 62-mile routes. Since 1999, the Rosedale Foundation, a volunteer-run organization, has helped raise more than \$300,000 dollars for the Rosedale School. rosedaleride.org.

HILL COUNTRY RIDE FOR AIDS (April 25) "Easy on the eyes, hell on the thighs" is an apt slogan for the annual Hill Country Ride for AIDS. In nine years, the ride has raised more than \$3 million to provide care for people living with this disease. It has three routes: the main 50-mile ride, a 10-mile loop and an

Olympic extension, adding an extra 20 miles to the main route. Hill Country Ride for AIDS, 371-RIDE (7433), hillcountryride.org.

BP MS 150 (April 18-19) Spend two days cycling 180 miles from Houston to Austin to raise funds for multiple sclerosis research and to support the 17,000 Texans affected by MS. Thousands of riders set out in 2008 to meet this year's goal of \$14 million. All proceeds go toward research to end MS and toward programs put on by the Lone Star Chapter of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society. (713) 526-8967, ms150.org.

THE SHINER G.A.S.P. (May*) Get ready to pedal 90 miles from Austin to the Spoetzl Brewery in Shiner. Not only will cyclists get the chance to ride through some of Texas' historic small towns, they'll also be greeted with delicious food, beer and live music upon arrival in Shiner. The 2008 Shiner G.A.S.P. (Great Austin to Shiner Pedal) benefited the Lance Armstrong Foundation, which is aimed at uniting people in the fight against cancer. shinergasp.com.

ARMADILLO HILL COUNTRY CLASSIC (May*) Not an experienced bike rider? That's OK. The Armadillo Hill Country Classic has been one of the most popular rides in Central Texas for both experienced and inexperienced bike riders alike. The ride features breathtaking views of Texas' Hill Country at its finest, and riders can choose courses ranging from 14 to 105 miles. The fees generated from this event support bicycle safety education and provide bike helmets for Central Texas children. Liberty Hill High School, 13125 W. Hwy. 29, Liberty Hill, austincyling.org.

THE REAL ALE RIDE (May*) Enjoy breathtaking views of the Texas Hill Country while challenging yourself in this ride from Austin to Blanco. Cyclists have the option of 15, 30, 50, 65 or 85-mile courses that benefit a great cause. Presented by the Bicycle Sport Shop, the 2008 Real Ale Ride benefited the Blanco Public Library. After the ride, cyclists cool down and enjoy an afterparty that includes Real Ale beer, live music and barbecue. realaleride.com.

* Date to be determined