

TRAIN with BRAIN

Political Weight Helps Cycling Agenda

Chris Kegel of Wheel & Sprocket knows a thing or two about advocacy. He has served as a board member to many high profile advocacy groups including the International Mountain Bicycling Association, Bikes Belong and the League of American Bicyclists.

“Advocacy is all about sharing our passion for our sport and doing what it takes to spread the enthusiasm,” said Kegel, who’s been with the Wisconsin retail chain since 1973. Kegel has been president and chief executive officer of Wheel & Sprocket since 1989.

Kegel is proud of several accomplishments in his time at Wheel & Sprocket. One major accomplishment came after the Department of Natural Resources board closed most mountain bike access in the southern half of Wisconsin.

“Together with Trek and [former] governor Tommy Thomson we got the Kettle Moraine trails open,” Kegel said. “The lesson learned was we must have political influence or we lose riding opportunities.”

Kegel also is proud of the bike bridge over I-43 on the Ozaukee Interurban

bike trail. “We overcame raising over \$180,000 in private funds and grants and huge political opposition,” he said.

Kegel’s time is broken up into thirds: in the office, helping customers and promoting cycling. “When you love what you do it doesn’t seem like work,” Kegel said.

For shop owners that don’t think they have the time for advocacy, Kegel said to maximize success you must have a balance of passion and fiscal responsibility. “The opportunity is building relationships that will have a positive impact on your business,” Kegel said.

Wheel & Sprocket has a Web site page dedicated to advocacy, where customers can learn about transportation enhancement programs along with tour and charity rides. The page also has information on the cycling clubs and teams the business sponsors.

Kegel said most of his employees share his passion for cycling and advocacy. But even with his successes, plenty of work remains. “Our biggest challenge is to bring cycling joy to as many as possible,” he said.