

SECTION

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HAWAII'S ENVIRONMENT

By Jan TenBruggencate

Old bikes offer new lease on life

In old plantation communities, bikes were often handed down from sibling to sibling, or across the fence from neighbor to neighbor.

My first bike in the Moloka'i pineapple town where I grew up was an old fenderless, fat-tired bike that my dad had oiled up and repainted. I treated that bike so roughly that it taught me a lot about bicycle maintenance.

There's a little bit of that kind of recycling, mixed with a portion of community activism and a healthy dose of promoting fitness, in a new bicycle program run by Kōkua Kalihi Valley.

Gary Gill, the Active Living By Design coordinator for Kōkua Kalihi Valley, said the basic justification for the new program is to promote active lifestyles.

The organization a while ago began collecting donated bicycles, some of which were operable and some not. They also found volunteers to work on them. Gill said the folks at EKI Cyclery have helped oversee the project to ensure the refurbishing goes properly.

"Right now, we have about 40 bikes, of which about 30 are functional," he said.

Members of the public who want a bike can get one for free — except that there are strings attached.

"In order to get a bike, you have to do one of three things," Gill said.

If you have an old bike that no longer fits, you can trade it in for another one that does.

Secondly, you can get a bike by spending a little time learning to do basic bike maintenance, "things like changing a tire, greasing the chain and all that," he said. That way, you know how to care for the bike you receive.

Or, you can make a donation to the program, to help cover the cost of bike parts used to repair donated cycles.

"We want to see more Kalihi residents on two wheels. People of all ages can benefit from human-powered transportation. It's fun and healthy," he said.

Having kids learn mechanical skills and personal responsibility are a bonus, he said.

If you're interested in making an appointment to see about getting a refurbished bike, call Gill at 227-9218. Unwanted bikes can be dropped off any Saturday be-