

NEW YORK

The Urban Youth Bike Project

► AT-A-GLANCE

► **Project Characteristics**
Innovative

► **Program Areas**
Youth Programs
Bicycle Safety

► **Targeted Populations**
Young Men ages 12-18

► **Type of Jurisdiction**
Manhattan

► **Jurisdiction Size**
110,000

► **Funding**
Funded through profits from
the New York Cyclist Bike
Shop

► **Contact**
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Problem Identification

The Harlem Hospital Injury Prevention Program's (IPP) mission is to improve children's lives from birth to adolescence. In the late 70's, the IPP established a trauma database to collect data on injury causes among children living in Harlem. The program surveyed the community about head trauma related to falls from bikes. The survey results indicated that eighty percent of children living in Harlem had bikes, but only two percent of them actually wore helmets.

Goals and Objectives

The *Urban Youth Bike Project (UYBP)* is a non-profit program that uses bicycling as a vehicle to support injury prevention and enrich Harlem youths' lives. The goal of the *UYBP* is to create a child-centered biking program that reduces the rate of traumatic brain injury to children by stressing safe cycling habits and proper helmet use.

The project's objectives are to:

- Engage, educate, and excite urban youth to explore and develop an awareness of self and surroundings through bicycling;
- Increase bike helmet use among children;
- Reduce the child injury rate by teaching practical injury prevention methods; and
- Encourage youth members to serve as biking community representatives in West and Central Harlem.

Strategies and Activities

The *Urban Youth Bike Project* implemented the following strategies and related activities to achieve its goals and objectives:

- Opened a full service bike shop, the New York Cyclist, which serves as the project headquarters and primary training center. The bike shop offers members first hand experience in bike mechanics, retail merchandising, bicycle renting and touring. It also provides employment opportunities for youth in the community as well as a comprehensive internship program designed around developing business management and customer service skills in addition to bike mechanics training.
- Invited motivated youth to work in the store to earn bike accessories or new or used bikes.
- Used bike shop profits to support UYBP and its activities.
- Retained a space in a community church that serves as a winter training facility and clubhouse.
- Offered year-round programs such as Bike Smarts, a bicycle safety curriculum, and Intensive UYBP Bike Mechanics, four days a week and on weekends.

- Offered indoor and outdoor activities that vary with the season.
- Met three days a week from 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm at the UYBP store, using the time for study and tutoring in addition to indoor training, bike mechanics, safety awareness, and injury prevention instruction.
- Recruited members through local churches and community groups and by word of mouth.
- Asked local bike mechanics to volunteer to teach members how to repair and maintain bicycles.
- Encouraged members to become bike safety advocates in their schools and communities and to offer bike safety clinics and bike fix-up days.
- Encouraged cyclists to compete for local and national recognition.
- Involved youth in activities that promote personal growth such as visits to art exhibits, computer training, field trips, and youth education conferences.
- Offered a Cycling Adventures program to schools and other community-based organizations. During trips, teach youth basic bike riding safety and riding fundamentals on city streets and on country trails.
- Organized and participate in efforts to promote bicycling and proper bicycle use.

Results

Over the last ten years, nearly 300 children have cycled through the UYBP. During that time, no children from this program incurred a head trauma or were involved in serious bicycle crashes. Helmet use among children and adults in the community while riding bicycles, skate boarding, and in-line skating has increased dramatically. In addition, the program achieved the following results:

- One cyclist received a top 20 ranking in New York State
- Two members were selected as the National Safe Kids America Challenge National Grand Prize Winners for their work as bicycle safety advocates. The youth developed a bicycle safety presentation that teaches young people traffic safety and the importance of wearing a bicycle helmet.
- Added a new component- a Child Passenger Safety Seat (CPS) fitting station. The fitting station is available to the community by appointment. UYBP offers this service to provide proper safety seat installation to community residents.
- The Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity adopted UYBC as its official little brother group, providing members with mentors and role models, and focusing on special projects such as conflict resolution training and national stay-in-school education programs.