

## 2020 Annual Award Narratives

### ***Bike Club: Village Idiots Cycling Club***

The Village Idiots Cycling Club of Lakewood Ranch, like most other cycling clubs, halted group rides when the pandemic hit. However, when the state opened gyms, the club resumed their group rides. The result was a record number of new members and many new cyclists. Under the leadership of Dawn Zielinski, all members were encouraged to follow CDC protocols for individual health and cycling education for group riding safety. Bike clinics were given while members practiced social distancing in addition to performance training rides to help improve their bike skills and speed. Following CDC guidelines, members enjoyed outdoor activities to celebrate their accomplishments including donations to four charities.

During 2020, the club reached out to FBA for infrastructure assistance to have a bike lane reinstalled at a high-traffic intersection. Although slow to resolve, the process has benefited both club members and transportation planners through listening and relationship building. The VICC has grown in size and earned respect by being a community conscious club that cares.

### ***Educator: Tom Roberts***

Tom Roberts, a long-time Sarasota Manatee Bicycle Club member and volunteer, is always searching for ways to broaden his service to the community and the club. Tom saw an opportunity to provide safety training to cyclists and completed the League of American Bicyclists' League Cycling Instructor (LCI) program in 2017. Since that time, Tom has served as a ride leader, taught numerous Smart Cycling workshops and participated as an instructor in the SMBC Basic Bike Maintenance classes. During the pandemic, Tom taught Smart Cycling courses while observing all Covid-19 safety protocols. During this time, Tom also helped create a meeting in a box presentation for community service groups and homeowner associations that told the story about cycling safety. Tom and two other members created a "lunch brief" virtual meeting for a local condominium association to use as an employee bike safety meeting. In addition to Tom's LCI duties, he has also served on the club's board of directors and is currently club webmaster. And then there are Tom's many years of community service as both an instructor and dispatcher for the American Red Cross. Pandemic or not, Tom is always ready to serve his club and the community.

### ***Law Enforcement Officer: Master Deputy Jason C. Johnson***

Master Deputy Jason C. Johnson is a truancy officer who works between various schools in Orange County. He also serves on the Orange County Sheriff's Emergency Response Team. While filling in as a Safety Resource Officer at an Orange County elementary school, he noticed many students riding without helmets and made arrangements for each child and parent riders to be fitted with helmets several times during the 2019-2020 school year. Additionally, he knew of several families who walked long distances to and from school so he obtained information for the families to receive bikes, locks and helmets. He also reached out to other deputies to do the same at their schools. Next, he helped set up a class for 20 deputies to become certified Helmet Fitters. He also has helped collect 15 plus bikes to be rehabbed and passed on to local families. His dedication and enthusiasm have helped many families see law enforcement officers as partners in keeping their families healthy and safe.

On or off duty, Master Deputy Jason C. Johnson continues his quest to keep children safe and protect their most precious resource, their brains. He enjoys mountain biking and hits the trails with his son whenever he can.

## **Supporting Agency: *Blue Zones Project of Southwest Florida***

Blue Zones Project® is a community well-being initiative that makes healthy choices easier in all the places we live, work and play. Since 2014 when Naples Community Hospital (NCH) Healthcare System and other community members invited the Blue Zones Project to Southwest Florida in support of its 10-year vision, the focus of Blue Zones has been to positively impact the well-being of our citizens and to unite SW Florida around a common goal. It offers free activities online centered around living longer better, fitness and yoga classes, workshops, community challenges and plant-slant cooking demonstrations. Over the past several years the Blue Zone Project has organized the multi-county Bike to Work and Bike to School events in SW Florida.

At the October 2020 Collier County MPO BPAC meeting, Megan Greer presented Blue Zones' initiative of coordinating a safety coalition involving Naples Pathways Coalition, Naples Velo and others in support of a unified messaging for a public education campaign on bicycle safety. Blue Zones is willing to absorb the Community Transportation Safety Team into their Build Environment Committee with the idea that the process may lead to fewer meetings but more work accomplished.

Blue Zones Project Southwest Florida is taking the initiative to be more active in the cycling community of Lee and Collier Counties. As part of its 2021 Bike/Ped Safety Campaign, Blue Zones is promoting one safety video per month on all of its social media platforms.

### **Event: *Bike 5 Cities***

Lisa Portelli, M.P.A. is the volunteer board chair of Bike/Walk Central Florida (BWCF), a non-profit agency dedicated to advocating for safe, comfortable, bikeable and walkable communities throughout Central Florida. She is also the volunteer ride director and force behind BWCF's signature event, Bike 5 Cities. Bike 5 Cities is a welcoming and inclusive 28-mile slow-pace ride to show people of all ages and biking abilities where they can feel most comfortable riding a bike through an urban setting - the five cities of Winter Park, Eatonville, Maitland, Casselberry and Orlando. The event advances equity through better transportation options, improves safety by teaching people of all abilities and ages how to use routes safely, enhances local economies by bringing bike "traffic" to businesses and builds public support for connecting bike routes throughout Central Florida.

During BWCF's first three years hosting the event, interest and participation grew each year, but for BWCF's 4th annual Bike 5 Cities event, they were faced with how to safely host such an event during the Covid-19 pandemic. Significant safety adjustments were made including setting a registration limit, staggering start times, and offering guided, small group rides of no more than five riders per group. Temperature checks were taken, and masks were required at all stops. By building in these safety precautions, BWCF was able to host the ride and build on the momentum and enthusiasm for biking that has only increased throughout the pandemic. In fact, 36 percent of the 2020 participants were novice or casual riders and over 60 percent were first-time participants! One participant summed it up by saying, "I loved seeing how all the bike trails are connected. I wouldn't have known about most of the trails without riding the event!"

### **Bicycle Professional: *Sam Beneck***

"To improve east-west roadway capacity and enhance overall mobility within the area bounded by SR-52 to the north, SR-54 to the south, US-41 to the east and Moon Lake Road, Decubellis Road, Starkey Boulevard to the west in accordance with the County's current Comprehensive Plan and the Metropolitan Planning Organization's Long Range Transportation Plan." – So go the words to explain

the purpose of a project, and in this case, one led by Pasco County Project Manager Sam Beneck. This same project – the Ridge Road Extension Project – will also provide additional roadway capacity and improved routing away from coastal hazard areas and improve hurricane evacuation clearance times in the event of a hurricane or other major weather-related occurrence in accordance with State of Florida requirements and the County’s current Comprehensive Plan.

Sam is an avid cyclist and adds this passion to his work to ensure safety for all users. His other projects, now being enjoyed by cyclists, include the Starkey Gap Trail and the Anclote Coastal Trail. As far as the Ridge Road extension, look for a multi-use path within that project that will connect to the Suncoast Parkway Trail; future bike/ped projects in Pasco County are in good hands.

### **Bicycle Professional: *Michael Zayas-Morales***

Mike Zayas-Morales is a young professional who is using his positions within the public sector (first at the City of Jacksonville and now at the Town of Miami Lakes) to put the focus on active transportation and the positive impacts bicycling can have on the community. He was an active participant in this year's Mobility Week effort, organizing virtual events and even taking up bike commuting himself. He advocated for incorporating bike rides as part of the Town's wellness program for employees, and continues to find ways to encourage people to try biking for themselves. Mike is an "up and comer" and well-deserving of this honor as he continues on this path of leadership and dedication to cycling advocacy.

### **Citizen Bike Advocate: *Howard Tessler***

Approximately three years ago Dr. Howard Tessler had a vision (no pun intended, he’s an ophthalmologist): dramatically improving the cycling conditions on Longboat Key. Singlehandedly organizing the Longboat Key Bicycle Association(LBKBA), his vision is clearly a reality. The Association’s sole purpose is to monitor and improve cycling conditions on the Island and maintain a strong relationship with both law enforcement and city officials. Members of this now sizeable Association have, with Howard’s lead, taken to the bike lanes with cameras and LBKBA jerseys, reporting what were substantial violations of the lanes by landscapers, delivery vehicles, sanitation trucks and careless civilians, reporting the cycling lane blockages to Longboat Key law enforcement who have contacted purveyors, given tickets when necessary and jumped on board to help keep Longboat Key’s bike lanes clear for cyclists.

In addition, city officials have been quick to clean up lanes when accidents, and other debris have made the bike lanes unsafe. Dr. Tessler rides the 23-mile round trip on Gulf of Mexico Drive daily monitoring bike lane conditions. The LBKBA email list is ripe with conversation on issues to be addressed and are done so quickly and efficiently. When cycling over the bridges on the north and south end of the Island, one quickly notices a difference in the road and safety conditions on Longboat Key thanks to Dr. Howard Tessler; a fine cycling advocate and man of action. He’s made a difference.

### **Citizen Bike Advocate: *Sue Van Bernum***

Sue van Bernum is a natural-born leader. Sue is positive, energized and willing to do the work. She is the current president of SORBA Orlando, the Orlando/Central Florida chapter of SORBA (Southern Off-Road Bicycle Association). A 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization founded in 2013, SORBA Orlando is dedicated to promoting and supporting mountain biking in Central Florida. These off-road trails offer everything from family-friendly places to ride, endurance bike races and time trials, skills-building sections and opportunities to give back to the community.

Under Sue's leadership, membership has grown and work continues to add trail systems (soon to be seven) to central Florida's off-road network. SORBA Orlando's trails are 100% volunteer built and maintained. As you enjoy your ride on the trails, look around and you will see the hard work of dedicated teams of volunteers. There are more projects in the works.

Sue has been a great advocate for off road cycling in central Florida.

### **Bicycle Business: *Trek Bicycle Store of St. Petersburg***

Rick and Anne Fidanzato have a passion for cycling and are proud owners of ABC Bicycles and Trek Bicycle Store of St. Petersburg. Anne Fidanzato manages the Trek store and assists with the women's rides. She believes too many women feel intimidated just to walk into a bike shop, so she schedules two women to work the Trek store and one woman at ABC. It's something she has focused on to try and get women comfortable with riding, comfortable with the equipment and comfortable with changing their own flat tire. Being affiliated with Trek, and Trek being a sponsor of the Florida Interscholastic Cycling League, you may find shop employees taking time to assist with League races throughout Florida. This level of commitment and care for the cycling community is what makes a visit to the Trek Bicycle Store of St. Petersburg a worthwhile experience.

### **Bicycle Friendly Community: *City of DeBary***

The City of DeBary, founded in 1993 and located on the St. Johns River, offers a unique urban community, highlighting its history, ecotourism and small-town living. It is also emerging as central Florida's shared use path/multi-use trail hub. Four regional trail systems – St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop, Coast to Coast Connector Trail, Lake Monroe Loop and Heart of Florida – converge here. Trailheads are featured at the DeBary Hall Historic Site Trail Welcome Center, Lake Monroe Park, Gemini Springs and Rob Sullivan Park. Outdoor camping opportunities are also available.

The DeBary Sun Rail Station allows riders to connect directly with Orlando and the world through international airports and it will soon be welcoming cyclists at the planned Mainstreet area near the station. The city has established a "Mobility Plan" to connect all of DeBary and has planned additional trails extending west to include the new planned Alexander Island ecopark on the St Johns River.

These assets combined will create a cycling mecca and the City of DeBary as a destination.

### **Trails Promoter: *Mike Stephens***

Mike Stephens is the chair of the Lake 100 Trails Committee and helped create the Friends of Lake County Trails, a citizen advocacy group promoting cycling trails in and around Lake County. Mike has been a tireless advocate for connecting regional trails into a network of inter-county systems. He is personally leading the charge to connect Green Mountain Scenic Overlook Trailhead to the Hancock Road Trail which will create a safe 40-mile cycling trail around Florida's fourth largest lake, Lake Apopka.

Mike has effectively built consensus among local, county and state legislators. He has coalesced broad support in the business community and the Lake County population in general. Mike leads with tireless energy and eloquence, but most importantly, he is effective.

### **Volunteer: *Dave Hunter***

Dave Hunter has a passion for cycling that goes beyond the ride. He is a leader, serving as president of the Vero Cycling Club, and director and officer of Bike Walk Indian River County (BWIRC), a 501(c)(3) bicycle advocacy and community support organization.

Through BWIRC, Dave serves the community as the liaison for the Bike Rehab Project. This project matches those in need with a bicycle, that is, after completion of a bike safety course, a bicycle fitting and helmet fitting if interested. Dave volunteers to teach the safety course and makes himself available for the fittings – each and every time.

In large part as a result of Dave's efforts, the Bike Rehab Project has been wildly successful at getting hundreds of bikes to people who need them. That's hundreds of people who Dave will personally get to know and help. His passion for helping the less fortunate is nothing short of amazing.

### **Elected Official Champion: *Senator Jeff Brandes, District 24***

Senator Jeff Brandes was first elected to the Florida House of Representatives in 2010 and currently serves as senator for District 24 in Pinellas County. Senator Brandes has been a friend to the Florida Bicycle Association since 2016 by assisting FBA in defeating an attempt to remove FBA as a recipient of Share the Road specialty license plate funds. For the past five years, the senator has always given the FBA executive director 30 minutes of his time during the off-session to discuss current events and legislative changes. One such change involved 2020 legislation for electric bicycles (e-bikes). Although this legislation is a national initiative from PeopleforBikes, FBA asked and was granted two amendments to the bill before it was signed into law. These amendments cleaned up statutory language that included the removal of the mandatory 25-inch seat height for bicycle seats, thus now allowing recumbents and adult trikes to be considered, by Florida statutes, a bicycle.

### **Special Recognition: *Joe Fritz***

Joe Fritz is a shining example for bicycling wherever he goes. He is a competitor, mechanic, event director, leader and advocate for bicycling in all types of terrain from road to dirt to mountains and pure fitness. He is a former bike shop owner, has done bike repairs for people in need and set up a Ghost Bike program in Panama City.

Joe was a member of the Panama City Flyers Cycling Club and later a group called Hammer Down Sports. He helped lead many group rides and races over the years hosted by the clubs, and was often one of the first to complete the courses. He has tried just about every type of competitive bicycling event, as well as advocating at public meetings.

Joe is to be commended for his many years of dedication to bicycling in Florida and everywhere he has traveled to compete as a Floridian.

### **Special Recognition: *Angelo Rao, FBA***

Angelo Rao was invited to join the FBA Board of Directors early in 2020, bringing his professional experience as the Manager of Traffic Operations for the City of Lakeland. Unfortunately, Angelo soon had to relinquish his position with our association; he's just that busy.

Although FBA misses Angelo's energy and sense of humor during our Board conference calls and meetings, his commitment to FBA continues with his service on our Advisory Board and his dedication to improving conditions for bicyclists and pedestrians in Lakeland and beyond.

**Special Recognition: *Harry Radebaugh***

Harry is a long-time member of the Coastal Cruisers Bicycle Club and inspiration to ANYONE who's ever ridden a bicycle! Last year, for his 90th birthday, the club was "locked down" for Covid so he rode nine 10-mile loops on his own in celebration of that milestone. Several club members did a drive-by to wish him a happy birthday and he was in front of his house with a hand-made sign jokingly telling us "whippersnappers" to get off his lawn.

When the club was functioning, Harry regularly served as a ride leader. In addition to his bicycle, Harry still rides a beautiful motorcycle. He is sharp as a tack and has a wealth of knowledge. He is often teased about his knowledge of history in particular as folks would say, "Harry was there!"

If there ever was a poster-child for riding a bicycle and being a warm, friendly guy, it's Harry Radebaugh. But Harry is more. He has been an icon to the Coastal Cruisers Bicycle Club for 20 years. Many members still recall their first ride with Harry. Three times a week Harry rises before the sun and begins three, 10-mile rides.