



LIFE IN THE SADDLE

By Jon deVarenes

Swiftly gliding across asphalt or brick, bumbling rhythmically over concrete and wood—spring is on its way and spinning rubber is already rolling through my mind. For cyclists, spring means tuning up, attending a few spin classes, and watching everyday for the snow to disappear.

Cycling is an affordable, ecologically friendly and very healthy mode of transportation. Although it may not be evident at first, there is a strong sense of both community and independence that empowers cyclists, and brings them together. We are fortunate to live in a city with a massive cycling community. Brockville is the home to both “The Wheelers” and the oldest registered cycling club in Canada, “The Brockville cycling club”. For new cyclists these resources can be invaluable. The cyclist community provides a means to get comfortable on the road, learn how to troubleshoot problems, plan for long rides, and ride in a group.

It can often feel intimidating or even dangerous to join traffic at first. Try going on a few short rides around low traffic areas in the evening to boost your confidence or riding with an experienced friend to guide you. It’s important to start slow, build up your strength and learn to gauge how much food and water you will need on your ride. As a vehicle on the road, you must acknowledge your responsibilities and practice communicating with others through signals and obeying basic rules. One of the best lessons I learned, as a new rider, was to stop hugging the curb and

start commanding a presence on the road. While riding the curb I was given very little space and found drivers would attempt dangerous manoeuvres to pass me. Cyclists are not obstacles. Sharing the road means both drivers and cyclists must learn how to travel side by side comfortably.

That being said, cycling enthusiast and Ironman triathlete Marc Billard has assured me that Brockville is a very safe place to ride and a great place for cyclists to live. There are many great routes throughout the countryside. On any lengthy ride you will quickly find yourself rolling across pristine asphalt, soaking up incredible scenery. Marc is very passionate about the cycling community here. He looks forward to the progress culminating between the cycling community and the cycling infrastructure throughout Brockville. More than anything, Marc appreciates the social aspects of cycling, and the sublime views that can be achieved through exercise.

“I can’t talk enough about the beauty of cycling here”

As a much more experienced cyclist than I, Marc had plenty to say on the topic of beginner cyclists. If you want to be a cyclist, sooner or later you are going to have to accept that you will get a flat tire or experience minor difficulties with your ride. Luckily there is an abundance of online videos demonstrating quick and comprehensive fixes for these problems. It is wise to practice bicycle maintenance regularly so as to familiarize yourself with your bike’s mechanics and keep things in smooth working order.

This is a great time to begin cycling. We’ll see you on the road! **LH**

