

Pedal Power

THE ULTIMATE ALTERNATIVE POWER SOURCE by S. L. Leonhardt

Two years ago, Ethan Seltzer was searching for a way to harness a truly amazing force: human energy. Combining a passion for green living with his love of family cycling, he founded Pedal Power.

"As consumers, we need to be aware of our habits and take responsibility for the future while teaching our children to do the same," says Seltzer. "Energy conservation doesn't have to be complicated and the whole family can get involved in lots of ways that add up."

Ultimately, Pedal Power's mission in the community is to raise awareness about energy sustainability. To that end, the nonprofit, led by Seltzer, coordinates both group cycling competitions and energy demonstrations to illustrate in actual wattage how much electricity is consumed, and what that equates to in daily usage.

Since 2009, the demos around metro Richmond have generated over 6,000



they use, but we do want to help everyone realize the significance of our dependence on fossil fuels," says Seltzer, who is the father of a 3-year-old. "It's important for our kids especially to see how changes in behavior and use of alternate sources of energy can provide a better balance."

Beyond endorsing a reduction in energy use, Pedal Power advocates minimizing waste. "At Pedal Power, we continuously look for creative ways to raise awareness and get the whole family interested in ways to minimize their energy use."

According to Seltzer, the smallest acts can add up, like placing the kitchen faucet in the cold position to lower hot water heater use of heated water that may not reach the faucet. Reducing waste can also mean consumer savings. "A common misconception is that power cycling your computer causes unnecessary wear," he says. "However, PCs aren't that fragile, and powering off a computer not in use can save families as much as \$200 annually." ■



A family favorite, Pedal Power's energy demo uses the cyclists' transferred watts to power a makeshift kitchen where lunch is prepared for the team.



watts of transferable energy. The cycling presentation shows how human energy can be converted to an alternate power source. "As people pedal on our modified bike trainers, the energy is stored in a set of batteries which are fed to an onsite electric appliance or device," says Seltzer.

For example, at the group cycling competition, the transferred watts power a make-shift kitchen where volunteers prepare lunch for the cycling teams. "People are amazed by how much physical energy they exert to produce even a small amount of electricity for basic needs. Given the level of effort, the idea of using less energy or avoiding waste really starts to sink in."

It's all part of Pedal Power's community education initiative. The message? Taking simple steps can reduce energy consumption and minimize impact on the environment. "Our mission isn't about making consumers feel guilty about the energy



Earth Day Festival

Saturday, April 23

Noon - 7 p.m.

Manchester District in Richmond

Annual celebration includes environmentally conscious vendors and exhibitors, including a Pedal Power demonstration which will provide electricity for food vendors. Also, artisans, and farmers, as well as, fun-filled eco-educational kids' programs, workshops, local music and entertainment.

Visit pedalpwr.com for more information on events and energy-saving tips for consumers.