



Free Bikes 4 Kidz Maryland

Second Annual Report

2020-2021

fb4kmaryland.org



Collect



Refurbish



Give Away



Howard Hughes

Message from the President

Free Bikes 4 Kidz Maryland is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization geared toward helping all children ride into a happier, healthier childhood by providing bikes to those most in need. We were established in July of 2019 and conduct annual campaigns beginning in October: We ask the public to donate gently used bikes; we organize scores of volunteers to clean and refurbish them, and then we give them away to children in need. We're the eighth regional affiliate of Minneapolis-based Free Bikes 4 Kidz to be established of the current twelve affiliates.



In this, our second Annual Report, we provide details on our annual campaign, our new initiative to offer free bike repair clinics for children in need, our activities since then, and our plans for the future. Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, we were able to safely collect and distribute twice as many bikes as we did in our previous year, while providing a safe working environment for our volunteers.

No nonprofit can be successful without the help of many people and organizations. We are grateful to the public, who have donated over 1600 bicycles to us this year. We thank our 230 volunteers, who collectively devoted over 2400 hours to making donated bicycles clean, shiny, and safe. We appreciate our collaboration with our partners who identified children in need and gathered their information for us, and who provided us with outdoor spaces for our bike giveaways.

And we are especially grateful to our sponsors, Howard County, the Horizon Foundation, Park Tool, Race Pace Bicycles, Adler Real Estate Partners, Cushman & Wakefield, and Quality Bicycle Products, for enabling us to have such a successful second year, and to our Founding Sponsor, The Howard Hughes Corporation, for providing our initial funds.

Ted Cochran, President
Free Bikes 4 Kidz Maryland
July 2021



*One of the most important days of my life was when I learned to ride a bicycle.” – **Michael Palin***

Three Issues

Health

One out of three Maryland children aged 10-17 is overweight or obese.¹ These children are at risk for cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and other health issues. According to the World Health Organization, the two most important means of preventing childhood obesity are healthy eating and physical activity. Outdoor activities such as biking are one of the few pandemic-safe ways to stay active, but as a result bicycles have been expensive and in short supply.

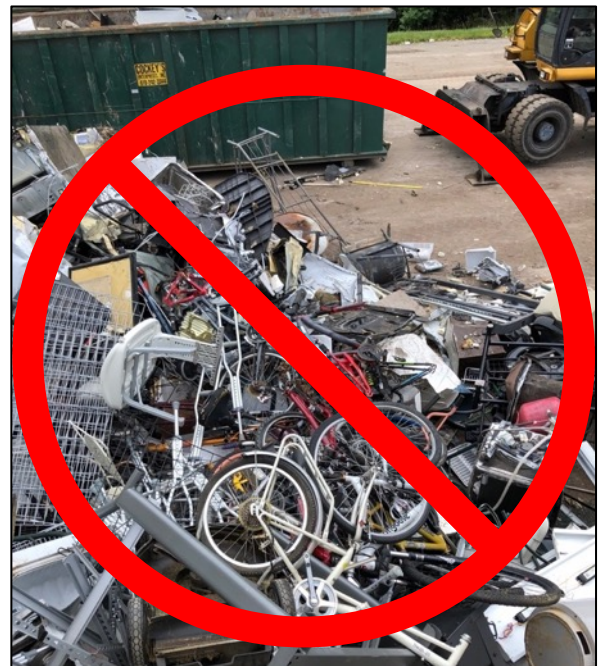


Equity

More than two out of five children in Maryland, and about 13,000, or one out of five children in Howard County², qualify for free or reduced-price school meals based on family income. Families that struggle to put food on the table are rarely in a position to furnish and maintain bicycles for their children. The pandemic exacerbated the problem by increasing unemployment while also increasing the cost of bicycles. These children are missing out on a fundamental childhood experience, the ability to expand their horizons and explore the world on their own, and the acquisition of a lifelong skill.

Sustainability

The supply of used children's bikes is nearly limitless. Every year between 15 and 20 million bikes are sold in the US. One-third of those bikes are 20" wheel-size or smaller. Since kids grow like weeds, well over 5 million bikes are outgrown each year. These bikes are often uneconomical to keep in good repair—an hour of mechanic's time can cost more than the bike is worth! Millions sit unused, and thousands end up in landfills instead of being refurbished for children to use.



"Often when you think you're at the end of something, you're at the beginning of something else." – Fred Rogers

¹ America's Health Rankings analysis of U.S. HHS, HRSA, Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB), Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative (CAHMI), National Survey of Children's Health Indicator Data Set, Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health, United Health Foundation, AmericasHealthRankings.org, Accessed 2020.

² Maryland State Department of Education Free and Reduced-Price Meal Statistics, 2018-2019

Our Answer

Collect Bikes from the Public

Conduct a campaign every year to collect used children's bicycles from the public. Ask for bikes that have been outgrown, broken, or otherwise unwanted and abandoned. Divert bikes from landfills.



Refurbish Them

Recruit volunteers to clean, tune, and/or repair the bicycles over a period of ten weeks. Have experienced bicycle mechanics thoroughly safety-check each and every bicycle. Using volunteers eliminates the biggest contributor to the cost of refurbishing bicycles. Conducting one short-term campaign a year in donated space also keeps the costs down, and prevents volunteer burnout.

Give Them All Away

Use schools, community organizations, churches, and other nonprofits to identify underserved children and programs in need of bicycles. Match children in need to bicycles on hand. Give the bikes, along with a new helmet, to the children.

We thus simultaneously contribute to children's health and fitness, address underserved populations, and keep bicycles out of landfills.

Do your little bit of good where you are; it's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world. **Archbishop Desmond Tutu**

"When the spirits are low, when the day appears dark, when work becomes monotonous, when hope hardly seems worth having, just mount a bicycle and go out for a spin down the road, without thought on anything but the ride you are taking."

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

"It is by riding a bicycle that you learn the contours of a country best, since you have to sweat up the hills and coast down them." – **Ernest Hemingway**

Our Approach

Free Bikes 4 Kidz has studied similar programs in the US that collect, refurbish, and give away bikes to underserved children. Most such programs operate year-round: They collect bikes, employ staff, own or lease space, and need to recruit volunteers and media coverage all year.

Our approach has been different: We collect bikes in a single one-day event; we borrow a warehouse for ten weeks, turn it into a pop-up repair shop staffed by scores of volunteers, and then partner with dozens of local agencies that work with underserved families to identify children in need of bikes. We give all the bikes away and then pack up, clean the warehouse, and return it to the owners. Then we essentially go 'dark' for nine months. This method allows us incredible financial efficiency as well as a renewed excitement when the lights go on again nine months later.

Our program might be easier if we just raised the funds to purchase new bikes to give away, but that is much less economical: Our cost per bike is only about \$32. Further, buying bikes does not satisfy our sustainability mission: We need to keep bikes out of landfills and put them back on the street. We want to refurbish bikes, not add new ones to the stream. Nationwide, we annually recycle tons of metal and rubber every year; as our program grows, that statistic grows.

And as more people ride bikes, we reduce CO₂ emissions. Every car trip saved helps, and if some of the kids we put on bikes now become bike commuters in the future, our impact will grow.

We also work to bring together people from all political persuasions, all religions, all ethnicities, and diverse economic statuses to work together as a community for the common good. Everyone can agree that a child receiving a bike is a good thing; our efforts are a bright spot in an increasingly polarized culture.

We are able to use volunteers of all ages and abilities regardless of bike knowledge, and if they become regulars, they learn a lot about bicycle maintenance. From cleaning bikes to adjusting and repairing them, we provide our volunteers with tasks that suit their abilities. And they can work alone, in pairs, or in teams, cooperating and problem solving to make the bikes safe and functional. It's a unique experience in a sea of hundreds of bikes of every make, model, and color. The experience is truly rewarding, and a high percentage of first-time volunteers return.

Finally, our method of giving away bikes is unique. We never want to be in the position of vetting recipients to determine whether or not they 'deserve' a free bike. Instead, we invite community organizations—schools, nonprofits, and government agencies—to identify children in need for us, secure parental permission, and collect the bike preferences from the children. We then schedule the children to receive a bike in our giveaway event.

When you ride a bike and you get your heart rate up and you're out, after 30 or 40 minutes your mind tends to expand; it tends to relax." – **George W. Bush**

"Nothing compares to the simple pleasure of a bike ride." – **John F. Kennedy**

Why Bicycles?

We have been asked why we're focusing on giving away bicycles, as opposed to other, less expensive sports equipment. Or computers. Or books. It's because we're cycling enthusiasts at heart, and know first-hand the benefits of cycling as a lifelong activity.

Bicycle riding is a life skill

Riding a bike is a skill that only needs to be learned once, and it's easiest to learn as a child. Once learned, bicycle riding provides lifelong benefits in mobility, physical fitness, and mental health, and is much less expensive, and often faster, than an automobile for short trips.

A bicycle is a child's ticket to freedom

A child on a bicycle can go four times farther in the same amount of time, opening up sixteen times the area that a child can explore, and enabling them to explore it without the need for adult assistance. They won't need a computer, an athletic field, or a chaperone.

Bicycling is a gateway to an active, healthy life

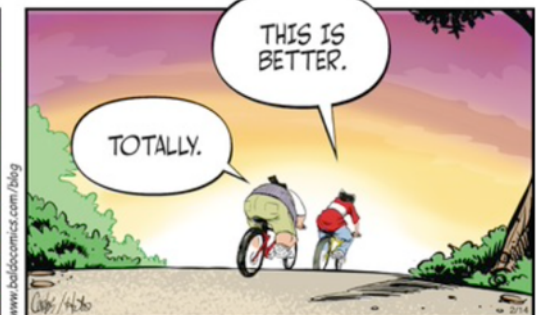
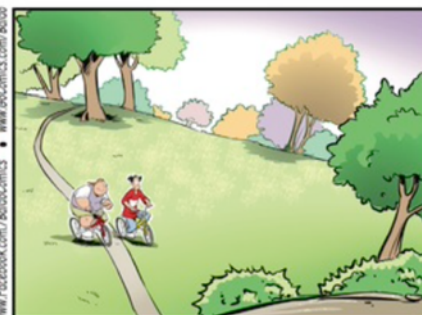
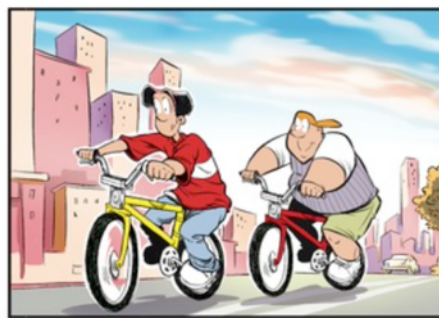
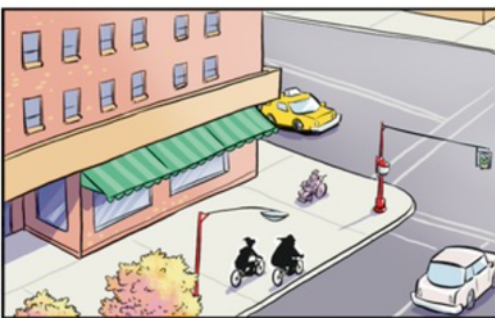
Bicycling is a low-impact physical activity that can be avidly practiced throughout one's life. It increases cardiovascular health, muscle strength and flexibility, joint mobility, and overall fitness.

Bicycling can be a social activity

Bicycling enables children to ride together on outdoor adventures, in person, for hours at a time. Besides, it's fun!

BALDO

BY CANTÚ AND CASTELLANOS



BALDO © 2021 Baldo Partnership. Dist. By ANDREWS MCMEEL SYNDICATION. Reprinted with permission. All rights reserved.

Collecting Bikes from the Public

Our 2020 campaign began with Collection Day on October 3, 2020. Thanks to the generosity of the Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services and five volunteer fire departments, we were able to use eleven Howard County Fire Stations as collection points. Volunteers helped the public unload donated bicycles, and other volunteers then trucked the bikes to our refurbishing center. We received 496 bikes that day, and more than 400 additional bikes over the next few weeks.



County Executive Dr. Calvin Ball helps unload donated Bicycles at Ellicott City Volunteer Fire Department



Bikes await pickup at Elkrige Volunteer Fire Department



Volunteers unload the trucks and bring the bikes into the refurbishing center.



Refurbishing Donated Bikes

In ten weeks, volunteers cleaned, adjusted, and repaired all but 4% of the bikes. Many bikes merely needed cleaning and adjusting. Repair parts, when needed, were taken from unrepairable bikes whenever possible. Each and every bicycle was checked for safety by bicycle mechanics whose cost was defrayed by our sponsor, Race Pace Bicycles. Tools were provided at a significant discount by our sponsor, Park Tools.



Safely-distanced mechanic's workstations



Mechanic's tools



Scout troops taking advantage of nice weather



Bearings needing replacement



Volunteers after a job well done



900 bicycles refurbished

Giving Them All Away

Children were identified and referred to us by our partners: schools, social services organizations, and nonprofits, who used their own qualification criteria. We matched the children to bikes of the correct size from our inventory, and notified the referrer when a match was made. We conducted about two dozen outdoor, pandemic-safe giveaways. Every child received a correctly-sized new helmet and selected their new bike from a dozen or so bikes that fit.



Howard County Executive Dr. Calvin Ball and Maryland State Delegate Courtney Watson unload bikes for our Giveaway Day at a Howard Community College parking garage.



Sizing a bike recipient for her new bike.



Measuring for a helmet with a disposable tape



Bicycles and helmets are arranged by size and type



A new helmet, correctly fitted, for each child



A new bike; a new world of possibilities



The Impact of the Pandemic

The pandemic severely impacted everyone last year, and Free Bikes 4 Kidz was no exception.

More children wanted bikes; bikes became scarce and expensive

Bicycling was one of the few ways children could stay safely active during the pandemic. As a result, demand skyrocketed, new bikes were in very short supply, and used bikes were more costly, on average doubling in price from 2019.

More families were financially distressed

The pandemic led to layoffs; many more families became unable to afford to repair their children's bikes or to obtain new bikes. This led to a larger demand for bikes from us. We had to quickly grow to meet the demand, and work harder to collect enough bikes for children who needed them. Instead of gradual growth, we doubled the number of bikes we refurbished from the previous year. In addition, we conducted free bike repair clinics for underserved children, helping to get them safely back on the road.

Bike parts were in short supply

Since we were refurbishing more bikes, we needed more bike parts. But the tremendous increase in bicycle riding led to a world-wide shortage of parts for bike refurbishing and repair, especially the parts we needed most, such as tires and tubes. Our wholesale partners were often sold out, so we had to pay retail prices for parts, buying them wherever we could and paying additional shipping charges as a result.

Significant expenses were needed to protect volunteers

Our response to the pandemic including significant expenditures for sanitizer, disinfectant, barriers, canopies to enable working outdoors, and ventilation to support working indoors. In addition to increasing the number of workstations to enable more bikes to be refurbished, we needed to duplicate many of our bicycle-specific repair tools to reduce the need for tool sharing. Finally, we needed to distribute the bikes safely—not in a single large event, but in two dozen smaller giveaway events at different locations over a two-week period, using rental trucks to move the bikes.

Howard County helps us Rise to the Challenge!

We are extremely grateful that we were able to secure CARES Act funding from a *Rise to the Challenge* grant from Howard County to enable us to safely address all of these issues. This funding enabled us to expand our operation to refurbish and give away twice as many bicycles, get the parts we needed to put more bikes on the road, get the helmets we needed to give to their new owners, and cover the additional expenses of ensuring the safety of our volunteers.

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has. —**Margaret Mead**

A New Initiative: Free Bicycle Repair Clinics

In the summer of 2020, the pandemic led to a huge increase in demand for all things related to bicycles. Bicycles were sold out; bicycle parts were in short supply, and bike shops were overwhelmed with bikes needing repair. Children of families in need—and there were a lot more of them because of the pandemic’s economic impact—could not afford to get their bicycles fixed and put back on the road. And even if they could, the waiting list for repairs at local shops was months long.



Free Bikes 4 Kidz, in conjunction with Columbia Community Care, a grassroots organization that sprung up to help community residents affected by the pandemic, offered free bicycle repair clinics at a local elementary school repurposed as a food distribution center. We were kept very busy! Well over 100 bicycles were repaired by our volunteers in eight semiweekly sessions conducted in July.

Most bikes merely needed adjustments, or a tube patch. When needed, we were usually able to use leftover parts from our first year to make the bikes safe to ride again. Some

of our volunteers even provided parts from their own stock.

Given the continuing need for bike repairs in underserved communities, we conducted six additional clinics in the spring of 2021, repairing over 100 additional bikes.



A New Initiative: Collecting Bikes from Local Recycling Centers

In late October of 2020, we finalized arrangements with the Howard County Department of Public Works, the Glenwood Lions Club, and Bikes for the World to expand the existing bicycle recycling program at the Alpha Ridge Residents' Convenience Center to enable us to collect small bicycles, tricycles, and other bikes not used by Bikes for the World, as well as parts from bikes that can not be refurbished. This initiative will further our objective to increase sustainability and reduce waste, and will add hundreds of small bikes and trikes to those that we can refurbish and give away each year. The only downside is that we'll need to collect and store the bikes until our volunteers can refurbish them during our annual campaign.

In the spring of 2021, we began negotiating with Baltimore County's Department of Public Works to set up a similar recycling program at the Western Acceptance Facility in Halethorpe. We have finalized an agreement with them and with other nonprofits collecting bikes in Baltimore County, and will begin collecting bicycles there this year.



2020 Campaign by the numbers³

Bicycles

<i>Metric</i>	<i>2020 Campaign</i>	<i>Since then</i>	<i>FY2021 Total</i>	<i>ITD Total</i>
Bicycles collected	911 (+78%)	729	1,640	2,222
Bicycles refurbished	875	85	960	1,451
Bicycles given to children	848 (+104%)	60	908	1,328
Bicycles given to programs	27	25	52	124
Total Bicycles given away	875	85	960	1,452
Bicycles stripped and scrapped	34 (<4% of bikes)			
Value of bicycles and helmets given to children in need	\$126,825	\$17,023	\$143,848	\$186,122

People

230 unique volunteers (+32%)

2516 volunteer hours exclusive of administration (+45%)

Financial (Fiscal year ending 30 June 2021)

\$36,252 Government and Corporate grants

\$7,059 cash donations by the public

\$222,050 in-kind contribution of tools, parts, bicycles, helmets, space, and services

\$41,973 in cash expenses for 2020 campaign, including pandemic expenses and \$11,570 for helmets

Average cost to refurbish a bike: \$32⁴ (+51%)

\$17,399 Funds remaining for 2021 campaign



³ Preliminary figures; our IRS form 990 will provide details.

⁴ Average cost is calculated by dividing \$30,403 cash expenditures supporting the 2020 campaign (exclusive of helmets but including parts, supplies, insurance, transportation, tools to support future growth, and other overhead) by 957 bikes refurbished.

Our Impact

“Above and beyond doesn’t even begin to describe what you did.” -An elementary school liaison.

“Your support means so much to our families particularly during this difficult time. We will be able to provide them with a memorable holiday due to our thoughtful contribution. The generosity of organizations such as Free Bikes 4 Kidz Maryland makes it possible for us to continue our mission of helping the less fortunate in our community.” -An elementary school principal

“Thank you to Maryland Free Bikes 4 Kids for a successful event yesterday. I am still on a high today! I have received such great feedback from the parents and other volunteers. It was a perfect day and the kids had such a great time and they learned. It was so encouraging. Please pass on my thanks to all of the volunteers.... It has inspired me to get my own bike and I am going to plan a community bike ride in the neighborhood sometime over the summer.” -A Scout leader.

“Thank you! This was an incredible event for our families!”-An elementary school principal.

“[The bike recipient] has never said 2 words to me - she must have come by my office 10 times to say hello since she received the bike. These types of community partnerships help us to create strong relationships with our families - a key for academic success.” – An elementary school Black Student Achievement Liaison

"...I am honored to be a part of this wonderful program, and being able to work with our local community to connect kids and families to bikes was one of the greatest opportunities I've ever had. It's so hard to describe the day to people other than inspiring but I'm so grateful to have been a part of it." – an elementary school teacher



What's Next?

As we begin to recover from the pandemic, we're planning to resume our regular operations to collect, refurbish, and give away bicycles to children in need. While we've been able to give away almost 1500 bicycles over the past two years, there is much work to be done: There are over 10,000 school children eligible for free lunches in Howard County alone, and nearly 3,000 additional children eligible for reduced price lunches. We intend to continue to grow to address that need, through increased publicity and cooperation with local organizations.

We've made our first steps into Baltimore County and Baltimore City, where the need is significantly greater, and we plan to expand our footprint there and in neighboring counties as donations and volunteers permit.

Our national organization continues to develop alliances with organizations with similar missions, including USA Cycling (the organization that sponsors U.S. national and Olympic cyclists and that champions children's bicycle riding for many of the same reasons we do. We will support that alliance by providing bicycles for USA Cycling's local and national giveaway events associated with their *Let's Ride* campaigns.

We will keep the public informed on our website, fb4kmaryland.org, and our Free Bikes 4 Kidz Maryland Facebook page.



A shaky child on a bicycle for the first time needs both support and freedom. The realization that this is what the child will always need can hit hard.

Sloan Wilson

A Final Note of Gratitude

Special thanks to Howard County Executive Dr. Calvin Ball for his support, and to the Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services and six volunteer fire departments for the use of space at twelve fire stations on Donation Day. Thanks also to the Howard County Department of Public Works, Bikes for the World, and the Glenwood Lion's Club for their help in providing access to donated bikes at the Alpha Ridge Residents' Convenience Center, and to Howard Community College for the use of their parking garage for our largest giveaway day.

And a massive thank you to the more than 230 volunteers who worked to collect, refurbish, and give away bikes, pandemic notwithstanding, over the past year. Your efforts are what makes our organization possible.





FB4K

FREE BIKES 4 KIDZ

fb4kmaryland.org