



STARTING A BICYCLE REHAB MINISTRY

(revised October 2021)

Bike Rehab is a ministry of Manchester United Methodist Church in Manchester, Missouri. It all started in a garage. In its infancy in 2000, a handful of bikes were rehabbed in a family garage by a few passionate volunteers with the desire to give bicycles to children who would not otherwise have one. Since then Bike Rehab has grown and now occupies the entire 'Bike House', a property owned and maintained by MUMC. Over 9,000 bicycles have been given to mission organizations who serve children and adults, and to individuals.

GOAL:

Provide the opportunity for volunteers of all ages to participate in the ministry of reconditioning bicycles for families and individuals in need.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Invite the local community to donate bicycles to be reconditioned for distribution to disadvantaged persons;
2. Collect and catalog bicycles for the rehab process;
3. Organize cleaning and repair sessions to recondition donated bicycles and;
4. Distribute rehabbed bicycles to charity organizations and needy individuals.

Any group choosing to become involved with a bike rehab or similar ministry may use the goal and objectives listed above. Caution should be taken to ensure that your goal and objectives are so written to describe the uniqueness of the program they are to serve.

Before establishing a bicycle rehab ministry, consider:

1. Need

Determine the volume of need for rehabbed bikes. If the need is 4 or 5 bikes a year the ministry will operate differently than if the need is 45 every 3 months. Regardless of the need for bikes, the ministry should function at a level of involvement and production that inspires enthusiasm, fellowship, and fulfillment, rather than pressure volunteers to over work. It would be better to turn out fewer bikes over a longer period of time than cram to get many completed and then quit because of worker burn-out.

2. Ministry team

It is important that the leadership of the ministry be composed of individuals committed to the success of the ministry. These individuals may or may not be those involved in active recreational bike riding. The more bikers you can have in the leadership of the ministry the better; but their most imperative contribution is their knowledge of terms, parts, and repair procedures on rehab work days. One experienced biker can coordinate 3 to 5 other workers to ensure that parts are being installed and adjusted properly.

Regardless of personal skills, there is a job for everyone in the bike rehab ministry. In addition to mechanical repair there are jobs of cleaning, lubricating, polishing, moving bikes, communications, "logging in", ordering parts, "parting out" (saving good parts from unusable bikes), organizing supply storage, picking up bikes and storing them, and sending letters of appreciation to bike donors.

3. Source of bicycles to rehab

Make your community aware of the ministry and its goals. People will want to be involved by donating bikes that haven't been ridden in years, ones that have been outgrown, or bikes that need repairs which would cost more than they want to spend.

a. Advertise in your organization.

b. Share your ministry goals with local bike shops. Post your ad on their bulletin board to spread the word of your cause. When a customer learns the cost of fixing their bike, many times it becomes more practical to buy a new one and donate their old bike to your bike rehab.

c. Take advantage of social media.

4. Degree of rehab involvement

Set standards for what quality bike you will give to the charity recipients. All bikes should be safe, functional and will make the new owner proud. To give away bikes that are in good repair and look in excellent condition, the quality of the collected bikes has to be at a level to support that goal. For example, our ministry chooses not to recondition painted or chromed parts that do not return to a "like new" appearance with cleaning and polishing. We do not attempt to replace bearings or axles. These tasks involve either too much time or too much expense. Some parts and systems can be replaced on a bike if good parts have been saved from bikes being discarded, which we refer to as bikes being "parted out".

5. Equipment

Hand tools and a bike stand are the basic equipment needed to repair bicycles. Volunteers may bring their personal tool boxes. The MUMC Bike Rehab ministry owns specialty tools such as tire changing tools, cable cutters for replacing brake and derailleur cables, chain breakers to remove and install chains, hex wrenches, cone wrenches, etc. The most helpful apparatus is the bike stand. It firmly holds the bike at standing work level verses having the bike lying on the floor.

6. Parts and Supplies

Supplies are needed both for the process of rehabbing bikes and the repair and replacement of parts on the bike. Bicycle parts can be acquired through a local bike shop. It is important that the bike shop understands your goals and objectives and has a shared philosophy of helping provide bikes for those in need. None of the rehabbed bikes will be given to charitable organizations in competition to bike shop sales. The ministry should not be rehabbing bikes for the neighborhood children as this activity may be in direct competition with the bike shop. Consider developing a partnership with a bike shop who can sell parts to you for 10 to 15 percent over cost, plus shipping, in exchange for advertising of where the parts are obtained. It is also helpful if the bike shop would be willing to give technical advice and assistance on "problem" bikes. Currently MUMC Bike Rehab partners with Trek and Ballwin Schwinn. We purchase parts through a distributor.

- a. Parts often needed to rehab bicycles are front, rear and wheel reflectors, handle bar grips and wrap, brake pads, brake cable and housing, derailleur cable and housing, cable ferrules, cable tips, seats, kick stands, tires and tubes. The goals and objectives of the ministry and the level of rehabbing involvement will determine the selection and stocking of replacement parts.
- b. Cleaning and lubricating supplies include degreaser, WD-40, silicon spray, wire and nylon brushes, hand cleaner, rags, paper towels, denim strips and patches, rust remover, chrome polish, Goo Gone, rubber gloves, wire ties, electrical tape, talcum powder, hair spray and newspaper to protect the floor. These supplies are purchased at local retailers.

7. Finances

Funding and financial support of the ministry is important for its success. The parent organization of the ministry may be the primary source of funds. Other sources would be fundraisers, personal donations, and corporate donations of parts and supplies. Collected bicycles that are of high quality can be designated to be offered for sale on E-Bay, Facebook Marketplace or other outlet sources. The sale of one quality bike could cover the cost of rehabbing 5 or 6 bikes for distribution.

8. Facilities and storage

Space is required to allow the operation of the ministry to be productive. Areas that are needed include:

- a. Receiving and storage of bikes to be rehabbed and "partsed out".
- b. Cleaning area for cleaning frames, gears and chains--can be messy.
- c. Storage of saved parts from discarded bikes.
- d. Storage of the ministry equipment, bicycle parts and supplies.
- e. Work area to rehab bikes. The number of workers and the number of bikes to be rehabbed will determine the space you need.
- f. Or, the scope of the operation may need to be organized to fit the space you have.

9. The rehab process

- a. **Log-in** Each bicycle is evaluated for its potential as a give-away-bike . Those that pass the judgmental test are tagged with a numbered check list card that includes the brand, model, tire size, and all major parts of the bike. A set of marking symbols is used to tell if each part is in good condition, needs adjustment or needs replacement.
- b. **Mechanical repair** The log-in card guides the mechanic on the particular repairs needed. The mechanic can keep track and check off the repairs as they are completed.
- c. **Cleaning** Lubricating and cleaning gears and chains, and cleaning and polishing frames and wheels are also listed on the log-in card. As the bike is being cleaned it can be double checked for completed repairs. These various tasks are checked off when completed.
- d. **Final Check**
When all of the tasks on a bike have been checked off, it goes to the "final check" station where all adjustments, repairs and cleaning are verified. Final small repairs and adjustments are done here; unless it is a major problem and the bike needs to go back to the cleaning or mechanical area.
- e. **Completed bicycles**
Bikes can be tagged for designated charities and stored. Possibly the rehabbed bikes can be delivered to or picked up by the recipient upon completion to minimize the need for storing finished bikes. The method of transportation to the receiving organization is another logistical task.

The bikes that are given away must function safely and mechanically as intended by the manufacturer. MUMC Bike Rehab provides a helmet with each bike. We use the phrase that "The *price* of this free bike is . . . You have to wear the helmet!"

When we know that an adult bike will be used for transportation to work or will be ridden in an area that requires greater security, a cable lock and key are provided with a beaded chain and key necklace to help deter lost keys.

And finally: If you are led to be involved in a bike rehab ministry, the most important advice is that you organize and operate your ministry to fulfill your established goals in a way that works best for you as you listen to your inspiration.