



How to Host a Successful Women's Bicycling Forum

Women Bike Webinar: July 23, 2013

ADVOCACY | BICYCLE FRIENDLY AMERICA | NATIONAL BIKE CHALLENGE | NATIONAL BIKE MONTH | NATIONAL BIKE SUMMIT | SMART CYCLING | WOMEN BIKE



Women Bike aims to change the face of bicycling by getting more women on bikes and participating as riders, advocates and leaders to create strong communities and celebrate the joy of riding a bike.

www.bikeleague.org/womenbike



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Women Bike Chicago

Day of Dialogue and Demos

Presenter: Susan Levin

Organizing



Women Bike Chicago =

A loosely organized, grassroots federation of women in Chicago from every organization & none

- All volunteer, grassroots
- Organizers: Some work in bike community, local advocacy organization board involvement
- No budget: Donated materials
- Planning meetings: Various locations, Google group



Photo by Michelle Stenzel

Getting the Word Out



Created blog, Facebook page and Twitter account

Promoted mostly within the bike community

Could have targeted women interested, but not involved yet

Conservative in promotion because of space constraints

Could have been more proactive

Sold out before the event!

40-60% RSVP no shows



Event

Sessions

Introduction

Family Biking

Dressing & Fashion

Commuting & Shopping

Visiting Bike Shops

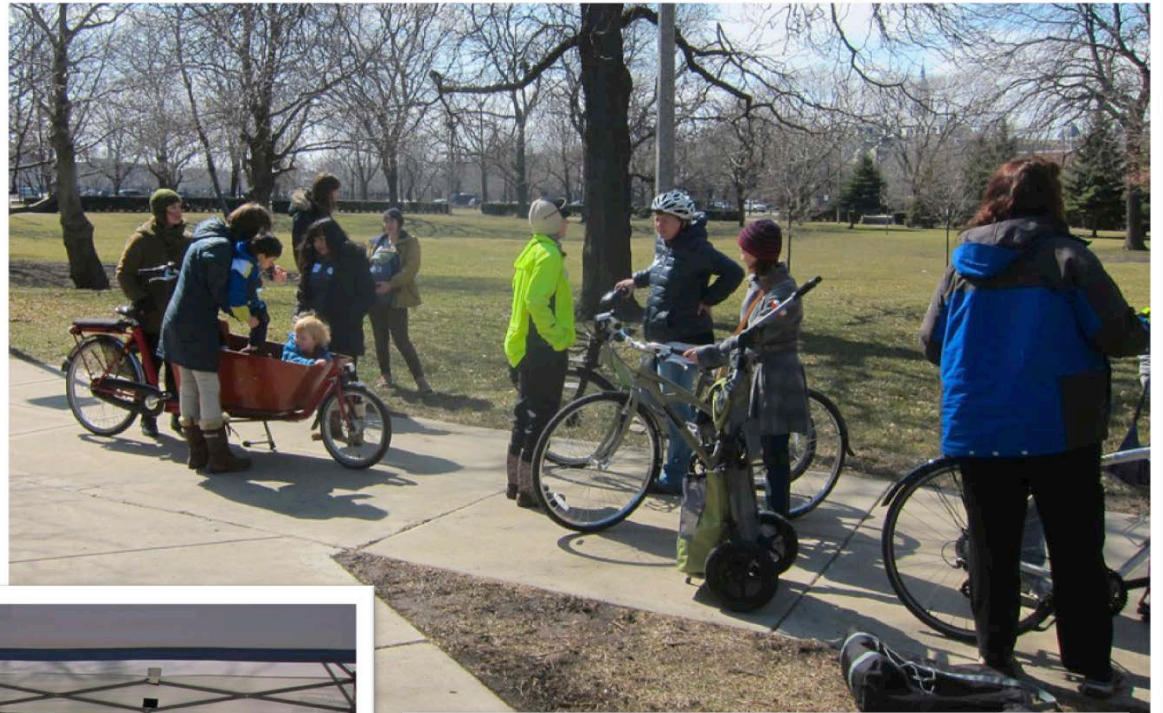


Event

Outdoor area

Access to try different types of bikes + tire changing demo

Photos by Michelle Stenzel



Event



Bike Buddies:

Stickers for neighborhoods for women to find others to ride with, map route



Photo by Michelle Stenzel



Lessons Learned

Signage:

Not well placed for visibility

Rooms:

Decided last minute based on interest

Timing:

Needed better planning to keep event on track

Volunteers:

Not always busy; need to be better organized

Sessions:

Not long enough



Photos by Michelle Stenzel



Post-Event



Survey **for participants**

Post-mortem meeting: **Organizers wanted to plan additional events, rides**

Main challenges:

- **Promotion**
- **Maintaining momentum**

Opportunities: **Partnering with local advocacy organization on women's specific programming**



Ohio Women's Bicycling Summit

Presenter: Jess Mathews

Mobilizing Women



Recognized an untapped need for **women's specific** bicycle rides and programming in Columbus, Ohio





Heels and 2 Wheels

Non-intimidating,
social ride

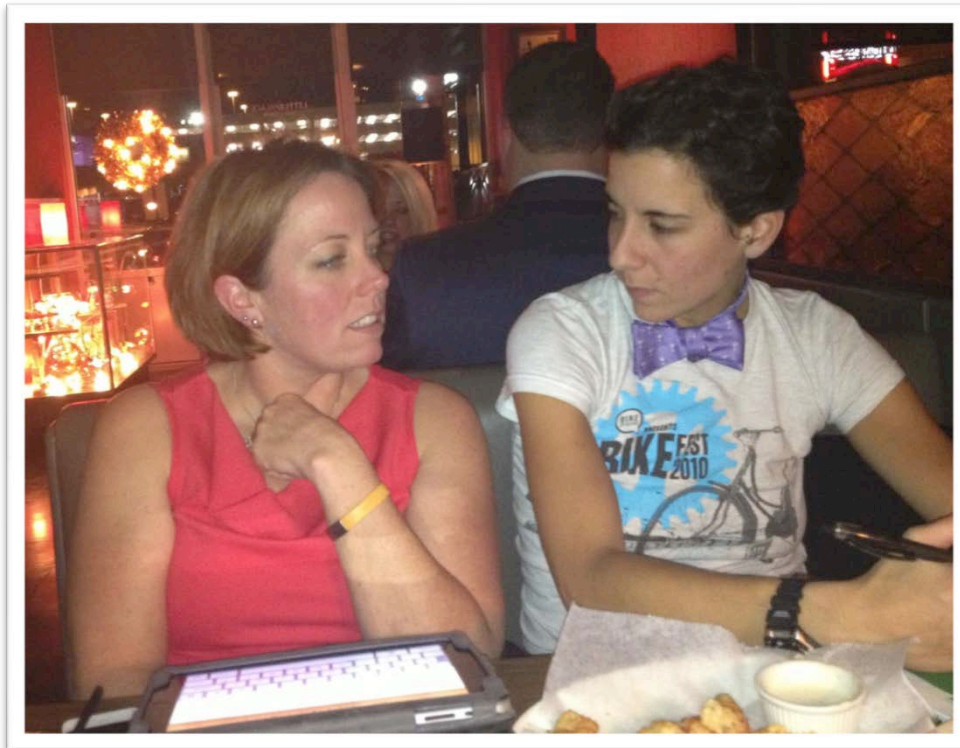
Celebrated wearing
everyday clothing

Discussions about
comfort and safety
based on the route

Ride exploded in
popularity



Taking it further



 **OHIO
WOMEN'S
BICYCLING
SUMMIT**





Organizing Statewide

Speakers | **Sponsors** | Promotion



Jess Mathews (right) with Ohio First Lady, Karen Kasich (center)

Photo: Ohio First Lady

Ohio Women's Bicycling Summit



Nine sessions **Broad diversity of topics**

Recreational riding,
Being a women bike
business owner

Clothing, Mechanics,
Economic benefits





Lessons Learned

Intentionally kept
the first Summit
broad in content

Included **participant
survey** to hone in on
key interests for
next Summit

Lessons learned

- Be a listener
- Keep it simple
(Less IS more!)
- **OVER-volunteer**





Washington Area Bicyclist Association

Presenters: Jesse Cohn, Nelle Pierson

First Step: Internship



Women's Outreach Internship



WABA = “Interested by concerned” about women’s programming;
internship was a great way to **test the waters**



Forum Evolution

Intern gathered input from **local women leaders**, riders

Private interviews turned into interest in group discussion... **and a public forum**

Forum Goals:
Allow women to tell their **stories** and encourage other groups to **dream big**



Forum Format



8 panelists, 1 moderator | Pre-event survey | Communications and press



Costs & Impact



Costs: Voluntary internship with minimal staff coordination

Direct Benefits

- **Agreement point:** We have a problem and need to do something about it!
- **Buzz:** Got members, supports and media talking about the issue
- **Support:** Inspired staff, board and members to invest resources



Forum > Pilot > Program



Started with **pilot project** to continue to raise awareness, build support and track justification

Led to **Women & Bicycles** Program program design and fundraising

Current program going strong; **providing a model** for other communities and organizations



Why Host a Forum?



Low cost, low-time investment consciousness-raising
Builds excitement and support and...



You never know where it will lead!

Questions? Comments?



Carmelita Sams, of West Town Bikes, at the 2013 National Women's Bicycling Forum (Photo Brian Palmer)

Find out more...

Women Bike Chicago

womenbikechi.blogspot.com/
facebook.com/WomenBikeChicago
susan@sjlevin.com

Ohio Women's Bicycling Summit

Web / blog
Facebook
Twitter
Jess@considerbiking.org

Women & Bicycles

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@WABADC
Nelle@waba.org

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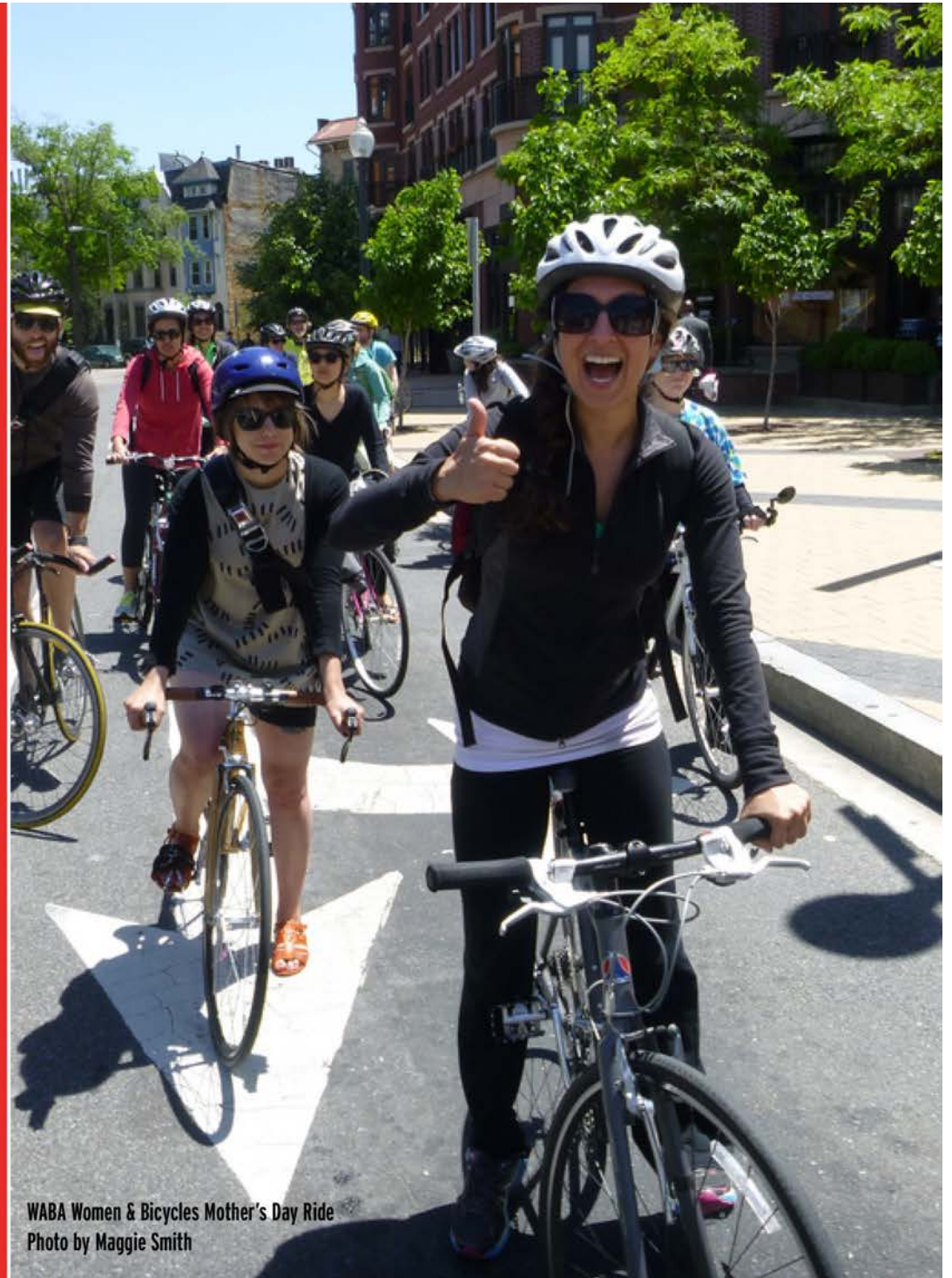
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Questions? Ideas?
carolyn@bikeleague.org
(202) 621-5452



WABA Women & Bicycles Mother's Day Ride
Photo by Maggie Smith