



No longer lined with scores of bikes waiting for a new rider, South Salem Cycleworks closed its doors May 31. PHOTOS SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL

Cycleworks rides into sunset

Bike shop has served as a green-business leader since it opened in 1991

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Michael Wolfe's 28-year tenure as a bicycle shop owner and leader in the green business field has come to an end — at least as a brick and mortar business.

South Salem Cycleworks on Liberty Road South closed its doors at the end of May.

But the impact Wolfe had in running an eco-friendly business set an example for other business owners and outlines a vision for a greener society. The business has been EarthWISE certified since 2014, although owner Michael Wolfe has been making the environment a priority since the shop opened in 1991.

The EarthWISE program is the free business environmental assistance program of Marion County. EarthWISE staff helps businesses recycle, save energy and reduce waste. To earn certification, a business meets criteria in six areas. There are more than 170 EarthWISE businesses and organizations in Marion County.

"Bicycles represent a way of life and transportation," Wolfe said. "The environment that they are sold in should reflect that."

Wolfe's shop was packed with bicycles and bicycle-related gear. He saved parts to make new bikes or find just the right equipment for a customer.

Longtime bike advocate Hersch Sangster said that he would call Wolfe for a part before even turning to the Internet.

"He is the source for old parts," he said. "I would always go and ask Michael first."

Wolfe estimates that all of the parts and bike frames that he saved were used on refurbishing thousands of bicycles since the shop opened.

Since those parts didn't get tossed like they



South Salem Cycleworks owner Michael Wolfe rode to work every day, rain or shine.

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Scores of bikes are still part of the Cycleworks inventory and will be available online. PHOTOS SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL

Cycleworks

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often do in other shops, South Salem Cycleworks did not have dumpster service its entire time in business. An extensive recycling program and a creative reuse system meant that Wolfe only took a small amount of garbage to the transfer station once or twice a year.

He recycled or reused all of the packaging from shipped bikes, parts and accessories. Cardboard, styrofoam, shrink wrap and other common materials never made their way to the trash.

Even uncommon items unique to bike shops found their way to a recycling or reuse market.

Worn out chains were sent to Resource Revival, which creates baskets, bottle openers and race medals in their Oregon shop. Instead of trashing inner tubes, South Salem Cycleworks fixed them, saved other broken inner tubes in boxes for future recycling and encouraged people to upcycle tubes as strapping material or bungee cords.

Wolfe learned that the only way to keep items from being trashed was to make an easy recycling and reuse system.

"You have put the receptacles where you want the stuff to go," he said. "You want to make sure you have enough receptacles and you have them in convenient locations. You can preach all you want to employees but unless it is convenient for them, they can't follow suit."

Wolfe made it convenient for his Saturday employees to eliminate single-use coffee cups by purchasing thermoses for each of them.

Even in terms of the bike shop's building, Wolfe made eco-conscious decisions.

"I've managed to maintain the business in this building for 28 years instead of building a new one or doing major renovations," he said. "In some ways, that is the most enviro-friendly practice."

Wolfe also led by example through his personal lifestyle — biking to work and around town every day — and his professional dedication — serving on the state's pedestrian and bicycle advisory board and with his local bicycle club.

"He's always had a strong community involvement in South Salem but he had statewide influence by being appointed by the Governor for the ODOT bike advisory committee," Sangster said. "When he talks to customers, he promotes bicycling, not just selling a bike."

He worked to promote bike parking at businesses and schools — reminding people that you can park 12 bikes in a spot for one car.

"Bicycles are a benefit to the community—to everybody even if you don't ride a bicycle," he said. "It's a low-impact form of transportation and when you invest in the infrastructure, it is there for a long time."

Wolfe also invested in alternative transportation by renting bikes, tandems, child trailers, cross-country skis and snowshoes.

"Our rental program drew tourists from around the world," Wolfe said.

Despite spending long hours each day closing the shop, he's still passionate about decisions regarding biking and recycling. He laments the bike tax that went into effect Jan. 1 but he applauds those who want a tax on single-use beverage containers.

"We are the only state in the nation that puts a tax on bike sales," he said. "Why are we discouraging the use of bicycles?"

Wolfe's commitment to the recycling world and his encouragement of biking made him stand out from others.

"The main thing about Michael is he stayed community centered," Sangster said. "He was so connected in South Salem."

South Salem Cycleworks will still have remaining inventory to sell for a few years, but those sales will be online. For more information, go to sscycleworks.com.

To learn about the EarthWISE program visit mEarthWISE.net.



Longtime employee Brad Bahr enters data into a 1990s Apple computer that is nearly as old as the store, which opened in 1991.



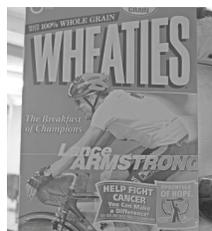
Brad McIntosh sorts parts for the store; remaining inventory will be sold via the internet.



Store manager Nate Taylor puts the finishing touches on a repaired bike at South Salem Cycleworks.



South Salem Cycleworks promoted biking in many creative ways — such as this custom mailbox.



Lance Armstrong was celebrated at the shop back before his doping offenses were revealed.