



THE SCENE
MY FIRST WHEELS

"She extols the basic need of every child to experience the physicality, the connection with the natural world, and the sheer freedom experienced when riding a bike. At Havergal, the Institute makes sure that students can act on their passions, just as Rebecca did."

Two long-standing community partnerships with Havergal – Toronto's Grenoble School in Flemingdon Park and Derrydown School at Jane and Finch – were the first recipients of the bike drive. Students at both schools filled

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TOP
 Rebecca Hoffer and mechanics Aidan Crawley and Dylan Grieve on donation day

Young philanthropist drives bike donations

by Suzanne Zelazo

Rebecca Hoffer likes bikes. She likes the freedom and independence that came with riding them as a child. She likes how her mind quiets when her legs pedal. She likes that bikes, even locked to a fence, represent mobility. She likes that they preserve the environment, and they mean she doesn't have to pay for gas. She likes the way they sound when she shifts gears. Most of all, Hoffer loves that as long as she can remember, she's owned a bike.

When this thoughtful Grade 12 student did a civics project two years ago, she realized that for many young children in Toronto, owning a bike is a luxury. One in three families can't afford the costs of recreation. Hoffer wants to change that. When she discovered My First Wheels (a local charity that collects bikes for children across the Greater Toronto Area), Hoffer decided she wanted to help the charity's founder Lenni Eubanks, increase her donations and her impact.

The 18-year-old student explained, "I began to see I was really passionate about letting kids realize their right to ride. I soon understood that this was not only about bikes, but that it would change people's lives."

Hoffer took her idea to the Institute at Havergal College, the private school's outreach arm, where she devised a marketing plan for a bike donation day that amassed more than 70 bikes. The director of the Institute (and former Olympic race walker) Ann Peel knows the value of sport and play for youth. "Rebecca connects riding a bike with the joy inherent to a healthy childhood," Peel said.

out order forms beforehand requesting size and model type. All the rest went to My First Wheels, a gesture Eubanks (the charity's founder), described as both touching and invigorating. "Rebecca did this whole thing on her own," Eubanks said, "and I'm so grateful for her energy and support of My First Wheels. She's an example of how young people can lead change in the world. She is a true inspiration."

Reaching out to friends, family and community supporters, Hoffer drove her family truck around the city collecting the gently used bikes. The rest arrived during the donation day on Sat., April 6 on Havergal school grounds. As part of her campaign, Hoffer approached the Trek Toronto Bicycle Store for on-site mechanical support. The store's owner Barry Near and bike mechanic Aidan Crawley set up shop in the school parking lot.

With the inaugural event behind her, Hoffer is planning for more donations and a wider distribution next year. Seeing the smiling faces as she delivered the bikes to Derrydown and Grenoble schools the Monday morning following the drive made for a day Hoffer won't soon forget.

GRAN FONDO FORILLON GASPÉ
 SEPTEMBER 1ST 2013

GRAN : 95 km • MEDIO : 40 km • PICO : 2 km

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