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Bike Commuter of the Year

By Cathy Tyson

What's up with the unusual number of bicyclists out and about on Thursday, May 14? It's Contra Costa County's official Bike to Work Day. Members of Lafayette's Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee will host morning and afternoon "Energizer" stations with snacks, drinks and giveaways at Plaza Park on the corner of Mt. Diablo Boulevard and Moraga Road.

Winner of the County's Bike Commuter of the Year Award, Jeff Kent, not the former Giants second baseman, will be pedaling from his home in Lafayette to work in Pleasanton, just like he always does. At twenty-one miles each way, which takes him about an hour and fifteen minutes, Kent is dedicated to his routine. Who knew starting at age 14, pedaling to a job at an auto dealership because he didn't have a driver's license, that thirty years later he would still be commuting by bike?

At 16 he was biking to work at Baskin Robbins; after high school, Kent did his undergraduate work at UC Davis, "a very bike friendly town" and worked part time at a bike shop.

The trend continued with graduate school at Chico State. He reflects, "It's just what I've always done. I never stopped." Working in the corporate IT department at Robert Half International, his employer has been very supportive of bike commuters with showers, lockers and bike storage. No wonder the company consistently ranks in the top ten places to work.

One might presume after the Monday through Friday grind, that he's ready to shift gears and get out of the saddle, but no. On the weekends he enjoys tandem riding with his wife, perhaps out to Pete's in Danville.

"It's always fun to see so many people out on bike to work day," said Kent. He also wants to "compliment the city of Lafayette and the way they treat cyclists - improving Mt. Diablo Boulevard and Pleasant Hill Road for both pedestrians and bicyclists."

One of his favorite accessories is a light hub, a small electrical generator that is built into the hub of a bicycle to generate power for a light. The motion of the spinning wheel is a power source - no need for batteries.

"That is one of my pet peeves," said Kent, referring to pedaling while listening to an iPod. "I've tried it and I don't recommend it. You need to listen to traffic, pay attention."



Jeff Kent Photo provided

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