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Building community two wheels at a time

By Jeff Gomez



First Mile Cycle Works owners Carey Platto and Dave Fraioli Photo Jeff Gomez

It's a dream lots of people have: quit the corporate grind, team up with a good friend, and start a business devoted to something you love. With the recent opening of First Mile Cycle Works, a new retail and repair shop located on Mt. Diablo Boulevard, two Lamorinda dads - Carey Platto and Dave Fraioli - have done just that.

Fraioli, a Lafayette native, has lived here the better part of his life while Platto, a longtime Bay Area resident, has been a staple of the community since 2012. When the pair met, they discovered they each had a passion for sports and being outdoors. This led to ski trips, backpacking with their kids, and mountain biking. "We love the thrill of speed and challenging yourself to do new things," says Platto. "And with mountain biking, those two things go hand in hand."

This past year, they decided to take the plunge and open a business together. Seeing as how the duo have complementary skills, the decision made a lot of sense. Fraioli is an entrepreneur with ample experience in operations and finance, while Platto has an extensive

background in brand building, marketing, and vendor relationships. "Those two skill sets are very different," says Platto, "but both are very necessary."

The physical shop is itself the perfect synthesis of the two founders' talents and vision. The strong visual look plays to Platto's marketing background, while having bikes worked on out in the open speaks to Fraioli's love of fixing things and making them work.

Even the shop's location has meaning. First Mile sits in what used to be Milosport, a popular snowboarding and skateboarding shop which closed in 2015. Says Fraioli, "We felt like there was some tradition here, as far as the expectation from the community - that this is where you go for your sports activity."

The location has more than just sentimental meaning. "Not only are we central to Lafayette," adds Platto, "but we're accessible to all of the East Bay. You can get on and off the freeway right here. And, for road riding, this is an amazing place to start and finish."

But rather than open the usual shop, the pair decided to offer consumer mainstay brands like Marin, while at the same time specializing in showrooming direct-to-consumer brands like Commencal and Blackheart. The reason for this is simple: when a person orders a bike online and it arrives unassembled, consumers often discover it's the wrong color or size, the bike can be difficult to assemble, and there's nowhere they can get it serviced. First Mile changes all that by giving consumers the opportunity to see and touch bikes from these direct-to-consumer brands.

The whole First Mile experience is designed to make people feel comfortable - this isn't a place where people are made to feel intimidated if they don't know the difference between a derailleur and a disc brake.

"We're not here to hard sell and we're not here to upsell," says Fraioli. "We do a good job of listening to customer needs and recognizing a price point they're comfortable with. And we can give you great value."

First Mile is also a place where you can bring any bike to get it repaired. "We'll take bikes of all shapes, sizes, and forms," says Fraioli. "We'll assess them and give you an honest and fair appraisal of what the work is going to cost." The shop strives for a one-day turn around on most repairs, and walk-in service visits are encouraged. First Mile also offers bi-weekly clinics where attendees can learn how to service bikes on their own.

Another staple of the shop are its weekly group rides. These cater to every level of rider and range from routes that start at the store to ones that include some drive time in addition to the ride itself. But wherever the rides take place, the purpose is the same. "It's really about connecting with other people," says Fraioli, "and being part of a biking community. That's the glue that'll help keep people interested in the sport and wanting to do it more."

That sense of community is central to every aspect of First Mile. The shop itself feels less like a retail space than a clubhouse, something they encourage by offering a coffee table and chairs for lounging. They're even applying for a liquor license so evening rides can culminate with a beer. "At this stage in our lives and

careers," says Platto, "we want to have fun at work." With the opening of First Mile, they're trying to ensure that everyone else has fun, too.

First Mile can be contacted at (925) 385-7072; www.firstmilecycle.com; 3566 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette



Inside the First Mile shop Photo Oliver Lane

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