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Twin Bridges: Rural Friendliness Pays Dividends

story by Alan Kesselheim with photos by Thomas Lee

The following story was originally published in the Fall 2010 issue of Montana Quarterly magazine.

Photo left: The sun sets and the bugs come out as a cyclist heads into the screened-in building, where her gear is safely stored.

One summer day, Robin Saxon went outside the Four Rivers Fishing Company building, which she runs with her husband, Greg Smith, in Twin Bridges, Montana. She noticed a couple of bicycles leaning against the attached laundromat that they operate as a seasonal sideline. She poked her head in the door. A couple was discussing their dilemma. One of their bike pedals had broken. They hadn't been able to repair it in Dillon, there were no bike shops locally, and they couldn't go on without a new pedal. She went back in to the store and mentioned the couple and their problem to her husband. "Hell, give them the keys to the truck," Smith thought. "There's a shop in Butte that will fix them up."

A simple kindness; people in need and someone else responding. Not a big deal in the cosmic context, but pretty huge if you have the broken pedal. It's the kind of thing that happens in places like Twin Bridges. And it's been happening a lot more since the Twin Bridges Bike Camp went up in the local park in the spring of 2009.

The bike camp was the brainchild of local resident Bill White. He doesn't like to hog the credit, but it's a fact.

White is an energetic man in his sixties who was attracted to the charm of Twin Bridges and decided to retire there. He enjoys talking with people and has an infectious entrepreneurial energy. The idea came to him at The Weaver's Studio -- a place that teaches weaving, sells tapestries, art, and coffee -- where he hangs out.

Photo right: An outdoor sink allows campers to wash and cook, while keeping the inside of the building clean. Camper Steve Alvarez says he and his girlfriend spent an extra night in Twin Bridges because of the showers and hot water available at the camp. "You couldn't ask for much more than this," he says.

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Bicycle Camping

by John Stultz

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Bicyclist choose bicycle camping for many reasons. For me, traveling on a bicycle is an adventure and sometimes quite unpredictable.

So the ability to camp between hotel or hostel stays allows me to go where I want and when I want. I am not tied to a certain mileage or destination to reach the next available room.

And the economic benefits can be quite appealing.

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