

WEEK OF
NOV. 29-DEC. 5,
2007

SPENCERPORT-HILTON POST

25¢



STAFF PHOTO/KEVIN LEAS

Rush-Henrietta physical education teacher Corey Brandes bikes to and from work each day.

A new spin on the daily commute

As gas prices soar, the number of people who use their bicycles as transportation is growing.

By **AMY CAVALIER**

Messenger Post Staff

While most of us are seated behind the wheel, our foot alternating between the gas pedal and brakes, as we contend with traffic on our way to and from work, Corey Brandes is pushing some different pedals.

His commute is all manpower. The physical education teacher at Roth Middle School in Henrietta and Rush traded in his motor for breathtaking views of the sunset and wildlife — from the seat of his bike on the Lehigh Valley Trail.

By road, Brandes' commute is 12 miles round trip. By trail, it's more like 26, but it's a better ride. He estimates he has ridden more than 1,000 miles since Sept. 1.

Brandes began commuting to work by bike almost a year ago.

"This summer we dropped from two cars to one, so there's no backing out now," he said. "Not that I would ever want to."

While he saves on gas money, his made the switch to get a workout.

"It's a way for me to get exercise and work at the same time," he said. "It kills two birds with one stone."

Since he gets a workout riding to and from work each day, Brandes said, it allows him more time with his wife, Shannon, a former professional mountain biker herself, and their two young children. And as an added bonus, he can eat anything he wants.

Bike commuters aren't really that rare, said Jason Crane of Rochester. He discovered that when he launched www.rocbike.com.

A union organizer and host of www.thejazzsession.com, a show that features interviews with international jazz artists, Crane started riding his bike to work this summer to avoid traffic during the Jazz Festival. When the festival ended, Crane kept on riding.

See **COMMUTE**, 7A

A new spin on the daily commute

► **COMMUTE**, from page 1A

Since June, he estimates he has ridden 1,400 miles and lost 25 pounds. He launched www.rocbike.com to serve as a means of chronicling his experiences.

Crane said the site is now getting several thousand hits a week, sometimes even several thousand a day. The Web site has become a network for bike commuters all around the Rochester and Monroe County area, and features blogs, podcasts, links to articles of interest, tips, and news about group rides that are planned year around.

Although the thought of commuting to work on a bike seems daunting, Crane said it's really just a matter of doing it.

"I think if there's one thing that stops people from bike commuting, it's doing it once," he said. "It's actually getting onto the bike one time and riding it to work or shopping or wherever you're going. I think once people do it, they realize there's nothing to it and it becomes pretty addictive."

For those starting out, Crane advises, "you don't have to climb Mount Everest on the first bike you go on. Make a vow to try to make every trip shorter than two miles on your bike."

Keith Buddendeck started commuting to work about once a week from Park Avenue to Xerox Corp. in Webster about five years ago. Taking part in a Tuesday Urban Assault Night Ride with Full Moon Vista bike shop on Tuesday evenings in the winter, inspired him to try commuting to work by bike at least once a week year-round.

"I think people are surprised, but there's a lot of open-minded people who say they wish they could do that," he said.

Buddendeck's route entails mainly road riding. To play it safe, he sticks to side streets and neighborhoods on his 26-mile round-trip commute. In the winter, he wears a light on his handlebar or helmet, rear flashing lights and reflector strips on his jacket to be sure he can be seen. He said he is able to take a shower at work and plans ahead. He brings extra clothes into work the day before his bike commute.

Then there are the harder core, like Brandes. He began commuting right after Christmas break last year.

"The weather was warm," he said. "It was in the low 40s. About a week later, the cold and snow set in. That was trial by fire real quick."

Brandes rides unless more than four inches of snow has accumulated outside his door. He invested in studded tires after an incident in which he got frostbite on his toe when he had to walk his bike along the trail. Giving himself one hour to make it to work, he leaves around 6:45 a.m.

Sometimes, on the way home, he goes a little farther than he has to to get a harder workout. And he has several routes he uses to get places to keep it from becoming monotonous.

No matter how much he tries to avoid contending with traffic, there is about one mile of road that is unavoidable. Cars can be scary, he said.

"When you are in your car, you are not as connected to the outside world, so you are kind of going through subconsciously and driving," he said. "I always assume people are driving that way or are distracted."

There are various reasons people don't try riding bicycles to work. Brandes said he is lucky to have the space to store his bike and to take a shower at work.

Other people just don't have the time to do it.

For Brandes, though, the effort is well worth the savings in money on gas and insurance, the environment and the physical benefits.

In the future, he said, his



STAFF PHOTO/KEVIN LEAS

Corey Brandes bikes past the back of Roth Middle School in Henrietta on his way home Nov. 16.

wife, who is also a teacher, would like to try and get a job at Roth so they can ride to school together. They even have hopes of being able to bring the kids to school on their way to work in warm weather.

"Some people say that it's kind of insane to be out on the road when it's that cold out, but I really like the natural aspect of it," he said. "I see things most people don't see in their car."

Amy Cavalier can be reached at (585) 394-0770 ext. 243 at acavalier@mpnewspapers.com.

More at MPNnow.com:

Visit our Web site to see video related to this story.

Walk! Bike! Brockport

Do you want to get out and start biking more? One group of community volunteers in the Brockport area is focused on increasing fitness opportunities and encouraging people to do more walking and biking. Walk! Bike! Brockport Action Group exists to improve the physical environment for walking and biking within the greater Brockport, Sweden and Clarkson area. The group sponsors regular walks, bike trips and Nordic walks, as well as public art exhibits. During the summer months, they provide bikes which can be borrowed from the Welcome Center on the canal at no charge.

Harry Shifton, chair of the Walk! Bike! Brockport group, said the canal is a popular biking spot around town, and would be a good route for bike commuters. Several large biking events also make their way through Brockport via the canal each summer, he said.

Visit www.frontiernet.net/~walkbikebkt/ for more information on the group's efforts and for other links to bicycle-related Web sites such as the Rochester Bicycling Club, Parks and Trails of New York, and even a link to an Online Pedometer Map, which provides an interactive map of anywhere in the United States on which one can mark out a walking or biking route and obtain mileage as well as a printable detailed map.