

## Nonprofit helps needy kids get free bikes in St. Paul

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When the St. Paul-Ramsey County Public Health Department held a bike safety event at the McDonough Homes on the city's East Side this summer, dozens of kids arrived to watch.

There was just one problem. "Kids were really interested in it," said Ann Tranvik, a public health nurse, "but many of them didn't have bikes."

Hoping to correct that problem, the department teamed with a nonprofit organization, Bikes for Kids, to give away 177 bicycles this week at two St. Paul Public Housing residences.

The first give-aways were Wednesday, Nov. 28, at Mount Airy Homes, north of the Capitol, and Thursday at the McDonough Homes, south of Wheelock Parkway.

By 3:30 p.m. Thursday, all but 50 bikes had been given away to young people ages 3 to 17. "We started here at 8a.m.," said Tranvik, sounding tired but upbeat in anticipation of the afternoon rush.

With grants from the Minnesota Department of Health's Statewide Health Improvement Program, Tranvik's department has been working with St. Paul Public Housing residents of all ages to boost activity levels and nutrition.

A "Fields to Families" program this summer hosted mini farmers markets that sold locally grown produce each week to residents of Mount Airy Homes and the Hamline Hi-Rise. Cooking demonstrations and grilled vegetable samples were provided by the group Simply Good Eating.

In addition, community vegetable gardens were built over the summer at the Hamline and Ravoux high-rises, with raised beds so residents with disabilities can garden.

The community bike shop Cycles for Change held bike maintenance seminars, and young residents were lent bicycle locks. Nice Ride Minnesota also held a bike event at the Ravoux Hi-Rise.

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One hundred seventy-seven children at McDonough and Mount Airy Homes in St. Paul received **free bikes**, helmets and bike locks this week as part of a public health initiative to promote bike use and increased physical activity. St. Paul-Ramsey County Public Health partnered with St. Paul Public Housing Agency and the nonprofit Free Bikes 4 Kidz to get the bikes delivered.



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Lia Vang, 18, looks over the bike designated for her 14-year-old brother, Tahong Wan, on Thursday morning at the McDonough Homes public housing site. Free bikes, helmets and bike locks were given away by the St. Paul-Ramsey County Public Health Department, the St. Paul Public Housing Agency and Free Bikes 4 Kidz as part of the Statewide Health Improvement Program sponsored by the Minnesota Department of Health. (Pioneer Press: John Doman)



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Maw Mu picks up a bike for her daughter Moo Paw, 10, at McDonough on Thursday. (Pioneer Press: John Doman)



3 of 5

Reconditioned bicycles are lined up and ready for pick up at McDonough. (Pioneer Press: John Doman)



4 of 5

Tong Kou Chang signs a thank-you note bound for donors after he picks up a bike for his 7-year-old daughter Nou Chang. (Pioneer Press: John Doman)



## 5 of 5

A passer-by takes a bicycle down the stairs for Sher Ler who has her hands full with her sons, 10-month-old Joel Ler and 3-year-old Edgar Ler. Sher Ler picked up the bicycle for her oldest son, SIRR Ler, 10. (Pioneer Press: John Doman)