



**400+ pack Facebook conference in
Menlo Park on Internet safety | Page 7**

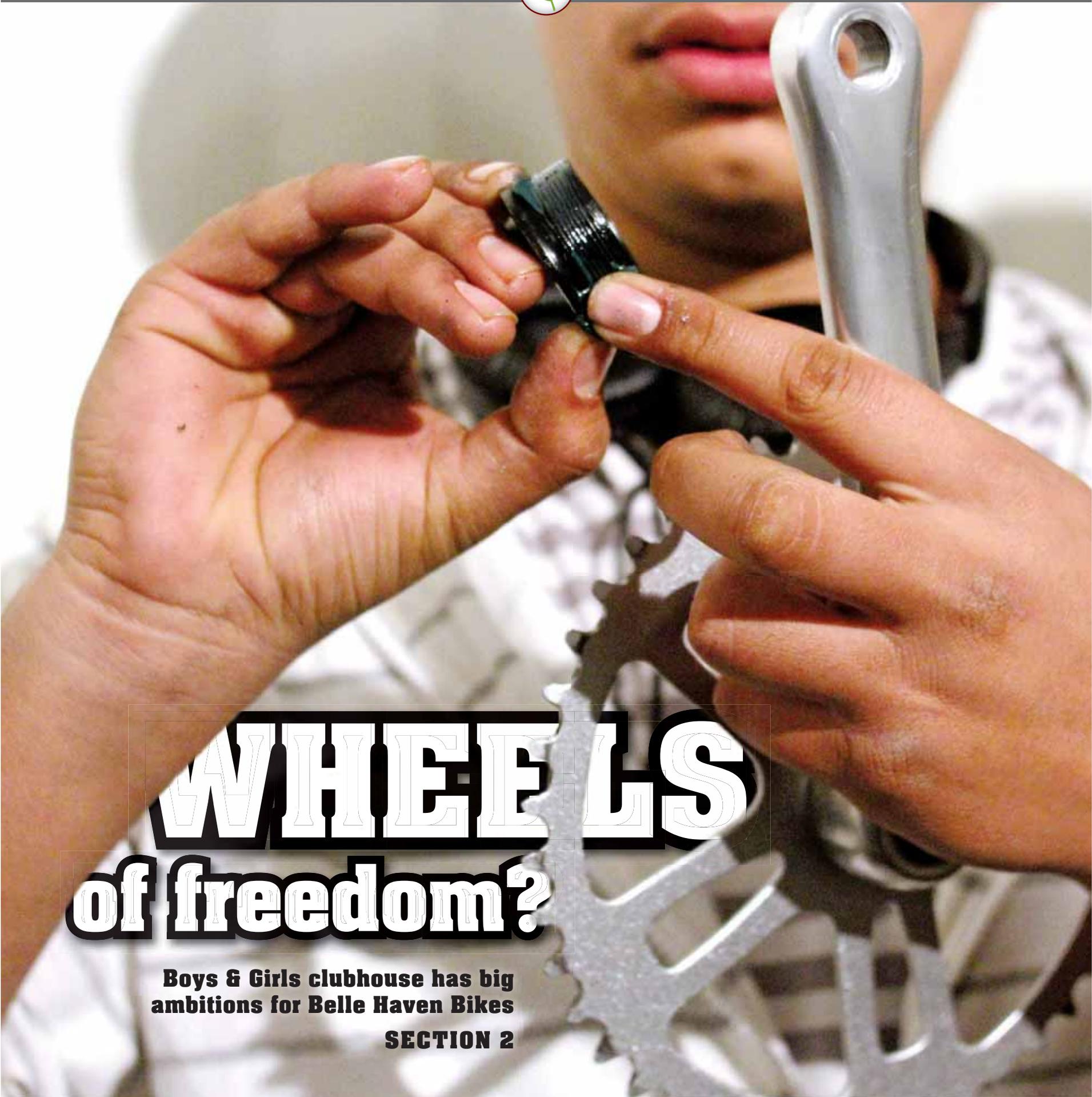
The Almanac

THE HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER FOR MENLO PARK, ATHERTON, PORTOLA VALLEY AND WOODSIDE

FEBRUARY 18, 2015 | VOL. 50 NO. 24



WWW.THEALMANACONLINE.COM



WHEELS **of freedom?**

**Boys & Girls clubhouse has big
ambitions for Belle Haven Bikes**

SECTION 2

2 The Almanac Community

STORIES ABOUT PEOPLE AND EVENTS IN THE COMMUNITY

Wheels of freedom?

Boys & Girls clubhouse has big ambitions for Belle Haven bike shop

Story by Dave Boyce | Photos by Magali Gauthier

There are uses for metal shipping containers other than shipping. In Belle Haven at the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Peninsula, a 20-foot-by-10-foot container is serving as a one-room bike repair facility and school on the grounds of the nonprofit at 401 Pierce Road in Menlo Park.

The bike operation, known as Belle Haven Bikes, is in its first year of teaching — for free — all aspects of bicycle repair for clubhouse members, says master bike mechanic and instructor Dan Hensley.

The shipping container — donated by Ed Schneider, CEO of Triton Container International — will be the first of several containers if Belle Haven Bikes evolves as planned, says Jeff Feinman, the club's vice-president for clubhouses. "We are fronting the money, hoping supporters rally around it," Mr. Feinman says.

The Menlo Park clubhouse has ambitions for the bike facility that could have important and positive impacts on the Belle Haven community. Among the goals are that Belle

Haven Bikes will:

- Serve as a youth-led space, where teens learn about bike repair, gain training that leads to paid work, and help community members to repair their bicycles so they have transportation to work and recreation.

- Serve as a community hub, where youth can learn from adults, families can congregate, and young people can gather in a safe and productive setting.

- Promote health and wellness by developing more ridership among children, teens and adults unfamiliar with the bike lifestyle.

Mr. Feinman says the club may stock parts, such as tires and chains, to be sold at cost to rehabilitate bikes now in garages and get residents out of their cars into healthier lifestyles.

Among other possibilities: community rides, a youth-run cafe and programs for younger children, including safe-riding and gender-specific riding classes. Some girls are intimidated when learning to ride in the company of boys, Mr. Feinman says.

On the wall of the container/shop are five rules that Mr. Hensley says have served him well for 20 years: "Respect everyone and everything, wait your turn, clean up when you are finished, use the right tool for the job, and be cool about it."

"A great rule," says Rainer Zaechelein, the owner of the Menlo Velo bike shop on El Camino Real in Menlo Park, referring to the point on being respectful. "They're all good

rules," he adds.

The classes at Belle Haven Bikes are based on a proven curriculum, Mr. Hensley says. In the first semester, students concentrate on common tasks, like fixing flats and aligning spokes (called wheel trueing). For students considering a career as a bicycle mechanic, it's a chance to "put them a step above a lot of people when it comes to getting a job in a bike shop," he says.

Bike mechanic candidates have to hit the ground running, he says. As is the case in a car repair shop, a bike repair shop manager allots an amount of time to perform a job. Repairing a flat tire includes removing the tire, replacing the tube, re-installing the tire and inflating it. A bike mechanic should be able to do that in three minutes or less, he says.

See **BELLE HAVEN BIKES**, page 23



Above: The new bike-repair shop in Menlo Park operates out of a 20-foot by 10-foot shipping container on the grounds of the Boys & Girls Club. **Left:** Juan Rivera, the go-to mechanic among his friends, works on a bike.

WHEELS OF FREEDOM?

continued from page 21

Mechanics to be

All the current students at Belle Haven Bikes are Menlo-Atherton High School students who live in East Palo Alto.

German (pronounced Her-
man) Gutierrez is 14 and a
freshman. At Belle Haven
Bikes, the hardest task he's
had so far is removing and
installing the bearings on the
bottom of the bike where the
pedals are, known as the
bottom bracket.

"I practiced again and
again to get used to it, and
now I know how to do it,"
he says. "Now I don't have
to depend on anybody else
fixing (my bike) and I don't
have to pay money."

Might he work in a bike
shop someday? "Yes, I
definitely want to work in a
bike shop," German says.
"I want to own a bike shop,
if possible."

Kleiber Marroquin, a 16-
year-old sophomore, says
he was "kind of astonished"
to learn that the Wright
Brothers were bicycle
mechanics. Bicycling is an
important part of his life.
He bikes with friends, "kind
of like a posse, you could
say. It's about 10 of us. It's
kind of like a second family.
It's a way to kind of be
interested in each other."

His goals? "Honestly I
don't know," he says. "I'm
doing really good in school,
straight As. I don't know
where life is going to take
me."

Brian Palominos, 16 and
a sophomore, states his
goal plainly. "I would like
to be a professional bike
mechanic just like Dan."

Juan Rivera is 15 and a
sophomore and says he
expects to spend at least
some of his time at Belle
Haven Bikes teaching
"the little ones." He's
played the mechanic role
among his friends. They'd
ask, "Oh, can



Left: Juan Rivera, left, shows Brian Palominos how to "true" a wheel during a bicycle-repair class. **Below:** Teacher Dan Hensley explains to Juan Rivera what happens when you adjust the tension on individual spokes.

"I get this fixed? Can I get that fixed?" I'd just fix it for them," he says. "Doing that, it became important to me to learn more about bikes and (this) is just a great opportunity."

In a word or two, what do bikes mean to him? He looks away for a second, furrows his eyebrows, then looks at this reporter meaningfully. "Freedom," he says. "Usually my parents are working so I stayed (around) home. The way of seeing my bike has changed all that and now it's just freedom. I just go on my bike and feel like it's freedom." ■

Go to bellehavenbikes.org for more information on this new bike facility.

On the cover: Emmanuel Avalos greases a bottom bracket cup during a bike-repair class at the Boys & Girls Club in Menlo Park. (Photo by Magali Gauthier/The Almanac.)



Javier Avila, front, and Christian Martinez learn about the "third hand" tool during a bike-repair class.



All the current students at Belle Haven Bikes attend Menlo-Atherton High School. The class is free for members of the Boys & Girls Club.