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Volunteer of the Week

Geared up for good things

Chuck Anderson works to maintain trails and educate mountain bike riders

9/1/02

By MARILYN McMAHON

NEWS-PRESS STAFF WRITER



If you were to ask mountain biker Chuck Anderson what his favorite trail is, he would answer, "The one I've never been on before. I like to explore new places. That's why I like mountain biking. I can explore more."

Mr. Anderson became avid about the sport the second day he arrived in Santa Barbara from Owatonna, Minn., to study for his master's degree in geology

at UCSB.

"Someone took me for a bike ride on Gibraltar Road. I was awestruck. It was a January day. There was no snow. Bikers, hikers, hang gliders, rock climbers and horseback riders were everywhere," recalled Mr. Anderson. "I decided the next day I was never going back."

That was in 1989, and since then, he has become active in the Santa Barbara Mountain Bike Volunteers, a group that organizes trail maintenance projects and educates mountain bikers about trail etiquette.

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Photo Gallery

Mr. Anderson casually assumed the presidency in 1997.

"There was no real election because there is no official membership, and there are no dues," he said with a laugh.

However, there is a mailing list of about 80 -- men and women of all ages -- from teens to senior citizens -- and all walks of life.

Twice a year, in spring and fall, "high profile" activities are scheduled to accomplish major trail projects. Sign-up sheets are placed in local bike shops and outdoor stores.

"We usually get about 185 volunteers -- hikers, bikers, trail walkers -- who show up at 8 a.m. for a continental breakfast, work until 3 p.m. and then, we have a barbecue and prize raffle," Mr. Anderson said.

This fall's event will be Oct. 19 to work on the Camuesa connector trail in the back country near the Upper Oso Campground. Interested persons can e-mail sbmbv@cox.net.

Last year was the first time the mountain bike volunteers used their BOB trailers.

"BOB stands for Beast of Burden. The trailers are pulled by bikes and can carry tools into remote locations. They work really well. We used them to work on the Buckhorn Trail near Mono Campground in the back country," Mr. Anderson said.

Getting volunteers to maintain trails is no problem, but persuading them to do trail education is more of a challenge, he said.

"It's hard to get people to sit at the top of a trail and talk to riders about courtesy while on the trails or to provide information for tourists who have never been in the area before," Mr. Anderson said. "But it's important."



He stressed that he is a "dedicated trail advocate who happens to ride a mountain bike, not a

dedicated

mountain bike advocate."

Not all of Mr. Anderson's bicycling is done on wilderness trails. The owner of three mountain bikes pedals to and from work, 13 1/2 miles each way from Montecito to UCSB, where he is the instructional materials coordinator in the geology department.

"I have a Toyota pickup, but it spends most of the time in the garage," he said.