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## In Mystic Bikes Are Meant For Sharing

Mystic Community Bikes Encourage Residents And Visitors To Get Out Of The Car

By [Bree Shirvell](#) | [Email the author](#) | April 26, 2011

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There's no reason to drive around Mystic and Stonington when you can explore by bike. Face it —finding a [parking spot during the summer](#) is the same as finding the proverbial needle in a haystack. Finding a bike rack, however, that's a little easier.

Since 2008, Mystic Community Bikes has offered residents and visitors a sustainable, active, and free way to get around. And the program is growing in popularity each year. Mystic Community Bikes Board of Directors President Rich Froh said 2010 was the busiest season yet with 432 individual bikes used.

The gist of the program is simple. From May 1 to November 1, bikes are located throughout town. With a valid driver's license or another form of identification and a \$10 refundable deposit for a day of use, locals and visitors get an adult touring bike, helmet and lock. Spontaneous bikers can just stop by one of the 10 pick-up spots or those not as spontaneous can call to check on bike availability.

"I definitely believe it's good for our community," said Tricia Cunningham, President of the [Greater Mystic Chamber of Commerce](#). "We [the Chamber] believe in it so much we're a distribution center."

This season the organization will hold a Tour de Mystic on Saturday, June 11. Froh hopes the event will promote bike use both among locals as a staycation and visitors.

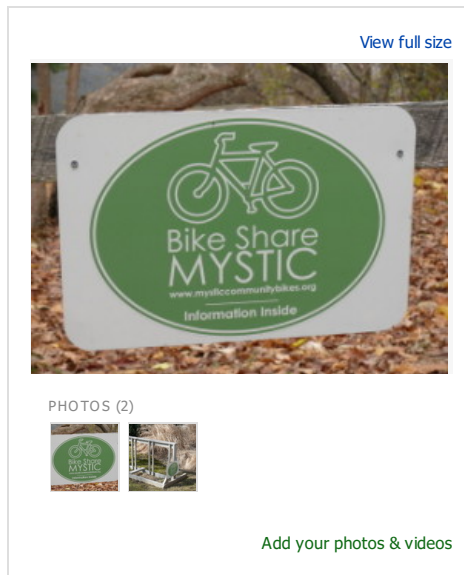
"People always tell me they want to get back on the bike," Froh said. "We hope to show people bike riding is a fun, good way to get around."







Cunningham, on the Board of Directors for Mystic Community Bikes, said the group tried to be very strategic in terms of picking distribution centers.

Distribution centers located at various areas around town include the [train depot](#), [Bank Square Books](#), the [Mystic & Noank Library](#), the Mystic & Shoreline Visitor Information Center in the [Olde Mistick Village](#), and the [Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center](#). The Mystic Shipyard, Noank Shipyard, Seaport Marina and Howard Johnson Inn also serve as distribution centers.

Froh said the train station location makes it easy for people coming from out of town to spend their entire time in Mystic without a car and that the locations at the marinas make the program very popular with boaters.

"We tried to spread them out and to locate the distributions centers throughout town based on who is going to use them" Froh said



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




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going to use them, from said.

Those users, according to Froh, tend to be a mix of locals and visitors but mainly visitors. Froh said some visitors see the bikes and immediately understand the program while others are sent to the program by locals and often by the hotels.

Mystic resident Tim Evers came up with the idea, Froh said, as way to increase bicycle use as transportation and create an easy way to get around the area.

Many of the bicyclists donate the \$10 deposit to the nonprofit program. Donations include cash, bicycles, bike racks, and time—a group of volunteers check the bikes each week to make sure they up to par as well as repair the bikes as needed.

"We live in a community where people are very generous," Froh said.

Still, Cunningham, who calls the organization extremely grassroots, and Froh said they are always looking for more bikes and volunteers.

In the future Froh says the program may try to have a longer-term bike program for those people who come to Mystic for the summer.

Have you used the bike program? [Tell us in the comments.](#)

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**Pablo**

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1:16pm on Wednesday, April 27, 2011

That's pretty cool. That would actually cut down on traffic. I know when I started riding the bike I got at <http://www.2wheelbikes.com/>, it helped cut down on gas a lot. The bike itself was expensive, but man did it save me some cash. That and I don't have to fight for parking spots, haha!

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**Patsy Crothers**

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9:15am on Thursday, June 2, 2011

That sounds like a great idea and cuts down on parking. Use a bike, not a car to get around in Mystic. Park at Howard Johnson's Inn, right off 95, and bike from there. When I come to Mystic I bring my bike with me but basically ride for exercise.

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