

Teach children the ropes of bicycling

BY ALICE VERNON

WHEN OUR CHILDREN were young, my husband introduced them to cycling.

First we rode them on rear mount carriers attached to the back of our bikes until they were old enough to ride their own bicycle. These rear mount carriers have a weight limit of about 40 pounds.

As they matured, we quickly learned there were other ways to cycle with our children.

Getting started depends on the physical development of the child. First, choose a proper fitting helmet and bike. A bike shop is a great place to start. Morgantown has two well versed shops, Pathfinder WV, Ltd. and Wamsley Cycles.

Keep the sessions fun and short at first while your child builds skills and fitness. Take them to a safe closed off area such as a park to learn how to start, stop, maneuver around objects and mount and dismount their bicycles.

Children as young as nine can learn to ride a bicycle in a straight line, stop at intersections and signal turns, but may lack the depth perception necessary to judge the speed of oncoming traffic.

If the child and parent decide to ride on the road with motor-vehicles, it is best for the parent to ride behind the child through traffic. A child on a bicycle can be often difficult to see by the motorist due to the height of their bike. Be sure to teach your child to be extra careful when crossing driveways and roadways from sidewalks.

It is beneficial for the child to take a cycling course. For information on "Smart Cycling" and "Cycling Skills for Children" courses contact Bike Morgantown at BikeMorgantown@gmail.com or call 304-376-0446. These classes teach both rules of the road and confident cycling on our roadways.

Cycling on the road with your child helps promote cycling and fitness, provides transportation and freedom independence for the child, and helps children learn to read maps, and interact with pedestrians and motorists.

If you don't want to try riding on the roadways with your child, is not something you want to try, there are other wonderful places to bicycle with your children, such as rail-trails, bike paths and mountain bike trails. West Virginia

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If you don't want to try riding on the roadways with your child, is not something you want to try, there are other wonderful places to bicycle with your children, such as rail-trails, bike paths and mountain bike trails. West Virginia offers both extensive rail-trail systems and mountain bike trails.

Whatever type of riding you choose to do with your child, cycling can be a great way to spend time together, build fitness and teach cycling skills that will last into adulthood. Over the years it has been wonderful to continue to ride with our now adult children.

And patience and fun are key.

ALICE VERNON is an active bicyclist and member of the Morgantown Bike Board. For more information, visit bikemorgantown.com.