

IN THE COMMUNITY

Pedal power: Group aims to light tree for 24 hours

by Brent Cole

On Saturday, Dec. 10, local non-profit Make.Shift, a group whose mission is to support independent artists and musicians through environmentally friendly programs, will host an event unlike any other in Bellingham. For 24 hours, they will light a Christmas tree at the Depot Market Square using their two Power Wheels (bike generators), while raising funds for the organization and enjoying the holiday spirit.

The idea for the event, called Cyclotron, came about at a recent Make.Shift meeting during discussion about fundraising and someone brought up the idea of powering a Christmas tree. "Everyone couldn't stand the idea of not doing it – it was just going to be so much fun," said Director Cat Sieh, adding, "I think we just couldn't resist."

After asking around, they realized the perfect spot for the fundraiser would be at the Depot Market Square, home of the Bellingham Farmers Market on Saturdays. The event will begin at 10 a.m., opening with the farmer's market. The Christmas tree has been donated by Manthey's Christmas Treeland.

The group will power the tree lights using two bike generators running for 24 hours, with riders taking one-hour shifts. A total of 48 riders will be participating. Each rider



The group Make.Shift will use two "Power Wheels" (bike generators) to power Christmas tree lights on Dec. 10. PHOTO COURTESY OF MAKE.SHIFT

will be attempting to solicit sponsorships for their hour, with all the money going back to Make.Shift (the rider with the most donations gets the tree). Riders are already filling up in the late night and early morning slots, and the group hopes to get others involved. "What we really want to do is encourage people to do it (sign up to ride) ahead of time," she said.

Make.Shift is also looking for musicians to entertain the riders. "We're seeking musicians who aren't amplified who will come entertain the poor people who will be out at 3 in the morning," Sieh said, noting they hope to attract anyone from jugglers to high school choirs singing Christmas carols – as long as it's "jolly." She added with a laugh, "It's going to have to be a very jolly 24 hours."

Make.Shift will provide refreshments and merriment and hopefully nourishment for the riders (food donations are being accepted).

The group's two Power Wheels are largely used during the summer months, so this event will ensure their use during the winter, which is one of the goals outlined by volunteer Sky Hester, who is in charge of the wheels. Over the summer, the two power wheels are in near constant use at events from outdoor shows to conferences.

Sieh hopes the day of riding and powering the Christmas tree lights will help expose Make.Shift to new residents who may not be familiar with the group. "It's a great opportunity to get people interested in the project," she said.

Anyone interested in cycling to help power the tree lights, can sign up online at Signupgenius.com/go/cyclotron.

In October, Make.Shift reopened the Jinx Art Space at 306 Flora Street in Bellingham. For additional information about the event or group, contact info@makeshiftproject.com.

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