

## MABA: Fostering a vibrant cycling community

You may never have heard of MABA (Montrose Area Bicycle Alliance), but it is a group of local cyclists who have been actively working for the past five years to make Montrose a safer place to ride and to develop a vibrant cycling culture in our community.



**Laurie Brandt**

Outdoors

It sponsors the bike-in movie nights, poker ride and full moon cruiser rides as well as provide an advisory role in bicycle route and path development. This past weekend, my daughters and I rode in the annual club ride that included a 23-mile, easy-paced ride, lots of conversation, and pizza at 2 Rascals Brewery.

The club has about a dozen, bike-centered events a year that bring cyclists together to have fun. It is about the joy of riding a bicycle and the camaraderie we feel when we share our common lifestyle together. Bikes are the bond between us and the common purpose in ensuring a quality of life and healthy lifestyle.

The MABA's mission is "to be a strong advocate for bicycle related issues in the area, provide information on bicycle education and safety, to be actively involved in bicycle path/trail development, to be an information sharing source and to provide a social network for area bicyclists."

I recently spoke with Leanna Johnson and Garry Baker, co-directors and board members of MABA, to learn more about their goals and upcoming events to help get the word out about what they are doing and how more people can get involved.

"I got involved with MABA originally to help develop a logo and website but soon realized that it would be a great opportunity to grow our cycling culture by offering fun, new bicycle-

oriented events like the full moon cruiser rides," said Johnson, who is also a graphic artist and owner of Treefeather Creative.

"Cycling isn't just a sport, it's a lifestyle, and MABA is really about communicating that to people by encouraging them take part in activities like Bike to Work Day, the February Love Your Bike party, Pedal Up to Clean Up, and our Bike-In Movie nights. Hopefully it opens people's eyes to the fact that you don't need a car for everything."

Johnson focuses more on organizing events and promotions, while Baker focuses more on improving bike-related infrastructure and facilities.

"Cycling is a healthy and environmentally friendly way to get around town and it is fun to ride a bike," Baker said.

"MABA puts on roughly a dozen different events every year. The only requirement is to bring a bike. Cycling is way more fun with other people and our events are free and open to the public. MABA is a fun, open, welcoming group of people. Come try out our events sometime."

MABA is a member of the League of American Bicyclists, a nationwide advocacy organization. One of its long-term goals is to gain national ranking as a "bicycle friendly community" with the league.

"We think this designation will be noticed by folks considering moving to the area, and bring them to Montrose over other towns with similar amenities," said Baker.

In an effort to move toward this goal, MABA members teamed with other interested citizens in 2014 as part of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force. This group, of which I am also a member, provided



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**Leslie Ardizone, MABA board member, and others picking up trash along one of the bike paths near Pomona Elementary School during the Pedal Up to Clean Up MABA event this summer.**

recommendations to the City of Montrose on improving bike lanes, trails, and sidewalks around town.

The group recognized an opportunity with the Sunnyside sewer project, and advocated for cost-effective bike lanes. The road was torn up and old traffic lines obliterated. It was the perfect opportunity to retrofit some bike lanes without the expense of removing old paint. The city put in bike lanes at very little cost.

"This mini-project is a great example of the kinds of high value-added infrastructure improvements we'd like to see in the future," said Baker.

Some of MABA's other accomplishments are: collaboration with the Downtown Development Authority and the City of Montrose on downtown bicycle racks; bicycle rodeos for kids to promote bicycle safety and education; bike safety/repair clinics

in cooperation with the Center for Mental Health, Northside Clinic and Cascade Bicycles and family fun rides as part of the Mission to Ride.

The club also obtained a grant from the Montrose Community Foundation for a handcrafted bicycle rack by a local artist, advocated for a bike sign on Highway 347 (popular bike route to the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park) and provided input on the newly paved 64.50 Road section north of Montrose.

MABA has seven local board members and is a membership-based non-profit organization that relies primarily on volunteer efforts but also uses dues and donations to fund projects. Some examples of costs paid for by MABA are purchasing movie viewing rights for the Bike-In Movie nights, permits for events on public property, and the movie screen, projector

and sound equipment to show movies.

Even though most people ride bikes only during the warmer months, MABA doesn't go into hibernation during the winter.

"We are busy in the winter planning for next year's events and projects and we can always use help," said Johnson.

Advocacy is a year-round effort that involves public meetings, planning sessions, and communications. "We want to encourage people to participate at whatever level they can," added Baker. "We would like them to come to the events, join MABA to help fund our activities and projects, and offer input and help."

"Our group provides a link between the public and government, helping make our community more bicycle friendly," says Johnson.

"We want to continue to work with the city and county to improve bike lanes and bike paths

throughout town as well as install more bike racks, and we also want to create new events and work on creating a bicycle education campaign."

MABA has already made a huge impact for the local cycling community. The club is a big part of the palpable growing momentum of the sport and excitement within the cycling community here. If you like riding bikes and want to be part of the cycling events and positive changes for bike riding in our community, I strongly urge you to join MABA and be an active part of the wonderful cycling culture of Montrose.

To become a member or for more information visit the website [www.montrosebicycle.org](http://www.montrosebicycle.org).

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## Heat problems in the outdoors



**Mark Rackay**

Tips from  
the Posse

Although the weather has cooled some, warm days still pop up from time to time. Imagine you are hiking up a trail on a very warm Colorado afternoon. The sweat is slowly running down your forehead and neck.

The slight breeze feels cool against your moist skin. This is exactly what is supposed to happen; your body is doing its job.

It is most important that you keep things running that way with your body. Dehydration can make you a permanent part of the landscape in just a few hours. It can be difficult to pick up on the signs so here are some things to remember.

You do not have to be sweating for dehydration to occur. In our very arid climate of Western Colorado, moisture evaporates from our skin very quickly. You lose much moisture just through normal exhaling and it is even worse when you are exerting yourself. Make it a hot afternoon and all the ingredients for trouble are present.

Watch for the signs as they come on slowly. Unless you are paying attention to them you might not notice. Your blood thickens as its volume is reduced. Your pulse quickens as your heart works harder. Exhaustion begins



COURTESY PHOTO

**The signs of dehydration show up slowly in the arid climate of the Western Slope.**

to settle in and your mind may start to become confused and you may start to make some bad decisions. You can eventually lose your will to survive, which usually ends poorly. If you do not drink some H<sub>2</sub>O quickly the risk of heat exhaustion becomes a real possibility. Heat exhaustion occurs when the body's temperature gets too high. You may feel nausea, fatigue, profuse sweating and clammy skin. The treatment is simple; have the person lie down in the shade with their feet elevated and pour down the fluids.

When the body temperature nears 105 you need immediate medical treatment for

heatstroke, which can be deadly. At this point, the victim might have hot, dry skin, headache, dizziness and unconsciousness. Elevate the victim's head and wrap them in a wet sheet. Get this person to a hospital as quickly as possible as heatstroke can damage the kidneys, brain and heart, all assuming the person lives.

It is much easier to prevent these illnesses rather than to treat them. The answer is to drink all the time while outdoors. Don't wait until you are thirsty as then it is getting to be too late. If you do start to have some signs of dehydration, start pushing the clear fluids such as water or

electrolyte containing drinks. Stay away from soda and the sugar drinks. It is also wise to leave the beer and other alcohol drinks at home as that only makes it worse.

We all know that outdoor activity in the heat can cause dehydration but remember that it gets worse as we go up in altitude. The air becomes more arid and thin so you're going to breathe harder and sweat more. So be sure to have a drink while you enjoy your day in the great outdoors.

Mark Rackay is a freelance writer who serves as a Director for the Montrose County Sheriff's Posse. For information about the Posse call 970-252-4033 (leave a message) or email [info@mcspi.org](mailto:info@mcspi.org).

## Buzzard Gulch trail work planned

The Colorado Plateau Mountain Bike Trail Association in partnership with the Bureau of Land Management is organizing a trail work weekend at Buzzard Gulch on Sept. 27-28.

The work sessions will begin at 9 a.m. at the Spring Canyon Trailhead and end at 3 p.m. Volunteers can sign up by emailing Bill Harris at [trlgpa@skybeam.com](mailto:trlgpa@skybeam.com) or by calling 249-8055. Volunteers are encouraged to bring food, water, clothing appropriate for the weather, sun screen, work gloves and sturdy footwear. Following the Saturday work session, starting at 4 p.m. there will be a party for all volunteers at 2 Rascals Brewing Company, 147 N. First Street ; food and one beverage courtesy of COPMOBA. A special edition of the popular Buzzard Gulch T-shirt will be distributed to all volunteers who register by Sept. 22. All hikers, runners, equestrians and mountain bikers are invited to join the fun.

The Buzzard Gulch Trails system is adjacent to lower Dave Wood Road 10 minutes from downtown Montrose. It offers 10 miles of non-motorized trail that are regularly used by local residents and an ever-increasing number of visitors. The trail work sessions are sponsored by Colorado Smiles and Cascade Bicycles.