

250501 Change your ride, give bicycling a try
By Chris Benz

Whether you are a regular cyclist or haven't been on your bicycle in a while, May is the perfect time to ride. May is Bike Month, and the Napa County Bicycle Coalition (NCBC) is hosting two fun, family-oriented events: *Bikefest* on May 4 at the South Napa Century Center, and *Bike to Work and School Day* on May 15.

"Bikefest is a big bike party with something for everyone regardless of age or ability," said Kara Vernor, Executive Director of NCBC.

It features music from the Napa High Jazz Band, Divorces, and Weekend Youth, along with food, shopping, bike rides, and games like Bike Limbo and "Tube the Mayor," where contestants will try to toss bike tubes over Napa Mayor Scott Sedgley's head.

"It's harder than you think," Vernor teased.

The Bikefest Kids Passport lists activities for kids including bike and helmet decorating, a bike rodeo course, and a kids' version of bike limbo. Those who complete the passport events will be entered into a drawing to win a new bike.

Bikefest is a great place to shop for a bike – everything from starter bikes for under \$150 to vintage bikes, e-bikes, kids' bikes, and state-of-the-art road bikes. A bike mechanic's booth will be on-site to fix problems, check out possible purchases, and answer questions.

Group rides offer something for everyone. A 28-mile ride through Carneros celebrates the Napa Valley Vine Trail's "Month of Movement." Shorter, in-town rides include the Cultural Heritage ride exploring the Oxbow/East Napa District, and the NVTI Infrastructure ride to view and discuss bike infrastructure around Napa. For young riders, there is the "May the Fourth Be With You" Star Wars-themed family ride. There are also group rides from Vallejo and North Napa, organized by local riders that end up at Bikefest.

Bike to Work and School Day is a Bay Area-wide event that takes place on May 15.

Vernor explained, "We want to reward people who try transportation by bike. We set up Energizer Stations throughout the county, with snacks, coffee, and giveaways such as bike accessories and collectable tote bags. This year, we have beautiful key chains that were upcycled from bike chains by an NCBC volunteer."

People who pledge to ride on Bike to Work and School Day (<https://napabike.org/bike-to-work-school-day/>) will be entered into a drawing for prizes.

Vernor points out that electric bikes (e-bikes) have opened up bicycling to a lot more people and made it easier to commute and run errands by bike without getting sweaty. She recently purchased an e-cargo bike to reduce her car use.

"An e-cargo bike is considered a car replacement," Vernor said, "because it can carry additional people with a bench seat set-up. Mine has a rack on the front and back. I do Costco trips and haul big sacks of cat litter and cat food, plus six bags of groceries. It feels

great to get your exercise while also getting chores done. I save time because I'm doing both at once. And it's better for the planet."

Bicycling is getting safer and less stressful in Napa with the addition of protected bike lanes and the expansion of the Napa Valley Vine Trail. In the City of Napa, the Imola Avenue bridge has flexi-posts installed by CalTrans between the vehicle lanes and the bike lane. Buffered bike lanes (with a larger striped buffer between vehicle and bike lanes) have gone in on Salvador Avenue, Freeway Drive near the outlets, and Jefferson Street near Vintage High School. Parking-protected bike lanes (between the sidewalk and parked cars) will be installed as part of the Browns Valley and the Lincoln Avenue repaving projects.

There are many benefits from bicycling: better health, cleaner air, and less climate pollution. Best of all, it's fun!

Actions You Can Take:

1. Learn about Bikefest and register for group rides: <https://www.napabikefest.org/>.
2. Participate in Bike to Work and School Day: <https://napabike.org/bike-to-work-school-day/>
3. Explore the Napa Valley Vine Trail and sign up for the Month of Movement: <https://www.vinetrail.org/>

Chris Benz is a retired winemaker and co-founder of Napa Climate NOW! Napa Climate NOW! is a local nonprofit citizens' group advocating for smart climate solutions based on the latest climate science, part of 350 Bay Area. Info, napa.350bayarea.org

Photo caption: How low can you go? Napa CHP Officer tries his hand at Bike Limbo.
Photo credit: Napa County Bicycle Coalition

