

Community college gets bike-friendly award

It's one of first such schools in nation to be recognized

Tri-County
COMMUNITIES
OF GREATER POTTSWOWN

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Montgomery County Community College was recognized recently as a bike-friendly university by the League of American Bicyclists in Washington, D.C. The honor goes to both its campuses in Pottstown and Blue Bell.

It was one of the first community colleges officially designated as bike-friendly, along with Santa Monica College in California, which also received the award this year. In total 100 bike-friendly universities were named in 37 states and the District of Columbia.

"I'm amazed by how much we're able to do with sometimes limited resources," said Gregg Heimer, senior network engineer and chairman of the school's Bike Advocacy Committee. "Montgomery County Community College is the ivy league of community colleges."

For the past nine years, the college has hosted the Team Livestrong Challenge Philadelphia ride to raise money for



Gregg Heimer, left, chairs the Bike Advocacy Committee at Montgomery County Community College. Geology Professor Rob Kuhlman also serves on the committee.

cancer research. The school's Bike Advocacy Committee started last year and has five members working to promote biking on its two largely commuter campuses.

Bikes can be housed in bike racks or in parking garages on campus to keep them out of the elements. Racks are also installed on the campus

shuttle that runs between Blue Bell and Pottstown.

Rob Kuhlman, a geology professor at the Pottstown campus who bikes to work every day, suggested commuters who come from greater distances could bring their bikes on SEPTA trains and ride from the closest stop to their campus.

Montgomery County Community College works with the Greater Valley Forge Transportation Management Association to map out the safest bike routes. Resources are available on the college's website that show how students, faculty and staff can become more active with their bikes for commuting or

leisure activities.

Pottstown was a particular focus in Montgomery County Community College's bid for the biking award, the school said.

The college owns a building by Riverfront Park, along College Drive in the borough. That's a major trailhead to the Schuylkill River Trail, which

will eventually run 130 miles from Philadelphia to Pottsville. Currently 60 miles of that trail are complete.

Many students at the community college take advantage of the Bike Pottstown initiative. That allows any community member to borrow the yellow bikes stationed throughout the borough and use them for a few hours or the day.

"Thinking bigger than the college was very impressive to us," said Amelia Neptune, program manager of the Bicycle Friendly University program at the League of American Bicyclists. "We're so excited to see Montgomery County Community College striving. It's clear from their application they're not done yet. They're going to keep moving."

Kuhlman, the geology professor, has logged about 70,000 miles since he started biking to work in the 1970s. He started at the Blue Bell campus but moved to Pottstown almost 20 years ago. Kuhlman has helped organize weekend rides with students and staff.

"Here in Pottstown, we are in a small urban community," he said. "It's a delightful place to ride."

The award will be presented to the school in December. In addition to a plaque, the college will also get "Bike Friendly University" signs to hang around each campus.

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