

SPROCKIDS

CELEBRATES WORLDWIDE SUCCESS

by Erinne Willock

Sprockids is one of Canada's most-renowned youth-development programs, and founder Doug Detwiller has put 22 years of dedication toward its success and growth. Sprockids is now a worldwide cycling program that is dedicated to creating a community for youth to “engage in a lifelong healthy lifestyle while teaching them the skills, strategies and values to help them succeed in school and in life,” explains Detwiller. It has been successfully adopted by 19 countries.



Doug Detwiller

(above) **Sprockids XC/Freeride Camp for the Generations quickly become one of our most popular projects.**

In 1990, Sprockids was originally developed as a self-esteem/anger-management program. His reluctant Grade Seven class was challenging Detwiller, a public school teacher by profession. He had just been introduced to the sport of mountain biking himself and “was so energized by the camaraderie and positive energy” of the sport that he knew he could “use mountain biking as a way to engage my reluctant learners. From there, Sprockids has definitely taken on a life of its own and has taken me on a multitude

of incredible journeys.” It has evolved into a multi-faceted program engaging thousands of youth.

Detwiller then spent the following years with Sprockids, which consumed his life outside of teaching. One of his early challenges was “lack of time.” While teaching full-time, he would have the school secretary, Nancy, help him type and organize his notes into what became the first Sprockids manual. After-school hours were spent riding with children and developing new ideas.



Doug Detwiler

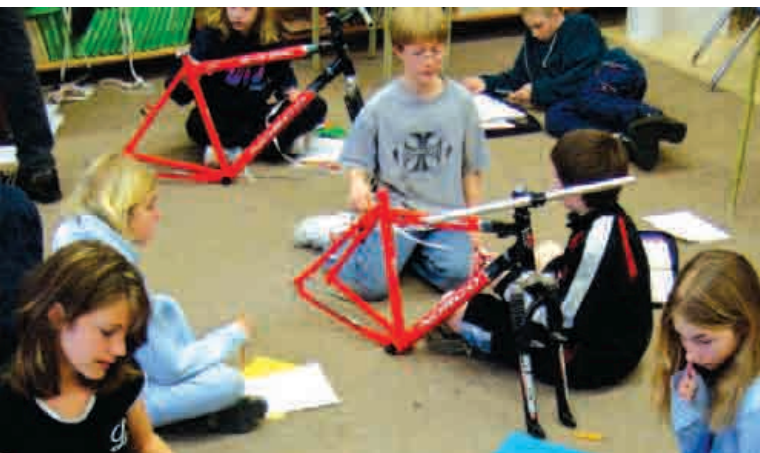
(above) Skills Clinic hosted at the Sprockids Mountain Bike Park in Gibson, B.C.

(right top to bottom) Lovin' Sprockids; Learning bike and life skills in Israel, Ramp riding takes courage.

Doug Detwiler

Sheena Fearndon

Doug Detwiler



Doug Detwiller

Doug Detwiller



(left to right)
Using bike frames to teach math concepts to Grade 6/7 class; Teaching young riders how to ride a Pump Track; Building confidence in a young Israeli rider.

As the program grew, it took Detwiller in many directions. In 1992, the Sprockids Mountain Bike Park was built in Gibson, B.C., which was the first officially recognized park of its kind in North America. He developed a youth trail-building and maintenance program, then in 1996, Detwiller formed the "Sprockids Program Development Society" with former Professional cyclists Alison Sydor, Leslie Tomlinson, Bruce Spicer and Sam Scorda. Then there was Trailfest 2000 and 2001, another Sprockids event that brought together more than 1,000 students to build trails as part of their school day. He worked with IMBA (International Mountain Bike Association) as its educational director, later with the Canadian Cycling Association

(now Cycling Canada Cyclisme) to develop the Sprockids instruction manual and then established Sprockids as the "National Introductory Cycling Program" for Canada from 2002-2006. Finally, in 2009, the latest edition of the original Sprockids manual was printed.

So how does Sprockids get adopted in a new country or community? "There are two ways an individual or organization can get Sprockids happening in their area. They can simply purchase the 'Instructional Package' or I make myself available to come to their location and conduct a 'Leaders Training Session.' Either way, I am always available to answer any questions by way of email or phone," explains Detwiller. The Sprockids website is a great place to review the material that will help you to decide whether your community could benefit from adopting the program.

Detwiller clarifies: "I see my role as a mentor to others wanting to get a program happening in their own area. Creating a powerful, pos-

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itive “cycling community” is what Sprockids is all about. Cycling does not have a nationally recognized community instruction-based program along the lines of soccer, baseball, tennis, etc. My goal was to create a program and resource where anyone from a parent to an ex-Pro racer could easily put together and run an entry-level program for kids. Sprockids would be that program. Sprockids can be successfully run in a number of scenarios, but my vision for it was to be a non-profit and volunteer-based community program.”

Detwiller commented: “Some of the best rewards are seeing where our ex-Sprockids are now in their lives. When I run into them, they all tell me how much the lessons they learned in Sprockids helped to shape their lives. Julien, an ex-Sprockid from '96-'97, recently sent Detwiller a spontaneous email confiding that “over the years, mountain biking has always been a constant in my life, and I sometimes stop and think about who and where I'd be without my introduction to cycling many years ago in your classroom — not only has cycling given me an outlet when I need to get away and spin away some troubles, it also helped foster a healthy love of the outdoors from an early age and has built many great friendships and taken me on many great adventures along the way.”

Another use of the Sprockids Program that Detwiller is very proud of is happening in Israel. “A few years back, I was in Israel training new Sprockids leaders. We traveled to a small town where Sprockids was being used as a unique method of bringing together young Palestinian and Israeli children. Through cycling, these young people were working and playing together building friendships and camaraderie before the bitter politics of their parents could cloud their chance for tolerance and understanding.”

What does the future look like for Sprockids? In June 2013, Detwiller will be retiring from teaching and is eager to be able to devote his time in taking Sprockids to the next level. Detwiller states, “I truly believe Sprockids answers the problem of today's obesity and inactivity among young people. Cycling is the answer and Sprockids is the program to deliver the solution.”

Sprockids has been used successfully with young people from ages 5-18, however recently Detwiller has found himself venturing into a whole new area. “I am now running Sprockids for older adults wanting to become active. Many of these new riders have worked all their lives and are about to enter retirement and want to get back into shape to enjoy it. It's very interesting that young kids and adults share many of the same concerns and apprehensions towards riding. Sprockids is easily adaptable to suit their needs.”

As we can see, Detwiller's passion lies with developing new material for the programs, training new leaders and riding his bike with children, therefore in the future he also hopes to team up with an organization of the same mindset that can help him with the business and administrative side of Sprockids.

For more information visit, www.sprockids.com.

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