



Spin

Professor cycles to work, stays fit

WVU IS A PARTICIPANT in the “Year of Active Transport” and is encouraging more bike commuting. For more info, including bike rack locations on and around campus, visit:

wecan.wvu.edu/biketowork

WEST VIRGINIA JUMPED eight places — from 50th to 42nd — in the League of American Bicyclists “Bicycle Friendly State” survey for 2009. Info: bikeleague.org/

Submitted to The Dominion Post

Only about two out of every thousand working West Virginians uses a bicycle to get to and from work, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Bill Reger-Nash, Ed.D., of the WVU School of Medicine, is one of them.

Reger-Nash, a professor in the Department of Community Medicine, lives near Stewartstown. His 14-mile route to work takes him north into Point Marion, Pa., before crossing back into West Virginia and following the rail-trail toward Morgantown. In the WVU Arboretum, he cycles uphill to the Evansdale Campus, then across the university to the Health Sciences Center.

He’s been a bicycle commuter since 1995. “I ride both directions about three or four times a week,” he says. “It’s an efficient way to get around; I get exercise, and I save money.”

Reger-Nash has been a fan of regular exercise since he was a college student in the early 1960s.

“I started jogging, and it made me feel better, made it easier to concentrate.”

His active lifestyle was one of the factors that led him to a career in health advocacy and research.

“I don’t like to ride after dark, so if I

have to be at work early or late, I’ll drive.” Even when he drives, the bike is always stashed in the backseat so that he can take a ride sometime during the day.

In good weather, his commute takes about an hour and 15 minutes each way. When the weather turns bad, he said, he might arrive home before his neighbors who travel by car.

“I have a set of studded snow tires for my bike,” he said recently, after a trip to work on a glorious summer day when snow was the furthest thing from his mind. “If it snows, it adds another 25 percent to my time — but I’m never stuck in a traffic jam.”

Most of his bike trips are on a 10-year-old mountain bike that he’s modified to adapt to his riding style. Despite the fact that he clocks 100 miles a week or more, his expenses are minimal. Tires last a year or two, and the sturdy frame of his bike looks like it’s ready for another decade on the road.

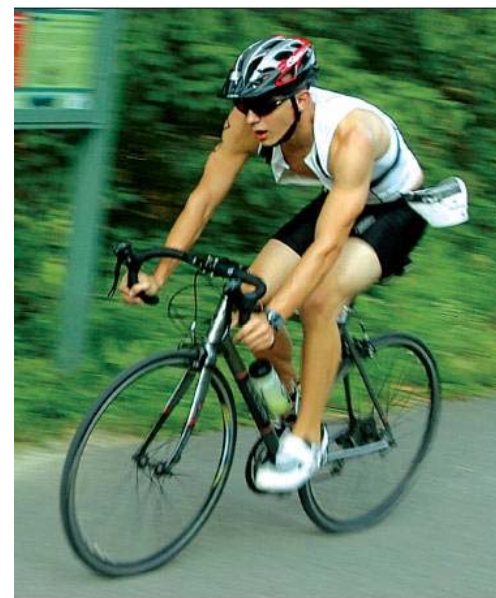
On warm days, he does arrive at work looking, as he puts it, “a bit disheveled.”

“I’m lucky enough to work in a building with showers. I’m in and out in 10 minutes, change clothes, and I’m ready to go.”

There are obstacles to bicycle commuting in West Virginia, he acknowledges. Roads can be narrow, and some drivers are not accustomed to sharing the highway with cyclists. “But the biggest danger to people on bikes is that riders sometimes don’t obey the rules of the road. We have to signal, stop at stop signs and work hard at visibility.”

Reger-Nash said biking is far safer than car travel, and he’s had only two minor injuries in years of long-distance cycling. He uses the rail-trail to stay away from traffic for most of his ride, wears a bright yellow-green vest and has flashing lights on his bike.

“All in all, it’s been a wonderful experience,” Reger-Nash said.



Bob Gay/The Dominion Post file photos

Dr. Bill Reger-Nash, Ed.D., of the WVU School of Medicine, commutes to the university on his bike. The trip is 14 miles, and he has chosen two wheels over four since 1995. On the days he must travel by car, he stashes his bicycle in the backseat.

Participants (above photos) from the 2008 Sprint, Splash ‘n Spin triathlon complete the biking portion of the race. This year, the athletes’ competition will benefit Habitat for Humanity.