

Dreaming of a bike pathway, leading tours in the meantime

By Asher Pavel

KENT — If he has his way, Sal Lilienthal, director of The Bicycle Tour Company in Kent, hopes one day there will be a 45-mile bicycle trail from the Massachusetts border to New Milford. It will be known as the Housatonic Covered Bridge Trail.

If Lilienthal's other wish comes true, that trail will be part of the Western New England Greenway, a bicycle trail from New York City to Montreal.

Lilienthal is a passionate man, passionate about his work and about cycling in general.

He started cycling at age 15. In college, instead of waiting on tables, he worked as a bicycle mechanic in a bike store. While still a student, he led teenage cycle tours in Denmark and the Netherlands.

He attended a bicycle mechanics clinic at the Olympic training center in Colorado Springs, Colo., and lived in Belgium for three years, traveling to bicycle races all over the globe, even in Japan and New Zealand,

and working as a mechanic.

He also served as a mechanic on many of Lance Armstrong's Tour de France races.

Now he's happy to reside quietly in the Northwest Corner with his business, The Bicycle Tour Company. Its website promises: "We do everything but pedal your bike."

The company runs bike tours and provides technical support for charities sponsoring cycling events including providing rental bicycles and providing on site repairs.

Lilienthal has led tours in 10 U.S. states, Canada, France and Spain. The firm operates about 100 different bicycle tours annually. Tours range in size from small family groups up to 90 people. When asked the age range of his clients, Lilienthal said, "From infants in their parents' arms to 80-year-olds."

Some of the types of events Lilienthal has operated include: birthday parties; wedding weekends; school orientation programs, reunions and alumni activities; training camps for

racers and tri-athletes; corporate programs including conferences, recruiting and team building; and park and recreation groups.

"I'm an avid rider, but I don't ride with the groups we take out. I usually drive one of the vans."

However, there is no shortage of dedicated riders in Litchfield County, though, to lead the tours.

When asked what brands of bicycles he sells, Lilienthal responded, "Cannondale and G.T. These companies are owned by the Cycling Sports Group in Bethel, Conn." Lilienthal said he prefers dealing with local companies whenever possible.

The company rents more bicycles than it sells.

Asked about the seasonality of his business, Lilienthal said, "In the winter I am the marketing director of my company. In the summer I function as operations director."

For information about the Bicycle Tour Company, call 860-927-1742 or visit the website at www.bicycletours.com.



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