



The Upstate Class IX group, DLI-ted to Bike

Phase 2

As a result of the vision of DLI Upstate Class IX Group, DLI-ted to Bike, the Sterling Spinners were created as a bike club for middle school kids in the Sterling community. Partnering with St. Frances Hospital and Sterling Recreation Center, ten kids were recruited to form the initial members. The group talked about nutrition and the importance of active lifestyles, but more importantly, they donned their bike helmets and hit the trail with their new Trek 1.0 bikes from the Great Escape. Regular outings up the Swamp Rabbit Trail to Travelers Rest or to a favorite park gave the kids a sense of independence and confidence that they could peddle farther than they ever thought they possible. Making it to the top of a very steep hill when it was too hot and they were too tired gave them a glimpse of their own inner resolve that will translate to other challenges. The plan was for the kids to take the bikes home at the end of the summer, but kids and adults had bonded and weren't about to let the experience end. The Sterling Spinners continued to ride through the fall, attending a Furman football game on their bikes, and even enjoyed 4-wheeled trips to Clemson University and to Youth-in-Government in Columbia. A December graduation event celebrated the accomplishments of the group and allowed the kids to take their bikes home for the first time, but the Sterling Spinners were far from complete. A new class of kids was welcomed into the group in March of 2011, and with the bike club now up to 16, a new season of riding and exploring was begun.

Parents have commented about the positive impact that the bike club has had on their kids. Malachi, who was expelled from middle school, is now on the A/B honor roll, and his mom attributes his progress to the role of the bike club in his life. "The difference is dramatic," she says. "When he comes home, we hear every single word you say, every place you go—he just loves it!" Another mom says that belonging to the bike club is very important for these kids. "It is the first priority of extra-curricular activities for my child." It is impossible to walk across the campus of the Sterling Recreation Center without a younger child asking if they can be in the bike club.

To that end, it is the vision of the stakeholders of the Sterling Spinners to continue to expand the bike club in the Sterling community. Funding is needed to finance the purchase of bikes, and to have strategic thinking about the growth and development of the Sterling Spinners. It is also a dream of those involved to replicate the bike club in other under-served communities. This project has laid a solid foundation on which a subsequent Capstone Project can build and expand the vision of the power of cycling in under-served communities. It has the potential to be no less than transformational.