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G&O Family Cyclery is on the Mend

By Cynthia Mullis, Cascade Member & Guest Contributor

Early in the morning on March 9, a natural gas explosion rocked the Greenwood neighborhood of Seattle, leveling three businesses and damaging many others. G&O Family Cyclery, located adjacent to the explosion site on Greenwood Avenue between North 84th and 85th streets, suffered major damage and has been forced to relocate and rebuild.

Co-owned by Davey Oil and Tyler Gillies, G&O Family Cyclery is at the center of Seattle's family and cargo biking movement. The bike shop is a welcoming place to purchase and service cargo, folding, conventional, and electric bikes.

According to Davey, G&O Family Cyclery is a specialty bike shop that encourages its customers to make transportation choices that support a community-wide paradigm shift. As a result, these customers depend on their bicycles everyday.

"We don't want to have one bad day strand all those people...but we did have a bad day and now we're out of commission," he said.

Both Davey and Tyler are fierce bike advocates who are integral to the family bike movement. Last year, Cascade awarded Davey Oil with the Doug Walker Award at the Bike Everywhere Breakfast for his work. As parents and riders themselves, Davey and Tyler exemplify how biking can work for all ages and abilities. By supporting bikes for families with kids and others who want to make biking a foundation of their transportation lifestyle, they help lower the barrier to biking in Seattle.

"We've worked hard on building this shop. Having it just explode is heartbreaking," said Davey. But more significantly, it's humbling, because we couldn't have stopped it. It just happened."

Immediately after the explosion, Davey said his alarm company called to tell him that all of his alarms were going off. He rushed to the shop expecting to deal with a burglary in progress. Instead he arrived to see more fire trucks than he could process and wreckage everywhere.

"From across the street it's easy to assume that our shop made it out ok," said Davey. "It was very hard to get any sense of how bad the damage was for several days." When they were finally allowed in, they saw that the building was severely damaged and the inside of the shop was a mess.

"Everything that was displayed on the walls was mixed in with rubble and was destroyed. All of our electronics were damaged or destroyed. Our bikes, our inventory, our fixtures, the place that we had built from scratch, was covered in debris, dust and broken glass. We had just started using a space around the corner next door to Gorditos," said Davey. "That was a blessing because all of our customer's bikes were out of the main space and at least a couple hundred feet from the explosion. It

seems like they all made it out fine along with our back-stock inventory. That stuff got dusty but is cleaning up ok.”

Two months later, Davey and Tyler are still assessing the condition of the inventory that wasn't destroyed, including their custom-built demo and rental bikes. “We hope they're just a little scuffed and acceptable for a discounted fire sale.”

The community is rallying around the shop with fundraising efforts. Davey said, “We have insurance but the situation is complex. The realities of our insurance are such that we won't be getting support from that channel for a long time. What is needed immediately is a cash lifeline to get back on our feet as soon as possible.”

Cascade is hosting a fundraiser at Flying Bike Cooperative Brewery (8570 Greenwood Ave N, in Seattle) on Thursday, May 5th from 5 to 9 p.m. to benefit G&O Family Cyclery. A dollar from every pint sold will support G&O.

G&O is committed to serving their customers and keeping their staff employed. In mid-April they reopened in a temporary location at 8554-½ Greenwood Avenue, just one block north of its blown out location. “I'm very excited to see customers again although we'll be better equipped to do repairs than new sales support since the temporary space is smaller,” said Davey.

Davey Oil and Tyler Gillies are working hard to find a permanent location in Greenwood. “The neighborhood has been amazing and we don't want to lose that,” said Davey. “We saw people willing to support our bike shop as a resource to our community and as a hub in a community-building network.”

Along with continued sales and service for the cargo bike community, goals for the new shop include creating a space that supports that social infrastructure, in addition to facilitating meetings and education, both casual and formal.

“We want the new shop to be a place that reflects the love and support that we've felt since this happened. We never want to take that for granted,” says Davey, “It's a very touching thing for Flying Bike and Cascade to give over this spotlight to us. We really appreciate it and can't wait to party with everyone at the fundraiser.”

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Cascade and Flying Bike co-op to partner on benefit event

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G&O Crew from left to right: Donald Villarreal, Tyler Gillies, Davey Oil, Karl Chapman. Photo by Cynthia Mullis.

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