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City of Duluth - Parks and Recreation

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SUBJECT: Duluth Parks and Recreation to launch new Youth on Trails mountain bike program

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Duluth Parks and Recreation to launch new Youth on Trails mountain bike program

[DULUTH, MN] Duluth Parks and Recreation is announcing the launch of Youth on Trails, a new youth mountain biking program. The program, which is funded by a grant from the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission, allows for increased access to Legacy-designated park and trail assets including the Duluth Traverse, Waabizheshikana: The Marten Trail, Spirit Mountain, and Hartley Park, and is designed to reduce barriers associated with trail-based activities.

The City of Duluth's Parks and Recreation Division was awarded the three-year grant in 2022, and has since built up a fleet of mountain bikes, adaptive bikes, and safety gear for use by program participants. Participants aged 6 to 16 years of age will be able to utilize the bikes through Learn to Ride events and series. Instruction will accommodate all skill levels, with a particular focus on increasing the comfort and proficiency levels of the participants while instilling a sense of good trail stewardship.

"We know there are youth in our community who do not have access to mountain biking due to barriers like cost, transportation, and mentors to guide them. This grant is designed to reduce and eliminate barriers for these youth, give them a fun and safe learning environment, and then access these regionally-significant Legacy-designated trails. It's more than physical fitness and fun—it's building life-long connections to the outdoors, to friends, and to the trail system," said Alicia Watts, Assistant Manager of Duluth Parks and Recreation. "Learn to Ride events will help kids gain confidence in accessing these spaces and learning new riding skills that they can use throughout their lifetime. We are so grateful for the financial support of the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission and the strong community partnerships that have helped us establish this uniquely Duluth program."

The Greater Minnesota Parks and Trails Commission awarded Duluth Parks and Recreation a total of \$167,783 in 2022 to be used over three years, with programming kicking off in 2023.

Amongst the first phases of the program development was instructor recruitment and training. Earlier this month, Parks and Recreation program staff completed their Level 1 Bike Instructor Certification Program (BICP Level 1) and Adaptive Mountain Bike Instructor Certification Program (AMTB BICP Level 1). A team of six certified Mountain Bike Instructors and six adaptive-certified Mountain Bike Instructors will deliver these programs through Duluth Parks and Recreation in 2023.

Youth on Trails programming will launch in May 2023. It will include youth education and adaptive bike lessons, as well as registration-based and public-facing events like the upcoming Learn to Ride event on June 15 at Memorial Park.

More information about Youth on Trails, can be found at: duluthmn.gov/parks.

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