

Perseverance, Strength, Resolve

Meet Noelle

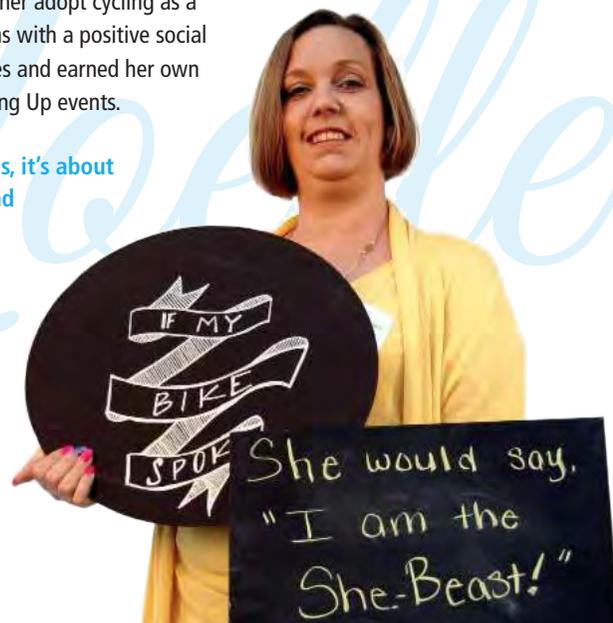
Noelle first participated in Gearing Up as part of a research study on the cardiovascular health of female inmates at the Riverside Correctional Facility. As a member of the non-intervention control group, she initially was not able to participate in the indoor cycling program. Immediately upon completing the study Noelle requested to enroll in the cycling class. Once enrolled she had perfect attendance. Cycling class was a safe haven that helped her cope with the crippling effects of anxiety and depression while incarcerated. Noelle reflects on the positive peer support she experienced...



"We supported each other in a way you would not expect in a jail setting. Many people in jail have a street mentality. It's all about what clique you are in, who likes who, and who has commissary. Not in cycling class though. Once we entered the gym for class it was almost like we were not in jail - even if it was only for an hour. Instead of fighting over things that really do not matter, we were cheering one another on. The level of support I received was unbelievable."

Upon her release, Noelle intentionally sought outpatient drug treatment at Interim House so as to continue riding with Gearing Up. Pedaling outdoors with the group was challenging in a different way than cycling classes in jail, and she was determined not to be left behind. She remembers that the feeling of inclusion and support provided by Gearing Up helped her adopt cycling as a regular part of her life and create connections with a positive social community. Noelle quickly amassed 100 miles and earned her own bicycle. She continues to participate in Gearing Up events.

"Gearing Up is not just about riding bikes, it's about building self-esteem, new friendships, and achieving goals. If it weren't for the women of Gearing Up I don't know where I'd be today."



"Gearing Up made it all positive, it made the day worthwhile."



Gearing Up's completed FY2014 with a net of \$9,894.



**A full-time development position was added in 2014.*

A SINCERE THANK YOU TO THE MANY GENEROUS INDIVIDUALS, CORPORATIONS, AND FOUNDATIONS THAT SUPPORTED GEARING UP IN 2014.

Corporate Partners



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COMMUNITY REPORT 2014

Connections.



In 2014, Gearing Up increased the scope and depth of programs as we took on exciting challenges, forging new connections with social service providers, volunteers, community members, and, most importantly, the women we serve.

These connections enabled Gearing Up to:

- Establish Shifting Gears, a program to support graduates on the road to self-sufficiency
- Launch a new program at the Kirkbride Center
- Achieve record enrollment at Riverside Correctional Facility, serving nearly 70 women
- Institute a structured volunteer program, training over 75 volunteers

2014 Service Partners

CHANCES

An outpatient recovery program for women (and children), Public Health Management Corporate affiliate

INTERIM HOUSE, INC.

A residential recovery home for women, Public Health Management Corporation affiliate

KIRKBRIDE CENTER

A non-hospital, medically monitored residential rehabilitation program

WASHINGTON HOUSE

A halfway home and Department of Corrections facility, managed by Gaudenzia



Community-based Programs

Nearly half of the women who enroll in Gearing Up have been **victims of domestic violence** and nearly all have a **history of substance abuse**. Over **60%** of women in Gearing Up have been **incarcerated**, often multiple times. Women with histories of abuse, addiction, and incarceration face a myriad of physical, emotional, and social barriers. Many women are left vulnerable and experience a low quality of life, including lack of physical activity. In fact, 60% of women enrolling in Gearing Up report that they have not exercised in months. Through Gearing Up, women learn to adopt cycling as a lifestyle to improve physical health, develop feelings of belonging, and create community connections that lead to self-sufficient, crime-free, and sober lives.



"I love to ride. It's great exercise and it helps my mood. It's a tool I use to fight mental health issues."



In 2014, Gearing Up served 133 women in community-based programs. **Thirty-two women graduated** from Gearing Up by making cycling a priority, accumulating 100 miles, and earning their own bicycles. A new program called Shifting Gears creates connections that allow for graduates to find jobs, build financial literacy, continue to receive mental health treatment, and secure long term housing. During the Shifting Gears inaugural pilot, **eleven women enrolled, one woman found housing, and eight women have already secured employment**; five of the eight employed secured positions with a Gearing Up employment partner.

"I do have positive relationships in my life because of riding a bike."

Volunteer Engagement

In 2014, Gearing Up formalized a volunteer training program, training 77 volunteers. Volunteers provide women with an opportunity to engage in positive social exchanges. As volunteers pedal alongside women, they give advice, emotional support, encouragement, and friendship through the simple act of lending an ear or sharing in conversation. Volunteer engagement is a critical component of the long-term success of women who enroll in Gearing Up. In fact, women who see volunteers early and often are more likely to keep riding with us. **Women who graduate, earning a bicycle, have seen an average of 2.5 volunteers in the first two weeks of riding with Gearing Up, whereas women who see fewer volunteers in the same timeframe are less likely to adhere to bicycle riding.**



What are the 2014 Gearing Up Graduates up to now?

Gearing Up attempted to contact all of our 32 graduates; we were able to connect with 17 women. Of the 17 we spoke with:

- **47%** report consistently riding their bikes
- **88%** have history of incarceration; 0% have returned to prison
- **35%** (3) women reported relapsing; two returned for drug and alcohol treatment
- **41%** are working
- **60%** have continued with therapy/one-on-one sessions (2 were not receiving treatment upon graduation)

"Earning my bike makes me have an optimistic outlook on life and it makes me feel really good."



Indoor Cycling Program at Riverside Correctional Facility

While women are in prison maintaining mental and physical health can be difficult. Many women develop or experience an increase in depression, anxiety, and stress during incarceration. **Thirty percent** of women enrolled in Gearing Up at Riverside Correctional Facility (RCF) are **diagnosed as mentally ill**, and **26% report other health problems**. Women **gain an average of 30 pounds** before they become involved in the indoor cycling class, although once enrolled, women with consistent attendance are able to maintain their body weight. Gearing Up recognizes the challenges faced by women at RCF and facilitates the indoor cycling classes to help minimize the negative effects of time spent in prison. In the past year, enrollment in Gearing Up at RCF has **nearly doubled to 68 and 19 women have earned a certificate of completion** (attended 18 classes). Cycling classes include 50 minutes of physical activity and a 10 minute discussion of a health topic such as nutrition, weight management, physical activity, smoking cessation, and stress management.



On the Horizon in 2015 Gearing Up will...

- **Launch** a new partnership with a women's re-entry home, implementing another community-based cycling program.
- **Expand** the Kirkbride Center program so that more women can ride with Gearing Up three times per week.
- **Implement** strategies such as goal-setting and individualized recognition of women's progress through the program in an effort to increase adherence, improving the graduation rate from 24% in 2014 to 35% in 2015.
- **Train** volunteers to work one-on-one with women who have earned their bicycle and are transitioning into their next step of re-entry and/or recovery.
- **Establish** more partnerships with social service programs and potential employers as ongoing resources for graduates.

