Supporting Cycling in SLO County- *Racks With Plaques*

Improving and redesigning simple, everyday products can be a challenging endeavor; how do you build a better mousetrap? For Cal Poly Engineering Instructor Rod Hoadley, the answer was easy when it came to designing a better bike rack for cyclists, and a new donor program called *Racks With Plaques* that delivers bicycle racks to communities free of charge.

Rod's brainstorm began in 2001 when the SLO County Air Pollution Control District offered a grant to Cal Poly's Bicycle Advisory Committee to purchase new bike racks for the campus. The goal was to encourage students to commute to class by bicycle thereby reducing traffic congestion and air pollution.

As a member of the advisory committee, Rod researched proposed bike racks, and immediately recognized the need for more efficient racks. Along with a group of creative engineering students, Rod convinced the committee he and his group could not only design and construct a better bike rack, but they could do it for less money.

"It took some persuading," said Rod, "but we got the grant and two years later delivered on our promise; we designed and manufactured a better bike rack!" Forty bike racks were manufactured to accommodate 300 bikes, and are now in use on the Cal Poly campus.

Born and raised in San Luis Obispo, Rod has always had a passion for cycling. He has competed in triathlons and pedaled thousands of miles across the United States and Europe. He and his wife Bonnie commute to work by bicycle every day, and along with their two children, have made cycling a family activity. All four were recently featured in a photo publicizing *Pedaling the Past*, a recent SLO Bicycle Club bicycling tour of historic San Luis Obispo.

"I wanted to build a bike rack that was easy to use and secure," says Rod. "My goal has always been to encourage bicycling as a valid form of alternative transportation. If you think about it, there are so many benefits: it reduces automobile exhaust, traffic and parking congestion, and promotes a healthy lifestyle. Everyone should try it!"

Rod's award-winning racks, manufactured in San Luis Obispo, incorporate a unique combination of innovations: a vertical stagger that eliminates frustrating handlebar tangle; security locking bars for each bike; and a design that takes less space and parks bikes more efficiently. The innovative design did not go unnoticed by the City of San Luis Obispo. At a recent dedication, Mayor Dave Romero unveiled the new bike racks announcing the *Racks With Plaques* program. Tax-deductible donations are accepted from both individuals and businesses and range from $650 to $1500, depending on the rack's size and its location. In recognition of donor support, a permanent, cast bronze dedication plaque with the donor's personal message is mounted on each rack. Councilman Allen Settle and local radio personality Bill Benica both donated bike racks at the dedication.

San Luis Obispo is the first city in the country to officially adopt this new, innovative bike rack donation program. For more information on the *Racks With Plaques* program, contact SLO City Transportation Planner Peggy Mandeville, (805) 781-7590 or e-mail pmandevi@slocity.org.