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Airdrie Bikes Help Africans

AIRDRIE, ALBERTA – More than five dozen bicycles from Airdrie are making a big difference in the lives of people in Africa, thanks to the creative thinking of a City of Airdrie department.

Last year, Environmental Services took stock of the many unclaimed recovered bicycles housed at the City of Airdrie Recycling Depot. In the past, these used, unwanted bikes were disassembled and shipped to salvage companies for recycling.

“I remembered seeing an ad once about bikes for Africa,” recalls Jason Thomlison, City of Airdrie Environmental Services Officer. “So I started doing some research and making phone calls. Eventually we contacted Bicycles for Humanity and the rest is history.”

Environmental Services loaded up 65 bikes and took them to the organization in Calgary. Bicycles for Humanity welcomed the shipment and, together with a donation from a church in Calgary, shipped 130 bikes to Malawi, Africa in 2010.

“The bikes are finding a second life helping provide much needed mobility,” says Thian Hundert with the Calgary chapter of Bicycles for Humanity (www.bicycles-for-humanity.org). “All items have been well-received and are improving the lives of many.”

The bikes collected by the City of Airdrie come from a variety of sources. Many are abandoned bikes found by Municipal Enforcement, Parks and the RCMP. Others are brought in by residents for recycling. Recovered bikes that are unclaimed after 30 days are made available for sale to the public at a nominal cost at the Recycle Depot. Even then, many are leftover at year end.

The City of Airdrie plans to continue the partnership with Bicycles for Humanity and has already collected another 25 bikes for the organization.

“I’m very proud of the team for taking the initiative to find a good use for these bikes,” says Susan Grimm, Environmental Services Team Leader, City of Airdrie. “Not only is it a great example of reusing and recycling, but of how out-of-the-box thinking can help people in need.”

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Photos attached, courtesy of Bicycles for Humanity, Calgary Chapter