

# Bicycle center celebrates new space

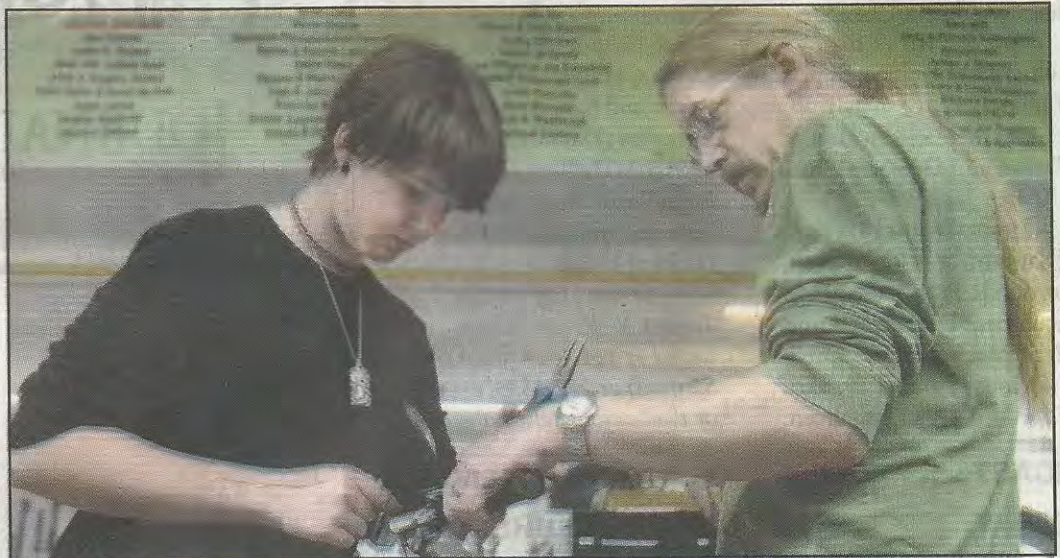
By **DINA MENDROS**

Staff Writer

**BIDDEFORD** — On a recent afternoon, the newly renovated Granite Street building – now home to the Community Bicycle Center – was humming.

Executive Director Andy Greif had the enthusiasm of a child on Christmas morning as he led a tour of the new facility. On the first floor in the spacious new bike shop, staff and volunteers were helping several children put together and repair bicycles. In one section, staff member Bronwyn Potthoff was working on a computer in the large office she shares with staff member Andrew Burnell. In another area, volunteer Amanda Johnson of Biddeford was helping out by removing usable parts from donated bikes. Also on the first floor is space for a welding lab where youth will be taught the skill and work on projects.

Upstairs is Greif's large office, with a large conference table for meetings that can



also be used by other groups who need a space to meet. Greif shares his office with some of the volunteers who need a desk and/or computer for their tasks.

Also upstairs is a separate section that has rows upon rows of bicycles. Several hundred bicycles that formerly were stored offsite are now housed in the new facility. Youth and others who participate in the CBC use many of

the bikes; others will be sold at a Portland store, which sells used bikes and other equipment and brings in some money for the nonprofit organization.

The after-school program, which uses bicycles to teach skills and empower youth, moved into its new home about one month ago.

After a week or so of unpacking, the center opened for business as usual on Sept.

2, the first day of the new school year. An open house, where members of the community could take a look, took place Saturday.

All agree they like the new site of the CBC. "More space" was the common quote from youth and adults alike as a major reason the new building was a big improvement over the former center, which was formerly located in a cramped,

**See CBC New Home**

PAGE A3

## CBC New Home

FROM PAGE A1

city-owned building on Hill Street, next to St. Louis Field.

At 4,200 square feet, the Granite Street building is nearly four times the size of the organization's former home.

"The new space is awesome," said Katerina Parker, a fifth-grade student at Biddford Intermediate School, who has been attending the CBC for three years. "There's a lot more room for more kids at once."

Jamie Bedders, who like Katerina is a BIS fifth-grader who has been attending the CBC for three years, also thinks the new building is "awesome."

The old space, she said, "was, like, crowded. Here, it's not crowded like it was there."

There's also more exterior space. The facility sits on a more than six-acre parcel and the backyard exits into Clifford Park, which is ideal for CBC members who enjoy mountain biking.

Greif said he's thrilled to be in the new space, which was paid for through many donations. More than \$475,000 was raised through major grants from the Biddford Savings Bank, Elmira B. Sewell Foundation, Tom's of Maine, the Quimby Family Foundation, the Larch Foundation, Samuel L. Cohen Foundation, the Maine Community Foundation, The Betterment Fund, Saco &



JEFF LUGASSE/JOURNAL TRIBUNE

Matt Perkins, right, helps Greg Pedro with a bicycle repair project at the Community Bicycle Center in Biddford on Tuesday.

Biddford Savings Institution, anonymous foundation grants, and contributions from individuals and businesses.

The new center has led to renewed excitement for the organization and its programs.

"There's a significant increase in the number of kids," said staff member Andrew Bunnell.

The center used to average about 10 children each day after school, he said. Now, the average is up to 15.

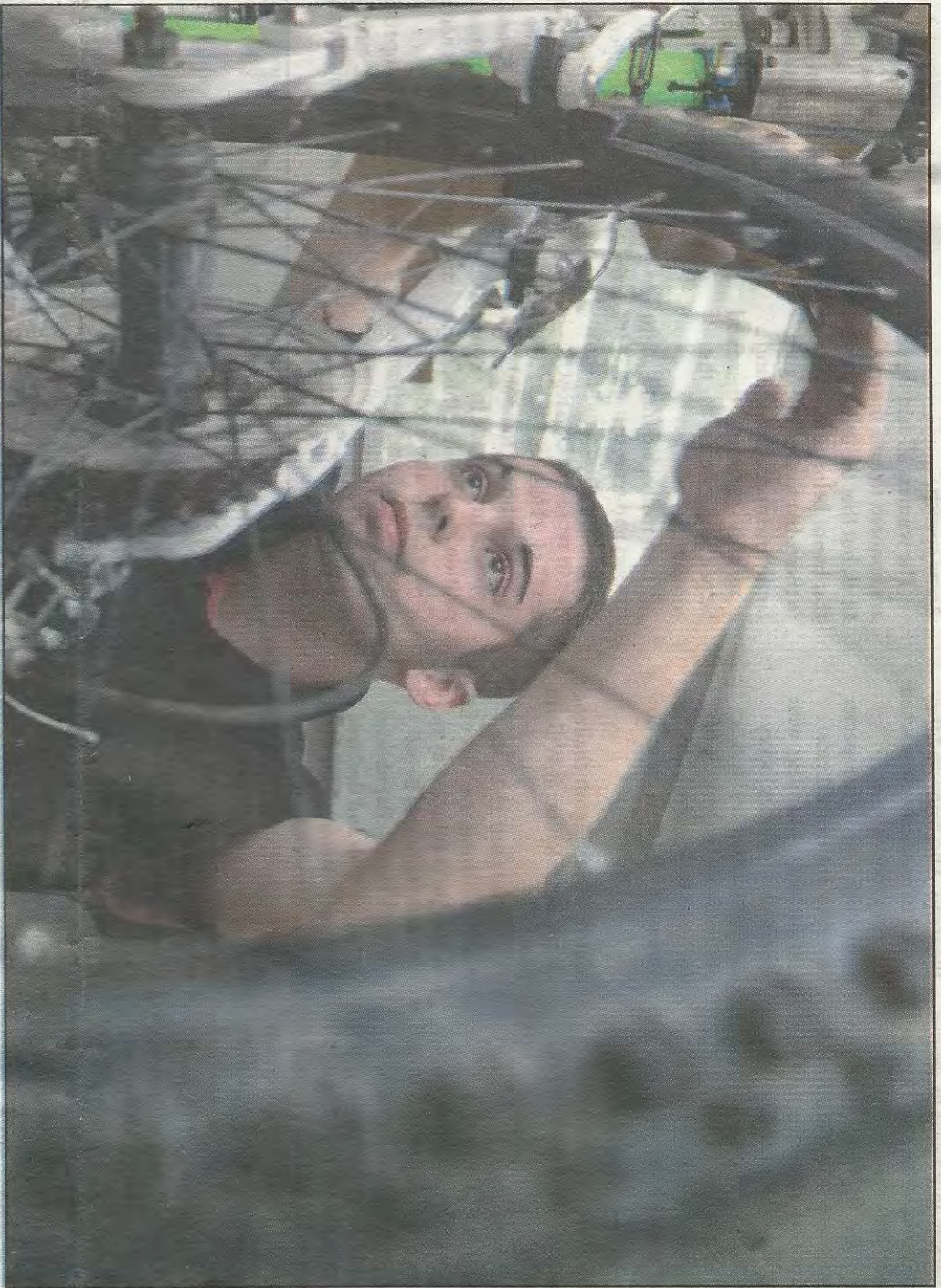
Just a week or two after the move, said Bunnell, 10 new children started coming. And with the location now more central to the at-risk youth who are the target demographic for the center, he expects more to sign up.

The advantage of the new center and having so much more space, said Greif, "is that it helps us do our work with the kids more effectively."

"We're not in each other's personal space," he said, "there's room to move around."

Having more space makes it easier to work on bicycles, said Greif. However, he said, the most important thing the CBC works to achieve is to create relationships and "interconnections between the kids, with each other and with adults."

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Above: Kyle Ricker tends to his bike at the Community Bicycle Center in Biddeford on Tuesday. Below: Breanna Schrader and her father Brian work on a bicycle Tuesday at the center's new Granite Street location.

JEFF LAKASSE/Journal Tribune