

Connecting City Kids to Nature—by Bike

Adapted from the May 21, 2015 CNN article at

<http://www.cnn.com/2015/03/26/us/cnnheroes-price/index.html>

Story highlights

- For three decades, Marilyn Price has helped at-risk kids use bikes to experience nature.
- Her nonprofit, *Trips for Kids*, has 90 chapters worldwide, serving more than 15,000 children a year.



CNN Hero Marilyn Price helps at-risk youth experience nature through biking.

SAN RAFAEL, California: At 74 years old, Marilyn Price still remembers the first time she rode a bike. "My father released his hands from the seat of my bike, and there I was...on my own," she said. Years later, Price realized the power of biking to change lives.

During a 1982 mountain biking trip in northern California, Price reached the peak of the trail, where she could see all of San Francisco. Looking out at the city, she thought of the children she met while volunteering at a soup kitchen there. And then it hit her: She wanted to give them the same experience. "There's nothing like biking up a mountain and looking behind you to see all you've accomplished," she said.

Price has since helped more than 25,000 at-risk youth from the San Francisco Bay Area get off urban streets and into nature through her nonprofit, *Trips for Kids*. In addition to mountain bike excursions, the group provides bike

mechanic training and the chance for young people to earn credit toward their own bikes. Today, *Trips for Kids* has expanded to 90 chapters around the world, serving more than 15,000 children each year.

CNN's Allie Torgan spoke with Price about the impact of her efforts. Below is an edited version of their conversation.

CNN: For many of the young people in your program, this is their first time on a mountain bike. How do they react?

Marilyn Price: Many of them have never really left the city. To them, life is automobiles and buildings. Everything is concrete. But you bring them where there are no buildings, no cars, and it's like, "Wow! I didn't know that this exists." I think we're planting a seed that there are alternatives to getting into trouble. They can get on a bike and go to a place that is very much *unlike* where they live, and they can do something positive. It's giving them the notion that there is something else.

CNN: And their experience goes beyond bike trips. What else do you offer?

Price: Another thing we provide is our Earn-a-Bike program, where kids in the community come after school. They learn bike mechanics, and while they're participating, they are earning credit. They can use this credit to buy bikes or bike parts. They're buying bikes for themselves, for their parents or siblings. I just love the idea of having them work toward a goal. They're learning **hands-on skills** as well as **soft skills**, like being dependable and hardworking, that will help them in the future.



The third program is our bike **thrift shop**, where anyone in the community can come shop for a discounted bike. We call it *Trips for Kids* Re-Cyclery. All of the bikes and bike **gear** are donated. It provides 60% of what we need to run our programs. And it is 100% an environmental program. We **adhere to** the three 'Rs' very seriously: reduce, reuse and then recycle!

CNN: Trips For Kids has grown well beyond San Francisco. Why do you think this model works so well?

Price: It's easy to use the bike to introduce kids to the environment because the bike is universally loved by children. The bike allows us to introduce them to a healthy lifestyle, **rigorous** exercise and good work habits, too. It's a tool that can teach life lessons. Right now there are 90 chapters, **literally** around the world, that are repeating our experiences. They all do bike rides and then some of them, as they get more developed like we did, also start their own Earn-a-Bike programs or their own bike thrift shops to support themselves.

CNN: Did you ever imagine your simple idea would have such an impact?

Price: I wear my *Trips for Kids* T-shirt wherever I go. I went into the bank one day here in Marin County, and there was a young girl who was the **bank teller**. She looked at my T-shirt, and she said, "Wow -- you're with *Trips for Kids*? That was one of the best experiences I've ever had. I will never forget it."

I don't know how many stories there are like that, but knowing that our organization has made a positive impact on even one young life is **touching**. I just love every minute of it. Seeing the results of what we have been accomplishing makes me more and more **determined** to **stick with it**. Since I started *Trips for Kids*, I've never **had second thoughts** about doing this forever.

Check out the *Trips for Kids* website at www.tripsforkids.org for more information.