

http://www.jackcentral.org/culture/lights-for-yellow-bikes-pilots-crowdfunding-campaign/article_1f41acb0-d2ac-11e4-90f9-fbd5fb642e2a.html

Lights For Yellow Bikes pilots crowdfunding campaign

Megan Troutman Mar 25, 2015

In Flagstaff, smoking marijuana is illegal, drinking alcohol underage is illegal and so is riding a bicycle without a light at night. While the latter is not as well known, it is required that riders be equipped with bright head- and taillights while riding at night.

With this law in mind, the Yellow Bike Program — a service which allow students to rent yellow cruiser bikes to ride on and off campus — becomes unsafe at night. For a solution to this problem, NAU is piloting its first crowdfunding campaign: Lights for Yellow Bikes. NAU hopes to raise enough money to buy bicycle lights for all 150 yellow bikes on campus. Crowdfunding collects Internet donations for projects through small contributions from large populations.

Associate director of Campus Services and Activities (CSA), Matthew Tantau, is excited to see change in the Yellow Bike Program. Tantau is the campus coordinator for the yellow bike program and oversees bike maintenance as well as the overall program.

“Safety of course is the number one thing,” Tantau said. “Here in Flagstaff, it’s a Dark Sky City so it’s very difficult to see bikes and bicyclists at night if they do not have lights on.”

In order to improve biker safety, the NAU Foundation brought up the crowdfunding campaign idea, which was immediately approved by each program involved, such as the Green Fund, Office of Sustainability out of Facility Services, CSA, Annual Giving and NAU Marketing.

“The NAU Foundation really took a lead on this, so we’re thankful for that,” Tantau said. “Now it’s in the hands of people that want to make an impact on NAU campus and make an impact on the Yellow Bike Program.”

From now until Earth Day, April 22, Lights for Yellow Bikes will be collecting donations at <http://nau.edu/go/yellow-bikes/lights-for-yellow-bikes/> in hopes of reaching its \$5,850 goal. One set of clip-on lights, a front white light and back red light, costs \$39.

“A lot of students rely on those yellow bikes,” said manager of the Office of Sustainability Ellen Vaughan. “I was definitely interested in making the bikes as user friendly and as safe as possible to get more people into biking and general transportation.”

As a manager of one of the active groups in this campaign, Vaughan highly supports the fundraiser toward sustainable transportation across campus.

“Anyone who cares about the culture of sustainability here at NAU will hopefully think that this is one great option to make a contribution towards Earth Day and the Yellow Bike Program,” Vaughan said.

While Lights for Yellow Bikes promotes safety among students and the community, it also supports environmental sustainability, making bikes more appealing than other modes of transportation that are harmful to the environment.

“It’s a nice partnership,” Vaughan said. “We’ve never really done anything to try to fundraise for sustainability and haven’t worked with development yet so just kind of building that relationship is great.”

Director of Annual Giving Nathaniel Cairney said that the popularity of the Yellow Bike Program increases the need for the initiative.

“From my perspective, it’s great because they are widely used,” Cairney said. “It’s a clear need that can be filled through philanthropy, and I don’t have hard numbers on how much safer it would make everybody, but it definitely doesn’t hurt.”

Cairney’s role in the project is to help coordinate the different groups involved with the campaign. He sees it as a group effort with all six groups working together to create a sustainable and safe future.

“I’m mostly excited to see what happens,” Cairney said. “It’s the first time the university’s done crowdfunding, so it’s sort of hard to tell what will or won’t happen. I’m just very curious to see how the message spreads or if it spreads and what the momentum curve will look like.”

With most fundraisers, contributors have to wait to see their money be put to use. With crowdfunding, the money can go directly toward the cause in a short amount of time.

“Instead of somebody donating to something — which is kind of broad and you don’t see something tangible that happens — people are able to donate directly to the Yellow Bike Program,” Tantau said. “They’re going to get to see things happen immediately with their money. We’re talking maybe a one-week turnaround time from their donation to being able to affect the program, which is unique about the crowdfunding campaign.”

Even if the donation goal is not met, Lights for Yellow Bikes will be purchasing lights for as many bikes as possible.

“Students will look at the Yellow Bike Program not just as commuting around town, but maybe as an option for more aspects of their lives,” Vaughan said. “Going out at night they’ll feel safe and be safe. Safety is probably the biggest benefit when it comes to the Lights for Yellow Bikes campaign.”