

Ockerman Middle School STEM Bicycle Club: Cycling into Service

Service: [noun] *The action of helping or doing work for someone*
 [verb] *to perform routine maintenance or repair work on a vehicle or machine*

Students at Ockerman Middle School experience a STEM Bicycle Club that uses both definitions of service, when typically, the STEM Bicycle Club is thought of only as the second.

Every student at Ockerman is required to attend a “club” on Friday mornings for 30 minutes. Since the 2014-2015 school year, STEM Bicycle Club has been an at school, after-school “club” option for students.

The club is led by Mr. Franzoi with help from other Ockerman teachers and mentors from the local bike nonprofit, Riding Forward. For the past three school years, the STEM Bicycle Club has grown and evolved into what students lovingly call the “Walmart Bike Club”.

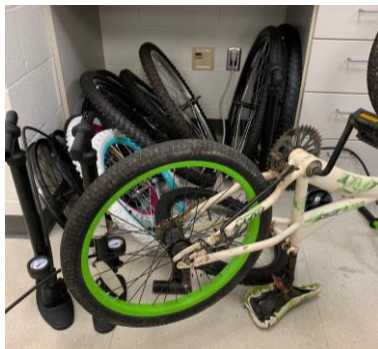
The first three quarters of the school year the “Walmart Bike Club” is offered to students and they work in small groups.

Through the “Walmart Bike Club”, Walmart Supercenter in Florence, Kentucky sends bikes that are damaged and cannot be sold to the warehouse at Ockerman Middle School. There, the Ockerman warehouse staff store and organize the bikes that the club uses.



Shipment of Walmart bikes stored in the Ockerman Middle warehouse.

The club session begins with one student from each group choosing a bike from the warehouse for their group to work on. Walmart sends a variety of bikes to Ockerman so one club might be working on a small, princess themed bike while another is working on a larger, more expensive mountain bike.



Spare wheels stored in Mr. Franzoi's classroom where club is held.

Students start by examining the bike for obvious issues – flat tires, rubbing brakes, missing parts. Then they move to more complicated issues – misaligned cranks, gears not shifting, or bent bike frames. Unfortunately, some bikes cannot be fixed, in which case, students harvest bike parts that can be used for future fixes.

Students spend between 2-4 weeks on average on one bike and they estimate they fix between 20-25 bikes per quarter. Over the last three years it is estimated that they are close to fixing 200 Walmart bikes!



STEM bicycle club

Through the “Walmart Bike Club” the word “service” goes beyond repairing bikes and into the “action of helping or doing work for someone”. The fixed Walmart bikes are donated into the community.



Students that have participated in the “Walmart Bike Club” and STEM Bicycle Club in the 2018-2019 school year. Each quarter students can apply for a different club; many apply to stay in the same club.

When donating the bikes, Mr. Franzoi works closely with the resource coordinators in both the Middle School and Elementary School to identify students who might want/need bikes. The resource coordinator then reaches out to the families to see if they would be interested.

When speaking about the impact of the program, Mr. Jackson, counselor at Ockerman Elementary says:

“Since OMS provides bicycles of various sizes, I have often been able to provide bicycles to all children in the home, such that none of them feel left out.”

When asked what their favorite part of STEM Bicycle/” Walmart Bike Club” was, students explained it was the service piece of the club – that the bikes are donated to children who don’t have their own and could use them. They also said riding the bike when no one is looking is the next best part.



Interviewed Ockerman students. “What was the hardest thing you had to fix this year?” “We had a bent gear shifter that had to be fixed and realigned.”