

V A L L E Y

Duncan couple gives the term re-cycling whole new meaning

RECYCLISTS: New service fills missing niche in city's attack on waste

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News Leader Pictorial

Cowichan's only pedal-powered recycling service has carved a niche among downtown businesses going green.

Cowichan Recyclists has a growing list of 14 paying customers whose mixed recyclables are picked up Wednesdays by owners Aaron Bichard and Katie Harris.

The core couple's fledgling operation uses bicycles to haul a small trailer.

The business also fits their eco-lifestyle and the needs of busy shops struggling to recycle.

"There didn't seem to be an easy way for businesses to recycle," freelance writer and former *News Leader Pictorial* reporter Bichard says of downtown Duncan's 200 or so businesses.

"We decided to pick up anything that goes into a residential yellow recycling bag.

"Our goal is helping downtown work toward zero waste and keeping things out of the landfill."

Many merchants recycle on their own "but it's a pretty large hassle because they don't have time to rush over to Harper's or Bings Creek (depots)," he says.

"That's where we come in because recycling can just fall off the radar."

Ask client Gary MacGregor, owner of Volume One Bookstore.

"Harper's is a wonderful resource that allows you to recycle almost everything but getting it there is a problem."

MacGregor also likes the fact Bichard and radio-freelancer Harris use fuel-free transport to haul his store's paper and cardboard after reusable stuff is picked out.

"They recycle it without using any other resources except the food they eat."

The couple pulls a unit from Mill Bay's Tony Hoar Trailers.

"We wanted low overhead and really low impact by being human-powered on bicycles," Bichard explains.



Andrew Leong

Aaron Bichard and Katie Harris picking up recyclable items at the Cowichan Valley Food Basket.

"We also want to promote biking to work downtown."

The Cowichan Valley Regional District provides residents recycling bags and multi-bins to reduce trash shipped from the Valley, but leaves a market to serve businesses wishing to recycle.

Cowichan Recyclists was launched Sept. 26 after a spring marketing survey.

Some businesses have big recycling bins on site but most don't have the storage space, Bichard says, making his venture viable.

"Many said they didn't have an outside recycling service so they're dealing with it on their own."

That includes Mayor Phil Kent, owner of Mercia's health products on Craig Street.

"We do our own recycling but we're considering switching to support their effort," Kent said.

Business recycling is mandatory

under the CVRD's solid waste management plan.

However, the recyclable mix is diverse and the volume is high, leaving Kent driving his stuff to Harper's while Bichard and Harris help their clients.

"Our trailer takes up to 300 pounds but I'm not sure my legs can haul that much," laughs Bichard.

Paper, plastic, cardboard and more are biked to Selkirk (Harper's), and Vancouver Island Recycling Centre at the former Koksilah incinerator site.

The couple charges \$10 for one stop monthly, \$15 for twice a month, and \$25 for weekly pickup.

They also haul free for the food basket, and Cowichan Green Communities.

"Response from business owners is 'Thank goodness there's a service available now,'" Bichard said.

Cowichan Recyclists can be reached at 732-3619 or visit www.cowichanrecyclists.com.