

Little tykes, even a granny

...‘the guy who teaches how to ride a bike’ takes them all, and gives them ‘wheels’



By MICHAEL LEE
mlee@newpaper.com.sg

WHEN bicycle shop owner Edmund Lee offered to teach his customers and their children how to ride a bicycle for a fee three years ago, all he got in return were amused looks or a “thanks but no thanks”.

“They all said they wouldn’t pay for something they could teach their kids themselves for free,” recalled Mr Lee, 43.

But after a while, the phone began ringing.

The coaching daddies had back-pedalled.

And receive a certificate at the end of the course.

“It wasn’t as easy as they had thought, and soon I was taking in my first clients,” said Mr Lee, who is married with three children.

He felt he had the “fatherly push” after coaching — and coaxing — his daughter Kah Hui when she was 5 years old.

“I’ve always wanted to become a teacher, but I had my parents’ Farrer Market cycle shop to look after,” said Mr Lee, who later

opened his own Queen’s Road shop in 2000.

“This coaching job gives me the chance of living my dream in a way.”

His “classroom” is the pedestrian area and open car park outside his HDB shop.

But Mr Lee started off giving cycling lessons to two students at their homes.

“It was time-consuming as some students lived quite far away, and sometimes they would also stand me up,” said Mr Lee.

The setback did not put a spoke in his wheel. He wisely decided to work from his shop instead.

SAME RATE FOR KIDS AND ADULTS

By word of mouth, more parents heard about “the guy who teaches how to ride a bike”, and his class started to swell.

“I always ask the parents if they can ride as well,” said Mr Lee who had his first bike when he was 5.

“Some of them are too embarrassed to admit they can’t, either because they never

had a chance to learn or gave up after too many bad falls.

“But there is no need to be embarrassed. It’s just that some start a little later.”

And he says even a 63-year-old granny joined the pack after seeing her 45-year-old daughter picking up the skill from Mr Lee.

At the other end, a 3½-year-old girl was once brought to him for lessons. But he said she was too young, and the minimum entry age has since been kept at 4.

Mr Lee, who now advertises in newspapers, said about 300 graduates have come out of his school, complete with laminated certificates and photos.

When asked if his clients were mainly the well-beeled, Mr Lee said: “They are from all walks of life.”

At that moment, Zachary Sim arrived for his lesson, all decked out in crash helmet, knee-pads and gloves.

The 5-year-old boy hopped onto one of Mr Lee’s training bikes and looked a little nervous.

But as soon as Mr Lee came riding along and grabbed his handlebars, Zachary relaxed and pedalled off with all the vigour his tiny legs could muster.

News IQ:
Page 8

Hey!
Pages
10-21

TV: Pages
22-23