

What is Grease Rag?

Grease Rag Ride & Wrench aims to encourage WTF (women, transgender, femme) cyclists by facilitating fun and supportive open shop nights, group rides, educational seminars and social events. We are an entirely volunteer-run organization, fueled by enthusiasm and a drive to grow our community. Grease Rag would like to make bicycling in the Twin Cities more inclusive of WTF cyclists, especially focusing on including and building confidence in new cyclists, and cyclists new to bicycle mechanics. In the past year we have gotten a lot of new cyclists biking and excited to bike around the Twin Cities.

What does Grease Rag do?

In 2013 we organized bike camping trips for beginners, monthly night rides, regular destination group rides, a winter biking skill share, and various social gatherings with the goal of making cycling in Minneapolis more inclusive. Our Facebook group is active with conversations about the challenges and triumphs that WTF cyclists deal with on a daily basis, including topics on gender identity, attire, equipment, and attitudes. We feel that allies are an important piece of making cycling a safer and more inviting place for WTFs, so many of our events are open to everyone although the focus remains on promoting biking to WTFs.

What does WTF mean?

WTF is an acronym that we adopted from San Francisco's Bike Kitchen, and it stands for "Women, Transgender, Femme cyclists." We think it is a cheeky acronym that covers our target demographic-people that do not benefit from cis-male privilege. ("Cis-male" refers to men that were born male and present and identify as male.) We do not specify that our group is for women-identified folks, because transmen and genderqueer folks are most definitely welcome in our space.

How does Grease Rag make a friendly space for WTFs?

Safer spaces are spaces where we try to identify and fight oppression, which can take the form of sexism, racism, transphobia, etc. We attempt to make safer spaces through facilitation, sharing preferred gender pronouns, not policing bodies, and creating an atmosphere of respect.

During our open shop nights, facilitators are in the space to make sure that WTFs are getting priority in the space, the shops promote our inclusive policies, and our allies are proactive and respectful of the space. We encourage participants to approach facilitators with any concerns in person, through email, or Facebook.

When someone comes in to a WTF-only event, we don't police bodies, we just ask, "Are you here for GR?" Our rides are "slow" to "medium" speed to maximize the number of beginners that will feel comfortable riding with us. There are other groups in the Twin Cities that host faster rides.

Most of our events feature "go-arounds" where we share our names, preferred gender pronouns, and answer an ice-breaker question to create a feeling of community. When we ask people to share their preferred gender pronouns if they feel comfortable sharing them, it is a way for people to feel a part of the group even if it is their first time and they don't know anyone. It also promotes the practice of asking for preferred gender pronouns as a regular activity, as well as reminding us all that in addition to not assuming preferred gender pronouns, that there are more options than the binary "he/him" and she/her."

What is a "facilitator"?

A facilitator is the point of contact for a Grease Rag location. We like to have at least two facilitators for each location, so that we can work as a team. Facilitators make sure the following things happen.

Set the VIBE and FORMAT for a space- Does an event have one hour of instruction and then one hour of open shop like Recovery GR? Do we ask people to bring snacks, etc.?

REET people coming in and make them feel comfy in the space

ENFORCE safer space rules- We try hard not to police bodies or allow sexist or transphobic behaviors. If you see something, speak to a facilitator!

Facilitate a GO-AROUND to give people an opportunity to share their names, preferred gender pronouns, and maybe answer a question

COMMUNICATE with other facilitators and volunteers as needed

ASK FOR HELP or resources if they/ the space need them

Despite the big responsibility that the facilitator has to show up and make shop nights happen, we don't want to create too much of a hierarchy between the "facilitator" and the rest of the team/ volunteers.

What is an open shop night?

Open shop nights were the first events that Grease Rag put on, starting July 7, 2009. An open shop night is a free event where all WTF cyclists, regardless of knowledge or experience, can bring in their bike and learn how to do their own mechanical work. We have one or two professional mechanics on site, but most of the learning is done by helping each other out. It can be surprising how much we collectively know, even if we aren't individually experts. Each location dictates the exact format of the open shop, so if you try one location and it isn't your style, try another! Or better yet... start your own! All you need is a space, some tools (read further down to learn how we use community partnerships for space and tools), and enthusiasm!

How do I find out about all of Grease Rag's events?

Grease Rag keeps an events calendar (<http://greaserag.org/calendar/>) on our website which shows our regular open shop events, special events including rides and parties, and events that are not specifically Grease Rag, but might be of interest. We also keep a running tally of special events gone by on our Events page. (<http://greaserag.org/calendar/current-present-happening/>) Our Facebook group page is also a good source of information. (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/greaserag/>)

How does Grease Rag engage in Community Partnerships?

In addition to our fantastic volunteers, facilitators and participants, Grease Rag only happens because of our relationship with community partners. Community partners/ bike shops give us space, time, and consumable items like lube and degreaser. We ask that they give us a paid employee for professional mechanical advice. In return, participants come into their space, "go beyond the counter" barrier, and feel very comfortable with the shop and employees. This ensures people will come back, because they feel like more than customers! They are a part of the shop. Confidence is our main goal, but sometimes it also makes loyal customers.

greaserag.org

greaseragmpls@gmail.com

@greaseragmpls

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