

Reprinted from a Journal Star Article spotlighting my business *World on Wheels*.

Ready to take a unique ride



BY SCOTT HILYARD

OF THE JOURNAL STAR

PEORIA - Chuck Bednar of Plainfield stood facing the river Wednesday afternoon and watched three colorful four-wheeled mutant bicycle-like contraptions run in circles around the clock tower on the riverfront.

"Can you rent them?" he asked the woman who he accurately sensed was in charge.

"Yes, absolutely, yes you can," said Lynnette Lee, the owner of the fledgling business World on Wheels.

"That's just great," Bednar said, smiling. "Really neat. Wow. Great."

Then Lee let Bednar's grandchildren take one out for a quick spin. No charge.

Lee debuted her small fleet of primary-color multi-seater bicycles on the riverfront on Memorial Day. While she's working to obtain a one-of-a-kind city permit, she's renting the machines out for a suggested tip of \$8 for adults and \$4 for children for a 30-minute ride. Three of the bikes sit two people, one sits up to four adults or two adults and several children. They are all pedal-powered, covered by a striped canopy and steered with a steering wheel, not handlebars. The machines are natural attention getters.

"Unless you've been in a major, progressive city no one's ever seen these things and everybody's curious about them," Lee said. "We're getting a really good response and we're just getting started."

The idea is a direct lift from a vacation more than 10 years ago to Galveston, Texas, where Lee saw similarly funky bikes for rent. The bike idea lodged somewhere in her brain and was reactivated by the city's attempts in recent years to breathe new life into its riverfront assets. She researched different styles and business models and settled on a company she won't name (for competitive reasons) that custom-made her four bikes. She has also leased a large trailer to haul them in and plans to be a presence at any event she can think of and get to.

"When they were talking about the riverfront and the museum plans and all of that good stuff, the bikes from Galveston came back in my mind," she said. "I thought those bikes would be a great thing for the riverfront."

Insurance was not a problem to obtain. Getting permission from the city has been a long process. She's met with someone from nearly every city department outside of the Adopt a Tree Program and has the support of Craig Hullinger, the city's economic development director.

"They're a good fit for the riverfront," Hullinger said. "It's such a beautiful area that's getting more and more attention from people, and it's a good thing to give them something to do."

Lee had hoped the City Council would approve the permit at its meeting Tuesday, but it did not address the issue. Now she's hoping for the permit in the next couple of weeks. In the meantime, she intends to set up for business seven days a week, asking for tips in return for a ride.

"This is a business that is going to grow, I can tell you that," she said. "I've got a lot more ideas."

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