



Dear Friends

2020 was not what I expected my junior year of high school to look like. It's been a lot of ups and downs.

My younger sister started going to Community Bike Works, to outdoor Earn a Bike, this summer. I didn't have a bike, and I'd always wanted one. So my mom suggested that I sign up for Earn a Bike too.

I made my friend Ari go with me. The class was every day for two weeks and we went every single day. It was something to look forward to. We didn't have anywhere else to go. We didn't leave the house except to go to Earn a Bike. There were days when she didn't want to go, and I would drag her out of her house. There were days when I felt depressed, but even if I felt depressed, we would still go. The East Allentown bike shop is only two blocks from my house so it made it easier for us to go.

Staff would always try to make it fun, every time we came. They were really welcoming and it made me happy to be around people.

I liked that I was learning how to fix things. My little sister knew how to do these things, and my uncle works on cars, so it made me feel accomplished that I could do this. I like being independent. When it was time to learn how to fix a tire, some people in the class said I wouldn't be able to, because my acrylic nails would get in the way. I had to take the tire off and put it back on. It was taking so long, but I said to Ari, we can do this—and we did! I did break a nail, but I was so proud of myself.

Then I earned my bike. It was the bike of my dreams. It is a cruiser bike, pink and white. I had mostly seen mountain bikes in the bike shop, so when I saw this bike I knew it was the bike for me. The instructors told me it would be harder to go uphill, but I have always wanted a bike like this and I love riding my cruiser.

Erick and James asked me to join Youth Leadership. This semester, we are talking about our futures, and it's really helping me. This spring I plan to do Youth Leadership again, to learn how to make change in my community, for people who are in prison and also for Community Bike Works. I also want to work at Bike Works and help teach Earn a Bike. I just like the community here and I want to be a part of it. I want to change kids' days like Bike Works changes my days.

Thank you for being a part of Bike Works and helping to make kids' days better, especially this year.

Paris
Paris, 16

(cont.)
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This year has been a challenge, for so many of us and in so many ways. At Community Bike Works, we are fortunate to see every day, in our students, in their families, and in you—our supporters and partners—the resilience and generosity of our community. I am grateful for each of you.

Since the public health crisis hit, we have worked to find new ways to support our students and families. We took Earn a Bike and Junior Earn a Bike outdoors and have created online versions of our programs to keep young people learning and connected. We are offering more bike rides than ever before to support physical and mental health. And we are providing direct support to families who are struggling.

But we know there's more to do. If we are going to help create the community our students imagine and deserve, we need to turn the challenges of this year into a renewed call for justice. From ensuring our students have the information they need to register to vote when they turn 18, to supporting our teen leaders who are standing up for racial justice and an end to the school-to-prison pipeline, Bike Works is proud to stand with our community to reaffirm our commitment to racial and economic justice.

A challenge can make us more resilient and lead to better days ahead. This year, Community Bike Works is celebrating 25 years of Earn a Bike—25 years of life lessons through bikes. Individually and as a community, we have been challenged this year as never before. With your support, we will do everything possible to emerge stronger and engage a new generation of young people in youth bike mentoring.

One bright spot this year has been our announcement that we plan to open a bike shop in the West Ward of Easton in 2021, allowing us to mentor young people across the Lehigh Valley. Because of you, students like Paris—from Allentown, Bethlehem, and Easton—will discover the thrill of refurbishing a bike of their own, the joy of riding, and the satisfaction of being part of something bigger than themselves.

As you decide on gifts you will be making this holiday season, please consider an investment in the young people of Community Bike Works—and our community. From the Bike Works family to yours, best wishes for a new year that is filled with peace and justice. From the bottom of my heart, thank you.

Kim

Kim Schaffer, Executive Director

