

Sustainable Saint Spotlight:

Shellie Jeffries Co-Director of Grace Hauenstein Library



What kind of bike do you have? Where did you get it/how long have you had it?

My commuter bike is a hybrid Cannondale that I bought in 1994 from Alger Bikes on 28th street. When I first got it, it was the bike I used to ride trails and long distances. When I upgraded to a Cannondale road bike a few years ago, the hybrid became my "tool-in' around town" bike for running errands and getting to work

How many hours a week do you bike/ how often do you bike a week?

During the summer, on my road bike, I ride the trails for about 3-4 hours a week. However, my commute to Aquinas is quite brief, since I live only five blocks away. I probably ride to work 4 times a week, which is about 56 minutes of commuting. That said, my commuting season, which starts around late March and goes into December, is much longer than my trail-riding season

Why do you choose to bike to school or commute to a job?

I decided to ride to work for a couple of reasons. It's very quick to get to campus from my house, so I can depart fairly late in the morning and still make it to work on time. Mainly, though, I make a conscious effort to reduce my carbon emissions as much as I can and made a commitment to ride my bike -- instead of driving a car - - as often as possible. Aquinas is well situated so I can run errands,

like grocery shopping and going to the public library, around Eastown, Gaslight Village, Fulton Street, and East Hills during my lunch hour and after work. I can also ride across campus to meetings if needed. I try to commute pretty far into December, depending on the weather -- I avoid riding in the rain and skip the bike when the streets are snow covered and icy, but I will ride when it's below freezing.

Do you feel Aquinas is a bike friendly place?

With Campus Safety's AQBikes program, the many bike racks scattered around campus, and the willingness of pedestrians to accommodate bikes on walking paths, I feel Aquinas is a very bike friendly campus

In Grand Rapids what is your favorite place to bike?

I'm very fond of the bike trails at Millennium Park. http://www.kentcountyparks.org/document_center/park_maps/Millennium_Park_FullPark_colored_trails.pdf The Kent County Parks department does a great job maintaining the paved paths, there are a variety of trails and loops you can ride, sometimes you get glimpses of Michigan wildlife (baby muskrats, turkeys, cormorants, cygnets, bunnies, and the occasional eagle), you don't have to worry about cars, and it's always lovely to look at, no matter what season you're riding in.

What tips do you have for people who might want to bike more or are intimidated to get started?

Well, I kind of have to quote Nike here and say "Just do it." Once you start riding to work it just becomes a habit. You might consider buying some extra gear to make it easier and more appealing -- and safer. For example, I have a removable basket that I can attach above the back wheel of my bike to carry work things or groceries. I also wear a reflective vest with flashing lights when I ride home in the dark. Lastly, pay attention all the time when riding on the street, make your intentions clear (e.g. signal when turning), and try to obey the rules of the road.