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Statesville bike shop honored

First Flight Bicycles named among U.S. top 10

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When Michael Matthews launched his search for a 29-inch mountain bike, he consulted five stores.

The only facility where he was able to find what he wanted was First Flight Bicycles in Statesville.

"They had the best price and seemed very knowledgeable. ... And I felt no pressure at all," said the 31-year-old Troutman resident.

Matthew's positive experience is apparently not all that unusual as the downtown Statesville facility has just been named one of the top 100 bicycle shops in the USA by Bicycling Magazine.

In their October issue, the magazine said "First Flight encourages its visitors to look up. Hanging from 14-foot ceilings (and filling the entire second floor) are the 450 bikes that comprise one of the world's largest vintage mountain bike collections."

The reference is to the Museum of Mountain Bike Art & Technology collection that is housed at the shop.

Considering there are over 4,200 bike shops in the country, the top 100 designation is pretty heady stuff for owner Jeff Archer.

"I had no idea we had been chosen until I opened up the October edition of the magazine," he said during a busy weekday afternoon punctuated by three walk-in and two phone-in customers.

"Being a small shop in a small town made it quite an honor to be chosen. Doing the math, it would average just two shops per state and there are definitely many larger shops in larger cities that were not chosen."

Archer's bike shop has been a staple in Statesville for over 22 years. Located in a former auto parts store at 174 S. Center St., his facility is filled with bikes and accessories. An Ohio native, Archer, 47, spends considerable time with his customers and places great emphasis on personal service.

In addition to an evaluation of physical facilities, Bicycling Magazine judged the shops on their community involvement which includes supporting local events and advocacy efforts. First Flight has been actively involved in several projects in Iredell County including the Carolina Thread Trail, Lake Norman Bike Route and Itusi Trail at Lake Norman State Park.

Archer says that while most of his routine bike customers come from the Iredell County area, he receives calls from all around the world for the custom mountain bikes made by Mountain Goat Cycles, one of the oldest mountain bike brands in the world.

"We have access to bikes that most other stores cannot get."

As to the name First Flight Bicycles: Archer says it was simply his way of holding on to a little piece of the world in Ohio where he was raised, as were the Wright Brothers.

Read more: http://www.charlotteobserver.com/2011/09/25/2629972/statesville-bike-shop-honored.html#ixzz1ZAk0IL8o