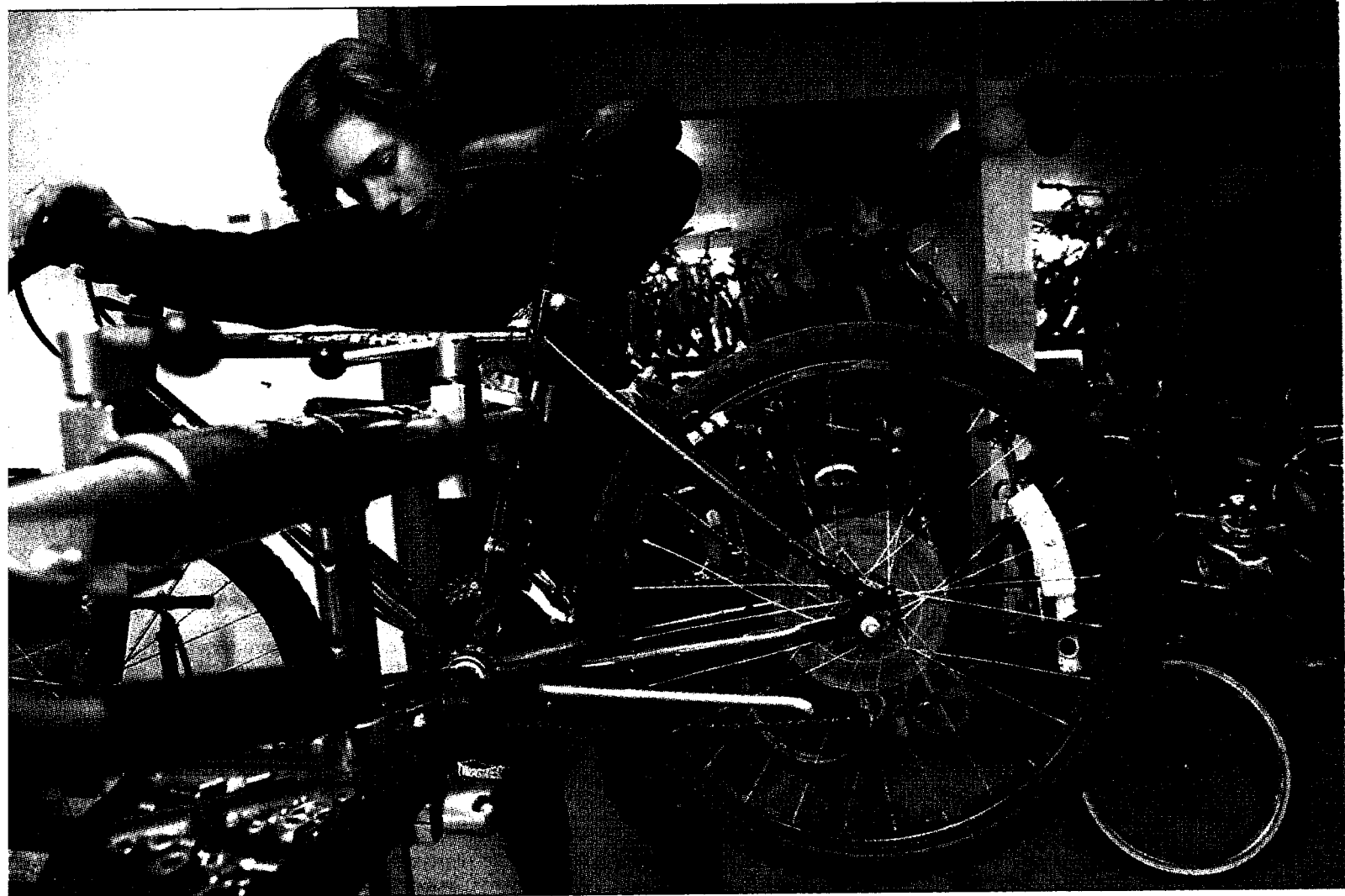


Kids' bike swap pays off



DAN DELONG / P-I

Suzanne Carlson, program director at Free Ride Zone Community Bicycle Shop, prepares a bike for tomorrow's Seattle Kids' Bike Swap.

Budget-conscious parents save money

By JUDI HUNT
P-I REPORTER

It wasn't hard for Teresa Berry to realize that her 8-year-old daughter had outgrown her bicycle in only three years. Sara's knees constantly banged into the frame of the 15-inch two-wheeler, making riding it uncomfortable.

So Berry began looking around at new bikes, but was surprised to discover how much the price had gone up in only a few years.

She didn't want to spend a fortune on a bike her daughter would outgrow all too soon, so she decided to take a chance on something she had heard about called the Seattle Kids' Bike Swap.

The swap enabled her to trade in her daughter's old bike for a bigger one, and she didn't have to pay much for the upgrade.

"We got lucky and found an absolute treasure

to trade for Sara's bike, a six-speed child's mountain bike in great condition. The new bike only cost \$50 after we got a \$20 credit for Sara's old bike."

That was a year ago. And the program was so successful that it's being held again tomorrow at Genesee Park.

Joel Horn of Seattle, one of the parents who dreamed up the swap, said more than 50 bikes, average age one to three years, were swapped in 1997, enough that the loosely organized group was able to break even.

The group's goal this year is to double the number of bikes swapped and perhaps make some money to donate to Free Ride Zone, a nonprofit bike shop that opened last summer in the Columbia City neighborhood.

It's easy to swap: Just drop off used bikes of all sizes, from 12 to 24 inches. Each is given a

quick tuneup, a safety check and its overall condition is evaluated before it's accepted.

Bikes are assigned a value from \$10 to \$90 and placed in a trading pen where the person swapping can shop for another bike of the same value or trade up to larger or more popular styles of bikes.

"But be prepared to spend a little money if you're swapping for a bigger bike," Horn said.

If people who bring in bikes can't find another, they can get half the value of their old two-wheeler in cash or donate the bike to the tax-deductible Free Ride Zone.

Genesee Park is at the corner of Lake Washington Boulevard and South 43rd Street. For information, call Free Ride Zone, 206-725-9408.

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