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## Commuter of the year

"I would be on my bike every day if I could be," says Chad Ulrick, 2012 Bike Commuter of the Year. And for the last year, he's come close.

In 2011, Chad figures he commuted 260 days — 12 miles round trip — from his home to his job near 86th and University. He logged most of his commuting miles on trails.

But it hasn't always been that way. Three years ago, Chad took up biking after a 20-year hiatus. His goal: lose weight and finish the Hy-Vee Triathlon before turning 40. Dropping 50 pounds and completing the Hy-Vee Tri transformed Chad into a biking fanatic.

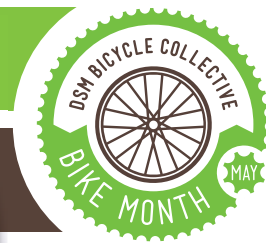
A *Des Moines Register* profile about his friend Sam Auen and his winter bike-commuting convinced Chad that he, too, could pedal year-round. So that's exactly what he did. "That first couple of weeks were tough," Chad recalls. "I really hadn't experienced winter commuting, and I started off riding home at 9 p.m. in the dark and on icy trails. I must have fallen a couple times a week until I got the hang of things."

### Chad's commuter tips for night riding

- **Buy a good headlight.** "My current favorite is the Nite Rider MiNewt 150. It's a light-weight rechargeable and sells for \$50 to \$80. "It's really dark on those trails at night and you need a good headlight to see."
- **Invest in a flashing taillight.** Or two. "If you ride streets or trails at night, an inexpensive LED taillight (Planet Bike sells several versions for less than \$20) will help others see you."
- **Wear reflective clothing.** "It's good to be seen. You can buy inexpensive safety vests at G&L Clothing or many of the home centers for less than \$20."

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It's all better now after that slippery start. Besides pedaling five days a week to his job, it's not unusual for Chad to meet up with biking friends and head out to Cumming, Madrid or one of the other popular biking destinations in the vicinity.

Recently, Chad has jumped with both wheels into the bike culture. "After 17 and a half years at the same job, I quit about a month ago to start Char-Buff Grill, serving hot wings, burgers and sausage on Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays at the Cumming Tap. I've switched to taking care of my bike friends. I'm having fun."



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