# Worksite Wellness Success Stories

May 2008

## 3rd Place Team Winner:

### Michigan Department of Environmental Quality

The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) - Waste and Hazardous Materials Division (WHMD) Headquarters' Staff participated in the **Smart Commute '08 Challenge** this past May 19th through the 30th. The Division HQ has about 82 staff, 15 of whom signed up to participate in the Challenge. Over the two week period, 94 smart commutes were conducted, often over significant distances. Many of these commutes were by carpools, public transportation and other "smart" modes, but a few were by first time bicycle commuters taking advantage of the opportunity to get some exercise, fresh air and beat the high price of gasoline. Jack Schinderle, a Environmental Quality Specialist made the bike commute from Grand Ledge to Lansing, about 15 miles, twice a week during the Challenge. "I first began riding to work for the exercise. The ride in feels great and after a shower I don't need coffee. However, the first couple rides home after a days work were more difficult as it is usually into the wind. I feel much stronger now and may begin riding 3 days a week."

I am an Enforcement Specialist with the WHMD and I have been a fair weather bicycle commuter since the "Fix I-496" construction project lead to long traffic delays on my fairly short 5 mile commute back in 2001. To get started, I made an initial investment in a new hybrid mountain bike suitable for light off-road use and pot-holed city streets and a Zappy electric motor conversion kit. The entire investment was paid for in about three years of bike commuting based on the then $2 price of gas. I find the electric assist useful for quick acceleration from stop lights, bridge climbing and on hot days when I really don't want to break a sweat on my way to work, as I usually don't take a change of clothes. Morning commutes are most enjoyable as the air is cool and my route follows along the winding river trail were traffic is light and the wildlife plentiful. I generally lose a few pounds gained over the winter months when I start riding my bike again. It is surprising how fast you can get out of shape. Even after a few days of bad weather, I can feel it in my legs when I start riding again. When winter sets in, I resort to spending thirty minutes each day peddling my stationary bike, and dreaming about my first ride in the spring.

Submitted by Gary Tuma, DEQ - WHMD Team Captain Smart Commute '08