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**\*\*\*\*PRESS RELEASE\*\*\*\*WALLA WALLA POLICE DEPT\*\*\*\***  
**State Penitentiary Program Donates 37 Bikes**

March 9, 2015

Inmates at the Washington State Penitentiary refurbished 37 bicycles to be given away to area families through Walla Walla Area Crime Watch. Many of the bicycles came from local law enforcement agencies as unlicensed, abandoned, and probably stolen. Without a bicycle license, it is nearly impossible to return the bikes to their rightful owners.

The bikes will find new homes with help from Crime Watch, who will be working with other local non-profits to identify area families in need of a bike, but without the means to purchase one. Blue Mountain Action Council has partnered with Crime Watch to help facilitate their disbursement. Crime Watch will be offering, at no charge, lifetime licenses for the bikes.

The bicycle giveaway was made possible through the Washington State Penitentiary Sustainable Practices Lab. The lab coordinator is Correctional Specialist Robert Branscum, who organized and started the lab in July, 2012. The lab provides employment and skill-building opportunities for about 115 inmates.

Reconditioning bicycles is just a small part of what takes place in the Sustainability Lab. Inmates also make Teddy Bears, aprons, quilts, backpacks, and many other items from donated fabric and upholstery. They also have the tools and donated materials to produce signs, banners, and office furniture. Since the inception of the Sustainability Lab, over 100 charities have benefitted from the items produced and reconditioned by these inmates.

The Lab also grows organic vegetables and herbs, has a very productive worm farm to produce fertilizer, and has saved the penitentiary thousands of dollars in food costs and landfill expenses.

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