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Ottawa's Health and Fitness Magazine

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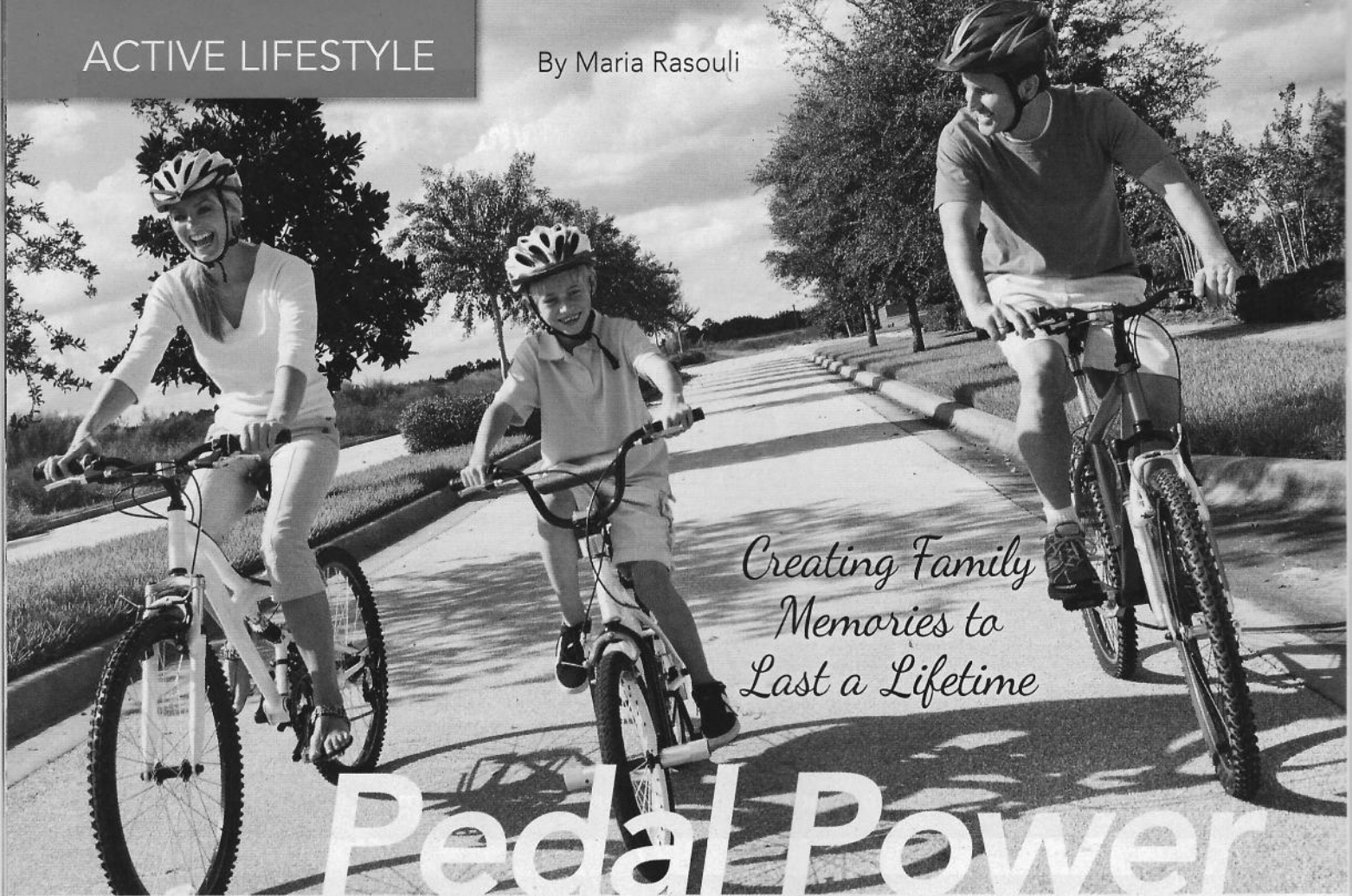
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*Creating Family
Memories to
Last a Lifetime*

Pedal Power

Our childhood memories mesmerize us, haunt us, and shape our hobbies and even career choices in adulthood. Have you ever wondered which kind of memories you are creating for your children?

I grew up in a small village in the north of Iran, near the Caspian Sea. My greatest joy was riding my bicycle every day after school with my best friend, Eli, balanced on my handlebars. We'd travel through the open fields, and into the forest on the edge of village. I'd pedal fast for the thrill of the wind in our faces. We'd often fall in the fields, or on the dirt paths, laughing hysterically at how ridiculous we looked. Exploring the world on my bicycle was my childhood definition of freedom. I was happiest outside in nature – visiting the trees and feeling the sun on my face. Around the age of eleven everything changed. One day, Eli and I were slowed down behind a group of young male soccer players who were walking on the path towards the field. I could not keep the bicycle balanced. We both



fell off and started laughing at ourselves, at which point an older man approached us and looked Eli in the eye. With a very kind paternal voice, he told her

We went home and told our parents, in search of sympathy. Instead, they told us to stop bicycling around, as we needed to begin behaving in a more 'proper' and 'appropriate' way for women. My bicycle was given to my younger brother and I was left with a yearning for the next 13 years.

I threw myself into school, replacing the physical freedom of my bicycle with the freedom found inside books. Reading became my escape. I excelled in school and university. After a lot of hard work, I received a scholarship from Carleton University in 2002 for my Ph.D. in Organizational Psychology. However, the first order of business for me was bicycling.

I got on a bike from the first day I arrived in Ottawa, Canada on July 25th, 2002. Words cannot describe how I felt the moment I got on that bicycle – what a rush of excitement, freedom, and joy! I was amused by the beautiful pathways, nature and ease of access to everything via bike paths in Ottawa. On the day I was told to

stop bicycling, I could never have imagined that one day I would be free to bicycle again in my beautiful home city, Ottawa.

I decided to start Escape Bicycle Tours and Rental to share with visitors, tourists, and locals the joy and freedom of bicycling. My parents gave me the gift of bicycling. I only wish I could go cycling with all my family members including my mum and older sister. The society in which we lived did not allow us. In Ottawa, we are fortunate to have hundreds of kilometers of recreational pathways and a unique mix of natural and urban scenes which makes it an attractive and safe cycling city for families. Imagine spending a few hours or a day outdoors with your family enjoying the fresh air and getting to know our beautiful city more intimately.

I look forward to seeing many of you cycling out there with your children giving them the gift of freedom, happiness, wellness and health this year!

Don't have a bike for all the family members. Rent bicycles from Escape Bicycle Tours and Rentals and explore the city with its self-guided maps. Have visitors? Treat them to an Escape Bicycle Tour. ☺

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