



Sunset Park unites for ‘bicycle awareness’ after more cyclist deaths in Brooklyn

Local Sunset Park businesses hold unified fundraiser to promote bicycle awareness and the programs of Get Women Cycling

Brooklyn, NY. Aug 15, 2019 – “This is about bringing the neighborhood together to slow down, stop and think,” explains Jessica Klaus, co-owner of L’Wren, a bar in Sunset Park, and organizer of a Sunday Aug. 18th fundraiser held by four neighborhood bars, Sunset Park BID, and Industry City to promote “bicycle awareness.” The high number of cyclist deaths in NYC this year, some of which happened in Sunset Park, sparked the collaboration.

Klaus, who is more driver than cyclist, says: “We all have room to improve. This is about acknowledging there’s a problem.” It could be something as simple as learning to open a car door with “your right hand instead of your left, and remembering to look,” Klaus says, referring to the problem of cyclists being hit by drivers who sometimes open their car doors without thinking.

It was just this problem that led to the death of cyclist Em Samolewicz on July 29th in Sunset Park when she was “doored” by a driver, according to StreetsBlog NYC. Samolewicz then tumbled into the street and was hit and killed by a truck in the next lane.

City Council Member Carlos Menchaca, who will attend the upcoming fundraiser in Sunset Park, praised the fundraiser idea, “The most inspiring part about this is that it’s the community coming together, on its own, and saying ‘these cyclist deaths aren’t statistics, they are human beings, our neighbors, our fellow New Yorkers, and it’s time to put our collective power together and stop more deaths.’”

Asked what they will do with the money, Klaus explained: “We were going to give it to Em’s family, but then we thought ‘bicycle awareness’ is the key. That’s when we found Angela, and decided to donate the money to Get Women Cycling in Em’s honor.”

Angela Azzolino, founder of the cyclist advocacy group Get Women Cycling, is known as “the mayor of cycling in Sunset Park,” according to Klaus.

“We want safe and enjoyable streets for all commuters: people who bike, walk, ride public transit, and drive,” says Azzolino, whose group receives DOT funding to provide commuter awareness workshops in driver education classes around the city.

Azzolino points to the many “quiet, but rapid” changes that have taken place over the past decade. “More delivery trucks and bicycles due to e-commerce, 134,000 additional vehicles from ride-hailing companies, 12,000 Citibikes (soon to increase to 40,000), we have green *and* yellow taxis, and as of this summer, 1000 new shareable e-scooters.” All these vehicles take up space on city streets. “Add to that all the people in crosswalks who are distracted by their cell phones, and you have some very clogged, very dangerous streets.”

Azzolino argues that government and citizens have to “rethink what kind of transportation works best for everyone.” She’s disappointed by community boards on the Upper West Side and in Bensonhurst fighting to protect car culture by opposing protected bike lanes in those neighborhoods. “Finger-pointing and suing the government seems so senseless when we all just want safe, sustainable, and enjoyable streets.”

Council Member Menchaca agreed: “I hope that other communities see what is happening in Sunset Park and realize that this is not a zero-sum game between cars and cyclists but about making sure everyone is safe on the road.”

The money raised on Sunday will be used to start a facilitator training program this Fall so that Get Women Cycling can continue to grow commuter awareness, initiate conversations around current perceptions and behaviors toward street safety, share best practice techniques for safe commuting regardless of transportation choice, and double its presence in Brooklyn driving schools by year’s end.

“I’m with Jessica,” said Azzolino, “we’ve got to slow down, transform, and unite.”

The fundraiser is scheduled for this Sunday Aug 18, 2019, from 4-7 pm. Many Sunset Park storefronts along 5th Avenue will display neon-pink flags in solidarity and four businesses have organized to raise funds: L’Wren (4004 5th Avenue @40th Street), Minnie’s Bar (885 4th Avenue @33rd Street), Judy’s (4022 5th Ave @41st Street), and Industry City (220 36th Street @3rd Avenue). These four will be offering specials for those who attend.

About Get Women Cycling

[Get Women Cycling](#) created a strategic Commuter Awareness Workshop (CAW) initiative to address safe street passage and the changing landscape of daily commuting in NYC. Our primary goal brings together the voices of all commuters—people who bike, people who walk, people who ride public transit, and people who drive—to initiate education, conversation, activism, and policy aimed at safe and efficient transit for all New Yorkers.

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