

# A New Spin on Pedaling.... Wares

By Kelly Rapp

**R**AGBRAI is an annual week long bike ride across Iowa. It was started in 1973 by two reporters from the Des Moines Register who wanted to find new stories across the state. Since then, it has grown into the largest bike ride in the world with over 10,000 riders. Many riding teams take old buses and create clever deck tops to carry their bikes. For many, RAGBRAI is a tradition where friends and families get together to enjoy a week of energizing riding, along with lots of delicious food and fun

My first three years of RAGBRAI were spent riding along side my dad with our team, Team White Bus. After three years I decided to work for one of the larger charter groups and help them with their tent service. We had over 70 tents to set up and take down everyday. The year I worked for them consisted of long hours, hard work, and low pay. Although this was not one of my most memorable experiences, I benefited by learning the business.

In school I have taken many business classes including Marketing and Sales, Introduction to Business, Accounting, Sports and Entertainment Marketing, Keyboarding, and Business Applications. With help from these classes and my dad's business knowledge and experience I decided to end my employment with the charter company and start my own tent business.



I began by creating a plan. I decided it would help me to have a larger target market if more people came on our bus. To do this, I added an extra support vehicle with a trailer behind it which allowed more room on the bus for customers. I increased my market from 15 to 30 people. To promote the business I made a flyer and sent it to each team member. My first year, I purchased four tents with air mattresses and put up a total of 12 tents.

During the week of RAGBRAI we wake up at 5:30 and have tents down by 7:00. We load the trailer and drive to the next town. After finding a camp spot we unpack and pitch the tents then blow up air mattresses. By noon we are finished.

After RAGBRAI is over, I check the tents and air mattresses and make sure they are ready for next year before storing them for the winter. My business benefits me greatly because I have more freedom, opportunity, networks and knowledge from experiences. I have made wonderful friends

from all over the USA.

I am very busy in school with soccer, volunteering and being student body president of my high school so this job allows me to make my spending money during the summer. This year my business grew 33%. I also hired two friends to help. I love working for myself. Yes, I have more risk but the profit and benefit have been much greater. I would tell anyone who wants to go into business to "Go For It". □