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The Independent Journal's editorial board meets weekly to talk about the paper's editorial positions. There are four members.

EDITORIAL

Pilot program to boost walking, biking is working

MARIN'S BIKE and pedestrian pilot project appears to be encouraging people to do just that — not get in their cars for every trip.

A recent survey of the project's impact reflects a 46 percent increase in people riding their bikes since 2007, when the project of bike lane construction and pedestrian improvements got its start.

Between 2009 and 2010, there was a 29 percent increase in the count of weekend bike trips.

Marin was one of four communities selected to share a \$100 million federal grant to find out whether making it easier and safer for people to get around on bikes or on foot would actually get them out of their cars.

Columbia, Mo., Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minn., and Sheboygan County, Wis., also are part of the program.

The Marin County Bicycle Coalition deserves credit for bringing this money home and then putting it to work.

Marin's impressive survey results reflect a trend of more people riding their bikes to their jobs, to school or to run errands instead of using their cars.

If gas prices remain about \$4 a gallon, those choices will be more attractive to a growing number of county residents.

The \$20 million available to Marin has gone to improvements, large and small, and to pay for planning for future projects.

The grant helped pay for reopening Cal Park tunnel, bike paths along Alameda del Prado in Novato and Los Ranchitos Road in San Rafael and bike routes through Northgate.

Marin municipalities also have worked to incorporate safe bike routes in their local planning. This grant has helped make much of this planning a reality on our roads.

Residents had indicated in earlier surveys that they would be more inclined to ride their bikes to work and school and for errands if they had safer routes to use. It appears they were telling the truth. The sizeable increase over a short period makes a case for investing in additional car-free ways to get around this county.

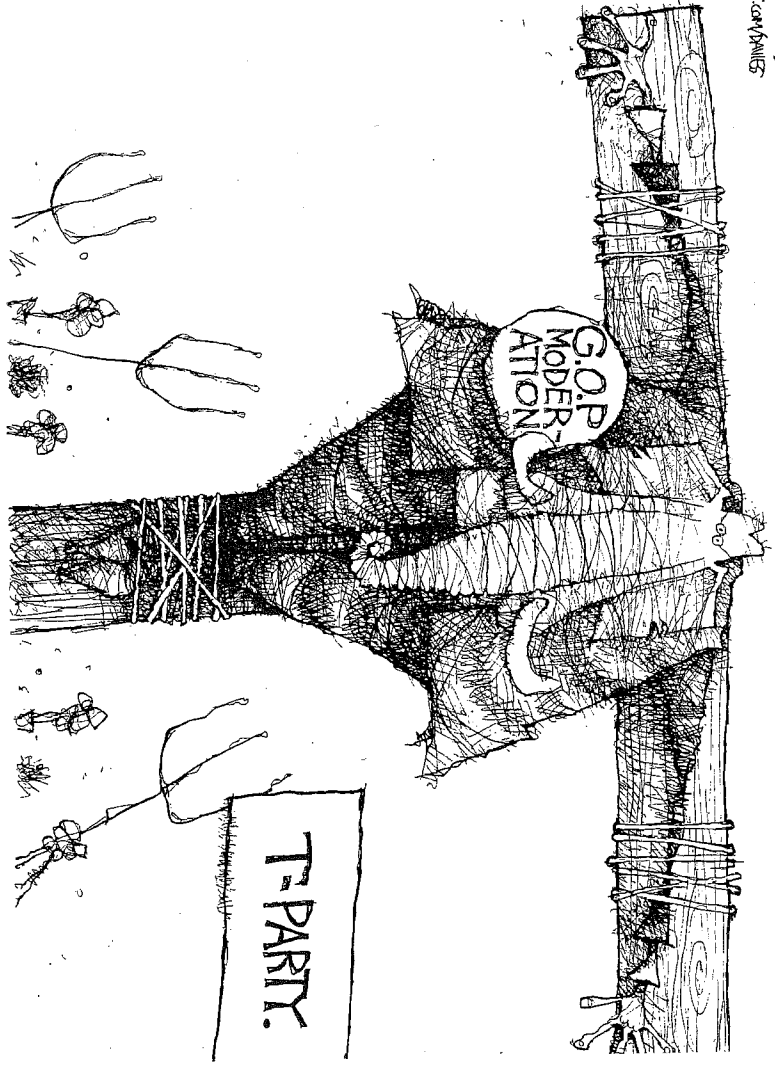
The latest survey showed significant increases in the number of bicyclists who say they ride their bikes to work or to visit friends. There also was an increase in the frequency that they opt for a bike over their car.

Certainly, the results deserve to be remembered when deciding how transportation money should be spent. The debate should not just be about widening highways and roads or spending more on public transportation.

The goal of the pilot program is to determine whether investing money in improvements that would make routes easier and safer for cyclists or pedestrians would get significant numbers of them out of the cars and SUVs.

Marin's survey results show that such improvements — and a growing green awareness — are encouraging Marin residents to get out of their cars and walk or pedal. That's a choice that is healthier for them, and for our environment. We need to do everything we can to find ways to keep gas-burning cars off our streets and reduce traffic congestion and pollution.

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Case for educational activism

MARIN VOICE

STEPHANE HESSEL escaped from a POW camp in World War II. Then, outraged by the Nazi collaborating Vichy French government, he became a hero of the French Resistance and helped shape the reform spirit of France in the years immediately following the liberation.

Toward the end of last year, at the age of 93, his 13-page book, "Indigene-vous" became an overnight sensation in France, soaring to the top of the French best-seller list and selling one and a half million copies.

The book has been translated into English and is now available here, with the title "Time for Outrage."

This brief manifesto urges young people to use peaceful resistance to revive the ideal of the French Resistance, resisting the "international dictatorship of the financial markets" and defending the "values of modern democracy."

Teachers, parents, and students would do well to read it.

Although Hessel's focus isn't on education, his comments on public education in France are instructive. Hessel describes how the 2008 educational reform plan in France ran counter to the Resistance's call for a practical opportunity for every French child to have access to to advanced education, without discrimination.

He applauds the young teachers who refused to implement those reforms despite the threat of layoffs and salary reductions. Hessel's words clearly speak to us as well: "They got angry, they disobeyed," they decided that



MARK PHILLIPS

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these reforms diverged too far from the ideal of education in a democratic republic, were too deeply beholden to a society of money and failed to develop the creative and critical spirit sufficiently."

I wonder why there isn't more resistance here among educators, parents and students.

There is clear justification. Education and the teachers to whom it is entrusted is a cornerstone of the "values of modern democracy." The combination of the mania for standardized testing and the attack on teacher status and rights is lethal for teacher morale, instructional effectiveness, and the curriculum. Teachers have been named and shamed for having students with low test scores. Cuts in school funding are undermining education in many communities, while tax policies and corporate welfare continue to reward the wealthy.

In Marin, foundations are trying to compensate for that. They shouldn't have to.

In the spirit of Hessel's book none of this should be tolerated. The lessons from Hessel are focused on channeling justifiable outrage into non-violent resistance. It's our job to figure out how to do this to save public education in this country.

What may be the most effective path to changing our school is non-violent action. Parents, students, and teachers resist. The heart of the Resistance France was small, localized actions. Our new digital age gives us formidable tools for such actions as well as for effective coordinating them with other communities through cyber-organizing and the media.

There are models.

In Pennsylvania, Michelle Gray and Tim Sleskar are educating parents in ways of resisting standardized testing.

Vicki Abeles' film, "Race to Nowhere," is drawing audience throughout the country and a social action campaign to help organize parents, educators, students, experts and organizations advocating for change has recently been launched.

Tom and Amy Valens have a Facebook page associated with their film, "August to June," that is building a network commitment in part, to resisting the test craze.

And, in Marin, a small group of educators, parents, and students are exploring ways of assisting each other in answering Hessel's challenge and promoting alternatives that better meet individual student needs.