

This is KPTZ FM 91.9 in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Rachel Perkins, bringing you news and commentary from the Jefferson County *Beacon* for Wednesday, May 6, 2026.

Freedom, childlike joy, inexpensive transportation: The Velo Cats crew wants this for everybody.

Velo Cats, the multicolored store on the Thomas Street roundabout at 1929 West Sims Way, is as exuberant on the inside as it is on the exterior. Its worker-owners – Liz and Jonathan Arp and Gabe Quintanilla – run the bike shop as a collective, with a lounge, a stock of original artwork large and small, and a legendary feline as a mascot. “We’re all in it together,” said Liz Arp, Velo Cats’ bookkeeper and electric-bike rider. She and her husband Jonathan met Quintanilla when the two men worked at the ReCyclery.

Velo Cats opened in May 2023, offering bikes for sale, repairs, tuneups and gear, much like any bike shop out there. It has a few unusual traits, including a pay-it-forward program. Anyone can donate a dollar, a hundred dollars, or something in between at velocats.com, to help out those who come in needing a bike part or a repair that is beyond their means.

Along with the bikes, the shop stocks maps, bags, tools, reflectors, T-shirts, and saddles. The place is studded with Quintanilla’s three-dimensional art and wearable art. He made the bike-parts piece in the front window and the bracelets of bike chain links, and he knows how to glow-up a bike with a bright paint job.

Quintanilla and the Arps are into bikes as functional art and as affordable transportation, whatever the rider’s experience level. And yes, Port Townsend is hilly. So are lots of places one could go out bike-touring. The Velo Cats want to provide moral and mechanical support for not only the legs-of-steel types, but also those who are daunted by the town’s inclines.

“Come talk to us, and see if we can provide some rides that are less strenuous,” said Jonathan. He added that he and his crew do not tire of talking about cycling routes, overnight trips, and the Olympic Discovery Trail. They are happy, he said, to go out riding with people, and offer coaching inside or outside the shop. For all three owners, this business has turned out to be rewarding on professional and personal levels. The Velo Cats mechanics seek to customize people’s bicycles to make rides more comfortable. You are not stuck with a one-size-fits all set of handlebars, for example.

May is known as Bike Everywhere Month in communities around the United States. For many people, electric bikes make that possible as never before. In Washington state, the WE-Bike rebate program (<https://wsdot.wa.gov/travel/bicycling-walking/bicycling-washington/e-bike-rebate-program>) can save buyers hundreds of dollars on a new ride. Velo Cats is one of the participating dealers in this program, funded by the state Department of Transportation and the Washington Climate Commitment Act. The shop has information about applying, as does the website <https://ebikerebate.wsdot-sites.com/>. The standard rebate on purchase of an e-bike is \$300, while low-income buyers can get a \$1,200 break on standard class 1, 2 or 3 e-bikes, e-cargo, or adaptive electric bicycles. Applications will be accepted through March 29 of next year.

Perhaps the most curious thing about Velo Cats is the creature whose faces appear on the building and on the stickers and t-shirts. That’s Frank and Louie, a real Janus—or two-faced—cat who lived to be 15 years old. This was the longest life of any known Janus cat, according to news sources including National Geographic and Guinness Book of World Records. Love and care from rescuer Martha “Marty” Stevens, a nurse at the Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University, made all the difference for Frank and Louie. Against all odds, this cat thrived. The story “just rang true with everything we’re trying to do,” said Jonathan.

He admitted, however, that some who see the cat painted on the front of the shop misunderstand what this place is. “People ask if we’re a pet store,” he said.

Velo Cats, 1929 West Sims Way, is open 12 noon to 6pm Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, and 12 noon to 5pm Wednesday. More information is found at <https://velocats.com/> and 360-344-2448.

Reporting on this story by Diane Urbani de la Paz

KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon and 5 Tuesday through Thursday, partnering on Wednesday to bring you stories from jeffcobeacon.com. This is Rachel Perkins. Thanks for listening.