Paige Stuart came to Moab for outdoor adventure but it’s the community that kept her here, she said — a community to which she has given back generously.

Stuart started a tool lending library and a bicycle cooperative. She also volunteers and helps organize the Moab Pride Festival.

The Moab Tool Shed is based out of a shed in the courtyard of the Moab Valley Multicultural Center. Stuart started the Tool Shed in April 2013.

“I’ve been to other cities where they have tool libraries — Berkeley, Missoula. And I thought, that’s just so cool ... You need a welder, you go borrow a welder. You need the jackhammer, you go borrow a jackhammer. [They have] these obscure tools that you don't need to have sitting in your garage,” said Stuart.

So she decided that Moab needed a tool lending library too. Stuart worked with a group of friends and coworkers to build the shed from scrap wood. Fundraisers and tool donations helped to stock the shed with tools, which are checked out on the honor system.

“Especially in the spring you go down there and look at the checkout and it’s pretty awesome to see how many people are utilizing it,” she said.

Rhiana Medina, executive director of the Multicultural Center, said Stuart is a longtime volunteer at the center.

“Everthing Paige approaches is respectful and humble and she just has this fantastic and open demeanor,” Medina said. “People like to work with her because she is such a hard worker and creative.”
Now, Medina said, “The tool shed is thriving and so is the Multicultural Center.”

Stuart runs a bicycle cooperative out of the Tool Shed on Sunday afternoons from 2 p.m. until dark, where people can work on bicycle maintenance together. The idea, she said, is for people to work together, learn, and feel empowered to do their own bike maintenance.

Stuart said having a bike cooperative is important in a town like Moab.

“[People] don’t have $45 to drop on a tune-up every time their bike is working bad, so you have a lot of people riding around town with really poorly maintained bikes ... I think it’s a good service to have and such a bike-friendly town. We have a lot of shops competing for tourist dollars but maybe there’s not enough focus on locals who bike.”

Stuart is currently looking for someone who enjoys tool maintenance to help out with the Tool Shed.

“Some of [the tools] fall into a state of disrepair, and I’m not a tool mechanic,” she said.

Stuart also volunteers for Moab Pride and has volunteered or helped organize the event every year except one since the first Moab Pride in 2011.

After a change in the lead organizers, this is a “starting-new year” for Moab Pride, Stuart said. The group is looking for more organizers and volunteers.

“It’s a new beginning for Moab Pride but we’re going to carry on the tradition of having LGBT visibility in Moab because it’s important in a rural, conservative state to promote acceptance of all types of people and to promote equality and openness and expressiveness,” Stuart said. “We’ll definitely need volunteers, if not someone who wants to also help organize ... It might be really low key but it’s going to have a cool new venue in town.”

Before coming to Moab, Stuart lived in Salt Lake City, working as a laboratory technician and as a volunteer coordinator for the Utah Food Bank.

“Then I really wanted to get my hands dirty and learn how to build so I moved down here for Community Rebuilds then went to work at the USGS [U.S. Geological Survey],” she said. “It’s been a little bit of a connect-the-dots kind of career path but I feel like it almost all culminates in having more empowering skill sets like construction, bike mechanics [and] a lot of do-it-yourself kind of stuff. I'm motivated to educate ... and encourage people to embrace new skills and new challenging situations.”

Stuart works on her volunteer projects at least one day each week she said, and more often in the weeks leading up to Moab Pride. She has worked a variety of jobs in town, ranging
from being a lab technician to a bike mechanic. This summer, Stuart is helping organize a circus camp for youth and adults.

“[Moab] brought me here because of the nature and the beauty and the outdoor adventure, but what keeps you here is the community — the active, involved, and embracing community that you don't get in a lot of places ... If I ever needed anything in this town, I feel like not one but a dozen people would rise up to help me. It's really neat.”

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