

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Kent School & Habitat for Humanity of Northwest Connecticut  
Co-Host Dinner for Providence to Seattle Bike & Build Group**

KENT, CT June 8, 2016. Habitat for Humanity of Northwest Connecticut and Kent School continued a long tradition of hosting the Providence to Seattle Bike & Build Group on Wednesday, June 8, 2016. Traditionally a picnic is held on the grounds of Kent School but with rain in the forecast and a larger than normal group, the event was moved indoors to the Dining Hall where the Kent School dining staff provided a delicious dinner of picnic-style food (burgers, hotdogs, pasta salads and the like along with ice cream, cookies and brownies for dessert). While only 3 days into their 70 day trek across the country, about 30 bike & builders from all over the country, age 18 – 26, provided lively conversation during the dinner with the Habitat Board Members in attendance. Campers attending a summer program with Kent School's Pre-Engineering Program also participated in the dinner event.

The Bike & Build group leaders gave a short presentation on the history and mission of the organization which started in 2002. They are on track, over the 16 year history of the organization, to ride more than 10 million miles collectively by the end of the summer. Bike & Build has donated more than 6 million dollars to affordable housing organizations in the US and volunteered for more than 200,000 build site hours (more info can be found on their website: <http://bikeandbuild.org/>).

Travis Southard, a Bike & Build group leader and Digital Content Developer from Philadelphia, PA, noted that "in zero counties in the United States can someone afford fair market rental housing working full time on minimum wage." They advocate to get the message out that having a decent place to live is the basic need "of being human." Each rider is responsible for fundraising \$4,500 to participate as a rider. Those funds go directly to the Bike & Build organization; from that 43% of those funds go directly towards grants of \$2 – 10,000 to other housing organizations. Carlee Schmidt, a materials engineer with Boeing from Phoenix, AZ, and group leader, said "40% goes to the riders to support their trip." However, the most interesting fact is that the more the group is able to save in costs during their trip the more they will have at the end of the summer to donate to a charity of their choice.

That is why it is so important for the group to have "host families" to house them overnight and provide a meal or two. The more meals provided to them the less they will spend thus having more funds to donate. Kudos to The Kent School for providing a place for them to stay for the last several years. And, in collaboration with the local Habitat Affiliate, the riders enjoy a dinner, breakfast the next morning, and granola bars and trail mix to take on their next leg of the ride.

The trip will include 13 “build days” with other affordable housing organizations across the country. Tracy Atwood, President of the local Habitat affiliate, is most enamored with this organization, having two of his own children participate in the program some years ago. “I will be following the P2S group this summer by reading their blog,” said Atwood. The blog can be found here: <https://p2s16.wordpress.com/>. Instagram posts here: <https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/p2s16/>

To top off a great evening of food, friends and fellowship, Megan Sokolnicki, Director of Community Service at Kent School, presented Habitat for Humanity of Northwest Connecticut a pledge of \$5,000 to support their 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary and Capital Campaign to raise \$100,000 for an anniversary build in 2017. The organization is grateful for the continuing support and generosity of Kent School. “This donation arrives on the heels of another contribution by Kent School, a shed built by the Manufacturing Design Class for our new build on Low Rd in Sharon, CT”, said Dawn Whalen, Executive Director for the Habitat affiliate. “This is a project we have wanted to accomplish for quite some time, and with the advent of our Pre-Engineering Program, now have the perfect conduit to accomplish the goal, and plan to make this a yearly service-learning project for the class,” said Sokolnicki. Thank you Kent School and good luck Bike & Build...blessings to you all.

## **ABOUT HABITAT FOR HUMANITY OF NORTHWEST CT:**

Habitat for Humanity of Northwest Connecticut is a locally run affiliate of Habitat for Humanity International, a nonprofit, ecumenical Christian housing organization. We serve the six-town area of Canaan/Falls Village, Cornwall, Norfolk, North Canaan, Salisbury, and Sharon.

**Volunteers** provide most of the labor, and individual and corporate donors provide money and materials to build Habitat houses. **Partner families** are required to work 400 hundred hours - “sweat equity”- in building their own home and the home of others. The houses are sold to the partner families with a no interest loan. The mortgage payments go into a revolving fund used to help build more houses.

Habitat for Humanity of Northwest Connecticut promotes home ownership by building houses in partnership with residents in need of adequate housing. In 2015, our affiliate dedicated its eleventh home located in North Canaan. Construction is underway on the affiliate’s 12<sup>th</sup> home in Sharon on Low Rd, a project in collaboration with the Sharon Housing Trust. A Capital Campaign, to celebrate the affiliate’s 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, is also underway – the goal is to raise \$100,000 by 2017 for an “anniversary build” on one of three available building lots owned by Habitat.

## **ABOUT BIKE ‘N’ BUILD**

Founded in 2002, Bike & Build’s inaugural routes – Central United States and Northern United States – dipped their wheels in the Atlantic Ocean for the first time in 2003. After that, Bike & Build added a new cross-country trip every year for the next six summers: Providence to Seattle in 2004, Southern United States in 2005, Providence to San Francisco (now Connecticut to California) in 2006, North Carolina to San Diego in 2007, Boston to Santa Barbara (now Maine to

Santa Barbara) in 2008, and South Carolina to Santa Cruz in 2009. During our first 13 years, Bike & Build's eight cross-country trips have engaged 3,000 young adults in service. Each summer, they now pedal over 1 million cumulative miles raising awareness for the cause.

In recent years Bike & Build has expanded our shorter offerings as well. Starting in 2009, our first regional ride- The Capital Ride- ran from Richmond, VA to Philadelphia, PA. After four years, this route evolved into Coastal Drift – a 3-week adventure along the Atlantic Coast from Bar Harbor, ME to New York City. Emulating that successful transition, Drift West became our 10<sup>th</sup> summer trip in 2015, a 3-weeker exploring the Pacific Northwest from Portland, OR to Bellingham, WA

### **About Kent School**

Kent is an independent co-educational boarding school located between the Appalachian Trail and the Housatonic River in Northwest Connecticut. Students at Kent are part of a dynamic community of learning, with our 575 students hailing from over 30 states and 40 countries. At Kent we are dedicated to educating students in preparation for college, and life beyond. We accomplish this through a challenging academic program, including 27 AP courses and a Pre-Engineering certificate program, with instruction provided by our talented faculty. Kent's strong college preparatory curriculum provides a classical liberal arts education, preparing students to go on to study at leading colleges and universities. Kent offers a wide array of extra-curricular activities, fielding 54 interscholastic teams, in addition to horseback riding, mountain biking, skiing, dance, theater and much more. For more information about Kent, visit [www.kent-school.edu](http://www.kent-school.edu).



Bike & Build group dining with Habitat Board of Directors @ Kent School



Bike & Build Group leaders along with Magen Sokolnicki (right), Director of Community Services, Kent School



Presentation of \$5,000 pledge.

Pictured Left to Right: Habitat Board of Directors – Micheal Kahler, Tracy Atwood, Kathy Stupak, George Massey, Dawn Whalen – Habitat Executive Director, Megan Sokolnicki – Dir. Of Community Service, Kent School, Bill Spalding, Tom Bartram, and Judi Moore



P2S Bike & Build group (Providence to Seattle)



P2S Group ready to ride on Thursday morning, June 9 – after a restful night's sleep @ The Kent School



Members of the Manufacturing Design class @ Kent School  
Shed Delivery to Habitat build on 273 Low Rd, Sharon