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## LFC student rides to help Habitat for Humanity

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July 3, 2008

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A soon-to-be junior at Lake Forest College is taking part of her summer to raise money for affordable housing while cycling across the country.

Samantha LePicier, 19, and 29 other riders from all over the country are biking from Providence, R.I., which they left June 2., to San Francisco to raise money for affordable housing and build houses for Habitat for Humanity along the way.

"I think that biking across country the first time made me realize how much poverty our country is experiencing," LePicier said. "When people think of poverty they think of Third World countries, but it's also really a problem in our own country, more than we think."

The trip is organized through Bike & Build, a non-for-profit organization founded in 2002 to empower young adults to take socially and responsible action and raise money and awareness for affordable housing efforts.

This summer Bike & Build is supporting seven cross-country trips with more than 210 participants in an effort to raise at least \$420,000 for affordable housing projects.

"Since there are so many routes, we're having an impact on the entire country," said LePicier, who is from Williamstown, Mass.

She heard about Bike & Ride while cycling from Savannah, Ga., to Los Angeles in 2004 after her sophomore year in high school.

"During that wonderful trip, I thought about how easy it would be to raise money if I was cycling to fundraise for a specific cause," she said. "I decided to fulfill the task of raising money while cycling across the country."

In 2003, she also participated in a trip from London to Rome through a bike tour program called Outdoor Adventure.

Lots of participants

To participate in Bike & Build, each rider must raise \$4,000, which help fund young adult-driven affordable housing projects. So far, more than 550 participants have cycled cross-country with Bike & Build, collectively raising \$1.1 million.

LePicier raised the required amount through letters to family friends. In addition, she rode a stationary bike trainer on a busy street in her town next to a sign describing what she was raising money for.

LePicier and her group, scheduled to complete their journey in San Francisco Aug. 12, stop every day in different cities along the way to rest and talk to their host families -- in churches, community centers and schools -- about affordable housing.

"We're all wearing the same jersey everyday. A lot of people are donating to individuals, and we add that to the pot for the group," LePicier said.

In certain towns, the bikers stop for two days to meet with Habitat for Humanity groups and help them build houses. In Providence, there was no site available to build on so they all went to a warehouse to build the pre-framing for a new house.

"The affordable housing cause is about building housing that is affordable for people to own. Habitat focuses on

ownership. It's important for people to feel a sense of ownership," LePicier said.

The second build day was in Pennsylvania where the 30 riders built roof trusses. LePicier said about 50 high school students worked with them. "They could see what we were doing and learn from example," she said.

She said traveling with 30 people is really an eye opener. "We get to meet all sorts of different people," she said.

In addition to studying environmental science at Lake Forest College, she is part of a Habitat for Humanity group. The participants meet once a week and have a build day once a month. "We helped put in windows in a house in Waukegan," she said.



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