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Media Relations

UNH Technician To Bike Across America For Affordable Housing

April 6, 2011

DURHAM, N.H. – The longest bike ride University of New Hampshire research technician and alumna Rachel Mixon ’10 has ever taken was from Dover to the Seacoast, a distance of about 22 miles. On a bike that didn’t change gears.

That doesn’t exactly equate to the training it takes to bike nearly 3,000 miles but Mixon isn’t deterred. Come May and for the following two months, Mixon will work her way to California with fellow volunteers for Bike and Build, a nonprofit group that organizes long-distance cycling trips to benefit affordable housing.

Riders depart from eight different East Coast locations. Mixon leaves May 16 from Nags Head, North Carolina, for San Diego. Along the way, they will stop to work on local building projects, and to talk with community residents about housing issues. The volunteers will stay in churches, schools and community centers. Some nights will be spent camping out. Dinners will be provided by hosts.

Mixon stays fit as the coach of the UNH judo club, and through her own judo competitions. She runs “here and there” and does yoga. A research technician at the stable isotope lab in Spaulding Hall and at the Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans and Space, she also bikes to campus from her home in Dover a few times a week.

And now that spring has arrived, she will start biking hard to get in the 500 miles Bike and Build asks riders to complete before their cross-country trip begins.

“I’m always active but I just haven’t been doing a lot of biking,” Mixon says. “But it’s not like we’re going to ride straight to California. There will be stops along the way, so I feel like it will be fine.”

Still, she says, she plans on getting on her bike every day between now and the time she leaves.

The Bedford native, who has always biked recreationally, had been thinking about taking a long trip for the last three or four years, trying to decide between biking on her own to California or on hiking the Appalachian Trail. When she was accepted by Bike and Build, (she had applied last year but all the slots were full), the decision was made.

“This is more than just the icing on the cake,” Mixon says. “I’m really excited to be doing something for such a great cause.”

Prior to her May 13 departure, Mixon has to raise $4,000 (a fundraiser takes place Friday, April 8, at Redhook Brewery in Portsmouth) and volunteer on local housing builds. As of March 30, she had $900 more to go.

“Because I’m a renter, I knew something about how hard it can be to find decent, affordable housing but my main focus was more on ecosystems and less on people-oriented issues,” says Mixon says, who majored in biology and the classics while at UNH. “But I’ve read so much now, I have a better understanding of what a huge problem it is, and I’m glad for the chance to help do something about it.”

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state’s flagship public institution, enrolling 12,200 undergraduate and 2,300 graduate students.

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Photographs available to download:
http://unh.edu/news/campusjournal/2011/Apr/storyInclude/06biking_Inc_clip_image001.jpg
Caption: Rachel Mixon ’10, a lab technician at UNH’s stable isotope lab, leaves May 13 for a bike trek across the country that will have her building houses along the way. Credit: Jody Record, UNH Media Relations

http://unh.edu/news/campusjournal/2011/Apr/storyInclude/06biking_Inc_clip_image001_0000.jpg
Caption: Rachel Mixon with "Edna," the Giant Avial bicycle provided by Bike and Build for her cross-country bike trip. Credit: Jody Record, UNH Media Relations

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