



# Habitat 500 Bike Ride

Fundraiser for North St. Louis County Habitat for Humanity



Support a Rider . . .

. . . pave the way to better life!



North St. Louis County  
**Habitat**  
for Humanity®

Habitat works in partnership with people in need to renovate and build decent, affordable housing.

**Inside, meet our 2013 families and the riders who will bike 500 miles this July to raise money and awareness for Habitat!**

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Office: 218-749-8910  
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Dear Friend of Habitat,

Spring took its sweet time getting here this year! This fact was very evident for our Habitat 500 bike riders starting the training necessary for the 500 miles that will be ridden in seven days to raise funds and awareness for six Habitat projects in the Northland. As we have ventured out on two and four wheels, abundant pot holes and rough pavement have created many obstacles that threaten to bust tires and wear out shocks!

Cyclists are keenly aware of rough roads. Even while driving we are observing the way ahead and thinking, "this road would be very difficult, even painful to ride a bike on!" For cyclists, rough roads cause flats, jar joints and disrupt the "comfortable feeling" of a small bike seat!

Our partner families have faced many difficulties on their journey to finding adequate shelter. "Pot holes" such as mold, unsafe living conditions, life events and substandard, overpriced apartments make the way ahead seem hopeless and harsh. Our Habitat homeownership application includes the question, "Why do you need a Habitat home?" Some of the answers to this question break my heart:

- "We stay in a very unhealthy environment that is too small for all five of us."
- "I have a five year old who has many disabilities. He cannot walk yet because I do not have the necessary room for his equipment and the carpet in our apartment is not suitable for a walker."
- "I would like to be able to buy a home so that my children can feel secure and be raised in the same place rather than moving all the time to try to find a better neighborhood and house."
- My daughter and I currently live in a one bedroom apartment. I have converted the living room into my bedroom and my daughter has the bedroom."
- "My son has to crawl up the stairs to use the bathroom since our home does not have a handicapped accessible facility on the first floor."
- "I live in a very small home where my son and daughter have to share one bedroom."

As I ride 500 miles my mind often turns to these statements for motivation. Families have experienced many deep pot holes in their attempts to find a decent place to live. As a Habitat 500 cyclist, the rough roads we face are temporary and serve as great reminders that we are riding to eliminate real obstacles that families face in meeting their basic need of a home.

We would like to invite you to help us clear the path for six families to get out of substandard housing situations this year. You can help them with the stability, safety and sustainability that a Habitat home can provide. Your donation will help pave the way to a better life! Please check out the stories of our six families and the riders who are raising funds and awareness for them. Your generosity will make a big difference in these families lives this year.

Sincerely,

Nathan Thompson, Executive Director

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# Thrivent Builds Partnership in Hibbing!

The Johnson Family, Hibbing • Riders: Rev. Brian Birk, Deb Hultman, Greg Krog, Caroline Owens

**Habitat address:  
1510 E 12th St, Hibbing  
Ground Breaking:  
Sunday, June 9th, 5:00pm**

This year the Thrivent house is being built in Hibbing. The home owner family is Marge Johnson and her five sons. Marge is excited to become a home owner. Her renting days will soon be over and she is anxious to have her own washing machine in her own house and looking forward to hanging her wash outside to dry. She looks forward to having a small camp fire in her own yard. Marge does house keeping work for the Super 8 hotel in Hibbing.

The team that is riding for the Thrivent house consists of Brian Birk, Greg Krog, Caroline Owens and Deb Hultman.

Caroline Owens is an experienced rider. This will be her eighth Habitat 500 bike ride. She has served on the North St Louis County Habitat for Humanity board for ten years. She was the president

of the board for two years and is currently the treasurer. Caroline expressed appreciation for our affiliate's partnership with Thrivent. They have provided our affiliate with grants for many thousands of dollars since even before the merger that created Thrivent took place. There are thousands of people all over the world in Habitat for Humanity homes who would not be in those homes if not for Thrivent grants.

Deb Hultman rode her first Habitat 500 last year. She attends Grace Lutheran Church in Ely where Caroline Owens is also a member. She wanted to do the ride for five years before she did it. Deb needed time to recover from cancer treatments before she felt that she was physically strong enough to ride 500 miles. Last year's ride was a challenge for her, but she made it and had a good experience. She enjoyed hearing from home owners and being around the other riders and volunteers. The ride was well planned and well supported. She was planning to do the ride just one time and cross it off her "to do" list, but she kept thinking about last year's ride and decided to do it again.

Greg Krog was part of a team ride last year. He rode two days of the ride and is doubling that effort this year. He will ride for four days and his other team member, Tom Long, will ride the other three days. Greg is a Thrivent Financial Representative and is riding to raise funds for the Thrivent house. Greg is a people person. He works for a company that helps people in many ways. He enjoyed the people he met on last year's ride and is looking forward to riding again. He made sure that one of his days will be the 100 mile day.



**Above: Riders Deb Hultman  
Caroline Owens**

Brian Birk is riding in his fourteenth ride this year. The ride has become part of his life. He enjoys spending a week with his son, Phillip, who is also riding in his fourteenth ride. Brian has served on both the North St. Louis County Habitat for Humanity board and the Mesabi Thrivent Chapter board. Phillip is currently the president of the Western Lake Superior Habitat for Humanity board.

Thank you Habitat for putting together a great organization to help a great cause. Thank you Habitat Minnesota for always organizing great rides, and thank you Thrivent for being a wonderful partner along the way.

~Brian Birk



**Left- Rider Brian Birk, Right- Rider  
Greg Krog,  
Center- The Johnson Family**

# Bringing People Together to Build Hope

The Bennett Family, Virginia •  
Riders: Doug and Christy Gettle, Dave Bergum

**Habitat address:  
105 12th Ave Virginia  
Ground Breaking: July**

We would like to welcome Tina Bennett and her son Michael to the Habitat for Humanity FAMILY in North St. Louis County.

Habitat 'Family'. Tina has completed the application process, and started doing her required sweat equity and already she senses that she is going to meet, and make friends with, dozens of people before her house is built this summer.

We all have our immediate families, our extended families, and our church 'families', etc. But, as Habitat volunteers, we are part of an even larger 'extended family' related to one another by a desire to express God's love through service. Tina, be prepared to be overwhelmed by the friendship and love of the volunteers that you meet!

Tina's son, Michael, will be celebrating his 6th birthday about the time that ground is broken for her house on 12th Avenue this summer. Michael has three sisters--the youngest is 21 years older than him and have their own

homes. He also has cerebral palsy and likely will be in a wheel chair for life. This was a major reason that Tina applied for a Habitat For Humanity home. There are very few affordable housing units in our area that meet handicap accessibility requirements and the waiting list is long. Tina's house will have wide doors and hallways, a roll-in shower, and other handicap accommodations for Michael. Plus, her mortgage and utilities will be affordable.

When we met with Tina at her apartment in Virginia, she talked about the reasons that most of us have for owning a home: having an affordable monthly payment, having a yard to take care of, not worrying about pounding nails in the walls to hang pictures, having pets and, finally, a space to put all the plants that have ended up on neighbors patios because there wasn't enough room! But one of the things that caught my attention was the excitement that Tina expressed at meeting and becoming a part of the



**Above: Riders Doug and Christy Gettle  
Below: Rider Dave Bergum, Ely**

Riding this year to raise support to build Tina and Michael's house are Dave Bergum from the Ely area and Doug and Christy Gettle from the Virginia area. Dave, Doug and Christy are longtime volunteers with Habitat for Humanity and longtime riders in the Habitat 500. We each have our reasons for riding each year; love of riding, the challenge of staying fit, glory, revisiting tolerance for pain and suffering, etc. But seriously, we do it to raise money and awareness for the need for affordable decent housing for families like Tina's. We so much appreciate your time, encouragement, and financial support in helping us build homes for Tina and five other families in North St. Louis County this year.

~ Doug Gettle





# Helping to Keep Families Dancing Together!

The Hansen Family, Virginia • Riders: Ben and Lisa Buchanan, Bob Buchanes

**Habitat address:  
107 12th Ave Virginia  
Ground Breaking: July**

When you are looking for rental properties, there is a bit of a dance involved. You have to be quick and ready to move. A rental property can be available one day and gone the next. It can be frustrating, to nobody's fault, as the landlord may be willing to rent to

anyone who comes along and will agree to their terms. Or they may want to rent to someone that they know, or at least have a connection to, because they may feel more confident in that persons ability to take better care of the house. This can leave someone new to a community feeling disadvantaged as they may not be aware of houses for rent that are advertised by word of mouth. I say this not as a critique of the housing industry; rather I say this to point out that these are realities that you learn as an adult. These are adult issues... this is an adult dance...

I met with Gail Hansen, a future recipient of a Habitat house in Virginia, MN that will be groundbreaking in July. As she began sharing, I was stunned by the story that she told me when asked about her children and their excitement about the house. Gail has two children, Nolah who is seven years old and Natalee who is five. She has also been watching, and may soon become guardian to, her nine year old niece, Kelsie. The first story that Gail told about her children and the possibility of the new house was that they became very concerned that they couldn't move in right away because they were worried that the house would become unavailable. It took some time to explain to them that the house hasn't been built yet, and Gail had to drive the children out to the site where the house is going to be built to show them that the house wasn't there yet, so they didn't need to worry. Needless to say, I was stunned to hear that her children, at their early age, are already too familiar with the stresses involved with their mother's dance of trying to rent, work and provide for her family.

Gail's children have inherited their mother's love of

music, and she shared the family loves to turn up music and have dance parties. This kind of dancing involves spontaneity and fun, it promotes health and happiness and family bonding. This is the kind of dancing that children should be doing.

When asked about the home, Gail said that while her children are too young to help out with the sweat equity, she feels that it will be a great education for them to watch as their house gets built and a great lesson for them to get to know the Habitat crew and volunteers who are gracious enough to donate their time and energy to help out a neighbor in need. She was grateful for all who are riding the Habitat 500... which was good to hear, because, due to the late start of the cycling season this year, I'm not entirely sure how grateful I am to have signed up for the ride at this point. It is going to be a challenge to get ready!

Near the end of our time together, I asked about what she was most looking forward to with the new house. There was no hesitation as she listed hopes and dreams that will soon be become a reality for her. A back yard for the children, an area for planting and flower boxes. A washer and dryer so she can do laundry at home instead of hauling everyone's clothes to the laundry mat. And she talked about the design of the house that she picked out, apparently a design few families have chosen, but one with a big open living area for family gatherings. To gather around a table for a meal together, or maybe to clear out and have a dance party from time to time...

Thank you for supporting Habitat for Humanity and helping to keep families dancing together!

~Ben Buchanan



**Above: The Hansen Family  
Below: Riders Ben and Lisa  
Buchanan**



# Determined to Find a Better Life

The Larsen Family, Virginia • Riders: Mike Stone, NTS Team

**Habitat address:**  
**224 N 3rd St. Virginia**  
**Ground Breaking: August**

Hello, I am Mike Stone. I had the privilege of serving as North St. Louis County's Habitat for Humanity's first AmeriCorps VISTA ten years ago. A lot has changed in the last 10 years! It has been exciting to see the growth in this organization. When I served as a full time volunteer with Habitat we helped three families, now we are helping six per year. The organization's growth is a testament to all the dedicated volunteers and staff who have worked to make it possible to serve more families who need a simple, decent and affordable home.

The last ten years have been good to me as well. I have worked at Northeast Technical Services in Virginia and have recently become part owner in the business. Having ridden in the Habitat 500 in 2004, one of my goals has been to come back and do this incredible ride again. I am finally at a place in my business where we have the time and resources to work with Habitat to give back to the community through this ride. I will be riding the entire ride and three of my employees will be riding as a team to complete three days of the 500 mile trip. It was great to meet with Waynette Larsen to get to know her as our company is working to raise funds for her home.

I learned when I did this ride back in 2004 that the only way you can get through it is to have a lot of determination! I was struck by Waynette's determination as I visited with her about her journey to homeownership. Waynette has an amazing amount of perseverance and determination. She has struggled living in an apartment with

her two teenage sons, Logan and Levi, for the past 3 years. Her family is extremely crowded in their small apartment and it is hard to get ahead because any time she earns more money her rent increases. Waynette is concerned about the negative impact of the apartment atmosphere on her sons. They are surrounded by peer pressure and crime. The cops frequent her apartment complex, leaving Waynette and her family scared in their own home.

Waynette was determined to find a better life for her family. She applied for a Habitat home four times in the past four years, each time being turned away with suggestions to qualify the next time. In October of 2012 she received the phone call saying she was selected as one of Habitat for Humanity's partner families for the 2013 building season. Her home was made available to Habitat by the Nelson family after Carol Nelson, who built with Habitat in 2000, passed away this last winter. Volunteers will be working with Waynette to add a third bedroom and bring the home back up to new condition.

Please consider partnering with us to raise the needed funds to bring this determined family home!

~Mike Stone

"Habitat will give my family a brighter future as I will have a place to call home, and my boys will have a secure place with chores, structure and a better living environment without neighbors upstairs, downstairs and in all directions. It will brighten our future for the rest of our lives knowing we have a safe place to call home, and no one can take that away from us.

~Waynette Larsen



**Above: Waynette Larsen and her mom, Habitat 500 rider Mike Stone.**

**Below: Habitat riders Steve Pellinen, Kristi Anderson, Dan Whitney and the Larsen family**



# Starting a New and Better Life

The Hackett Home • Riders: Nathan and Marjie Thompson, Josh and Mariah Peterson, Emma Keeler

## Habitat address:

1212 E. 13th St

Hibbing, MN

Anticipated move in: August

This year, Nathan Thompson, his daughter Marjie, Emma Keeler and Mariah and Josh Peterson, have the privilege of getting to know the Hackett family. Katie Hackett is the loving mother of two wonderful boys, Gabe (7) and Michael (14). Gabe is by far the cutest and smartest 7 year old we have ever met. When talking with him, we



learned that we couldn't get much past him. Michael was not able to be with us during our visit due to some choices that he made while the family was living in the Twin Cities. It was these choices and hardships that Michael was facing that brought them back to Hibbing to start a new and better life. Katie, who is a body builder on the side, is currently working for Thrivent Financial for Lutherans. Right now they are sharing a trailer home in Hibbing, MN with another couple. Working for Thrivent, Katie became aware of Habitat for Humanity when her boss was getting ready to go on a Global Missions trip with Habitat. It was through their conversations that she learned about what Habitat for

Humanity was and that it was not impossible for her to have her own home. Listening to the Hackett family's story, it was immediately apparent that they needed to get out of where they are and move to a place of their own.

At this point, with the normal Habitat process, you would expect them to find a suitable lot and go through the process of building a home. It will be a little different for the Hackett family. Instead of building their own home, Habitat has a home that they recently bought back from a previous family. Even though the house will need some work to restore it to its original glory, with a little tender loving care, the Hackett family will have their own home sooner than expected. It will be through the restoration process that Katie and her sons will be fulfilling the sweat equity requirement that is needed for a Habitat home.

Even though it has been a long hard road for Katie and her boys, they have persevered through the trials of life and are now only months away from owning their very own home. We have a feeling that this house will become more than a house. It will be a constant reminder that even when things look ugly and nothing seems like it can be fixed, there is help in the world and there is hope. With help and hope great things can happen. We invite you to be a part of their Habitat house with us. As we all work together to support this family we will be creating memories that will last a lifetime. Congratulations Katie, Gabe, and Michael on your soon-to-be new home.



Above: Emma Keeler

Below from left to right: Riders: Marjie & Nathan Thompson, The Hackett Family, and Mariah & Josh Peterson

~Mariah Peterson



# Sixth Family Needed... You Can Help

Family To Be Determined, Hibbing •  
Riders: Tom and Lois Long, Alina Stevenson



**Habitat address:**  
**1212 15th Ave E. Hibbing**  
**Ground Breaking: Sept**

The partnership with the Applied Learning Institute, the Hibbing Community College and the Hibbing and Chisholm High schools has been secured for the sixth year!

This home, to begin in September, needs your help! We working to get the word out to potential applicants in the Hibbing community. Families that are ideal for the Habitat program often think that home ownership will never be a

reality for them. You can help us get the word out that Habitat can make a difference in their lives. Encourage a family to apply today! More information about the application process can be found on [www.nslchfh.org](http://www.nslchfh.org) or by calling the office.

## Habitat Needs a Simple, Decent Home

Riders: Tom and Lois Long, Alina Stevenson

Habitat 500 riders Alina Stevenson, Lois Long and Tom Long (pictured below) will be riding for a home of a different focus this year. A new home for North St. Louis County Habitat for Humanity! While a new home for Habitat may not have the emotional appeal of building for one of our great partner families, it does have the emotional appeal of all of our Habitat partner families both present and future.

Habitat needs a new home. If you have been to our current office recently you might understand the need of having a good roof overhead! Habitat needs a permanent home. The organization started out with an all volunteer board that utilized someone's kitchen table. As the need grew to have central

location to keep files and hold board meetings, Habitat moved into a cubicle in a realtor agency with access to their conference room for small meetings. Once the first employee, an executive director, was hired real office space was needed. An inexpensive office was found that contained the buildings steam closet that kept the whole building so warm that open windows were the only cure for acceptable temps during the winter.

After four moves in 7 years the need for simple, decent and affordable housing became a priority. Even to this day equipment and supplies are spread around different board and staff member's garages, basements, barns and back lots. The need to gain efficiency by having centralized space for construction equipment and materials and the benefits of purchasing certain materials in bulk and not for each house separately will be a great benefit to holding down cost and helping everyone work more efficiently, allowing us to build more homes.

The stories of each and every habitat family rings in the ears of these riders as we peddle mile after mile to the end of having a new home for North St. Louis County Habitat for Humanity. The new office and warehouse will enable Habitat to grow into serving more families in coming years and to expand the work of Habitat by providing stability, safety and efficiencies of owning our own home. There will be a conference room for holding partner family meetings, board meetings, committee meetings, newsletter preparation and many more events. We look forward to having a home where people can find us and not have to call to see if we have moved again.

Please consider encouraging one of our riders and support the building of the new office and warehouse building or one of our six homeowner projects. Thank you for being part of North St. Louis County Habitat for Humanity and for putting God's love into action by helping a family in need.

~ Tom Long

Seek the LORD and his strength, seek his presence continually.

-1 Chronicles 16:11

### WEBSITE AND EMAIL

Track the progress of this year's projects and find when and where volunteers are needed by visiting our website:



[www.nslchfh.org](http://www.nslchfh.org)

Or feel free to call us for the latest volunteer opportunities:

**(866)749-8910**

If you would like to receive email updates on volunteer opportunities and events please send us an email with that request to:

[habitat@nslchfh.org](mailto:habitat@nslchfh.org)

#### Mission:

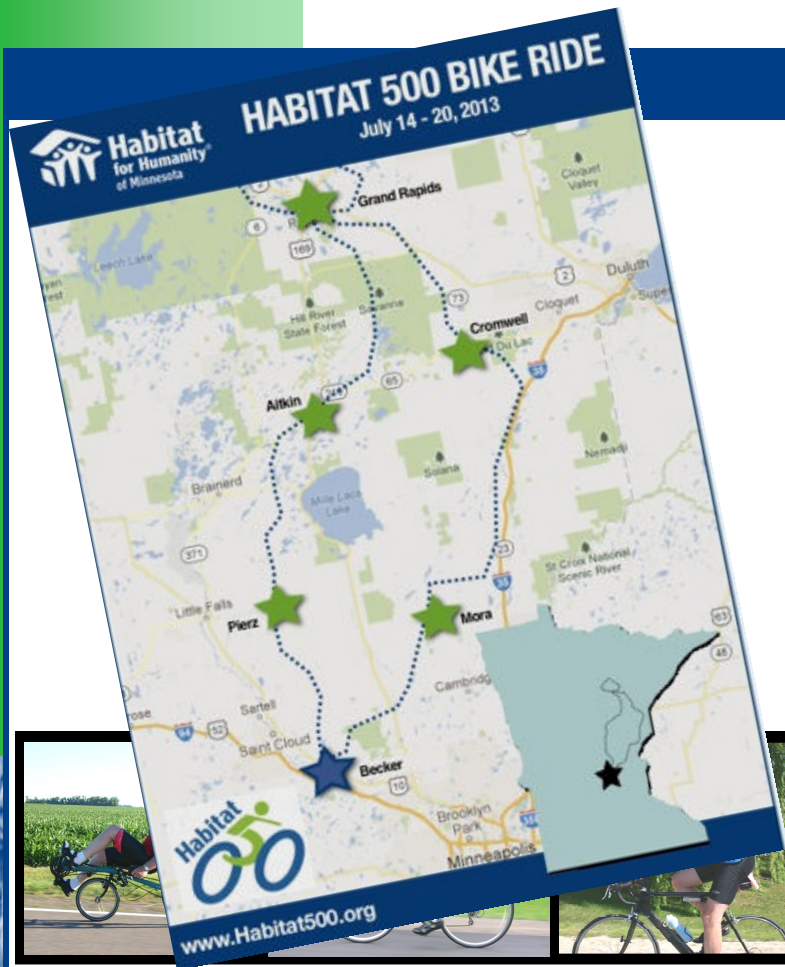
Seeking to put God's love into action, Habitat for Humanity brings people together to build homes, communities and hope.





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## HELP US BUILD SIX HOMES!

This July, twenty-two bikers will embark on a 500 mile journey to raise money for Habitat for Humanity.

To truly come to understand the heart and mission of our affiliate, they have met with Habitat's 2013 partner families to share and celebrate their Habitat stories.

We invite you into their stories and on their journeys as together we are: "Building homes and hope in North St. Louis County".

