

Peddling for a Purpose

Local Organization Prepares for 120-mile Fundraising Bike Ride for Autism

Bethesda, MD – *Bike to the Beach, Inc. (B2B)*, a non-profit organization founded by four Washington, D.C.-area residents will host its ninth annual 120-mile bike ride from Washington, D.C. to Bethany Beach, DE this summer on August 1. At last year's inaugural fundraising ride, the group included 21 riders, and raised \$23,000 for Cure Autism Now. This year B2B is aiming much higher, hoping for 100 riders with a goal of raising more than \$100,000 for Autism Speaks.

The group held a launch party last week at Tommy Joes Bar & Restaurant in Bethesda where they educated people about the ride itself as well as their chosen charity, Autism Speaks, the world's largest advocacy organization dealing with Autism.

"We were just hoping to crack 100 [guests], but by 9:00 pm, we had given out well over 200 wristbands! As hosts, we were definitely stretched, but it was a good dilemma to be in. As Bike to the Beachers, we thrive when pushed to our limit," **Co-President Ben Dalley** said after the event.

The B2B tradition began in 1999 when the organization's founding member and current **Vice President Joey Schmitz** and Ben Dalley—then recent graduates of Georgetown prep—decided on a whim to bike from Washington to the Delaware beach. What began as a challenge between two friends grew into a larger event each year and in 2007 Joey, Ben, and now **Co-President Tommy Schmitz** were inspired to parlay the buzz surrounding the event into a fundraiser. Because several of the past riders had family ties to Autism, the charity was an easy choice. With minimal planning, the group recruited 21 riders and raised over \$23,000 in just 3 months. This year, the group is looking for 100 riders.

"You don't have to be Lance Armstrong to do Bike to the Beach; many of our riders have never biked more than 5 miles in their life," explained **Secretary and Events Manager Kevin Rapp**.

Bike to the Beach continues to grow and move forward with a 100% completion rate; no rider has ever failed to reach the steps of Bethany's boardwalk, a feeling most riders can only describe as surreal. Last year, Holly Bigalow became the first woman to participate in B2B, completing the 120 mile expedition right on pace with the rest of the group. She reflected, "The sense of accomplishment is amazing, personally and as part of the team; I hope this inspires others to challenge themselves. I feel that we are all capable of a lot more than we think – physically and otherwise."

"The original theme of finding our true potential is still the same, but it's no longer strictly physical. Instead of 'How far can I bike? Can I really make it 120 miles?'... Now it's 'How much of a difference can I make? Can I really raise \$100,000 for Autism?' And if there is anything Bike to the Beach has taught us, it's that the answer is probably yes," said Tommy at the launch party.... "Next year we'll shoot even higher – maybe a half a million [dollars] - because we know that if we put our minds to it, together we can accomplish a lot more than expected. That's what Bike to the Beach is all about."

That positive mindset and enthusiasm for making a difference was on display at the Bike to the Beach '08 launch party. The group was expecting to host 100 friends and relatives, raise \$1000-\$2000, and register some riders. In the end, expectations were once again exceeded, as B2B welcomed almost 250 guests, raised almost \$4500, and registered more than a dozen riders for the 2008 ride. And with its first corporate sponsor of 2008 already signed up—**Coakley Williams Construction**—Bike to the Beach is well on its way to reaching its goals. With this group -- whose motto, "Nil Volentibus Arduum," translates from the Latin as "Nothing is impossible for the willing" -- that shouldn't come as a surprise.

For more information on Bike to the Beach for Autism, please visit the B2B website at www.biketotheseach.org, or email Tommy Schmitz at tschmitz@biketotheseach.org.