

October 2009

To the participants and supporters of the Habitat 500 Bike Ride,

2009 has been nothing short of amazing for my family. The spring begun with a groundbreaking ceremony on the future building site, and the year will close finding Gabe, Annika, and myself settling into our brand new, completed home in time to celebrate Christmas.

When I first filled out the application, I never could have dreamed the avalanche of blessings that would heap upon us as the project marched on toward completion. One of the greatest of those blessings took place the week of the Ride to Rebuild. Every single person that I met was enthusiastic and friendly, and ready to help! As I chatted with people, I learned what a dedicated group you are! The effort that each person had to put into preparing for the ride, both physically and financially is impressive! It shows a lot of character to give up a week of your lives in the middle of summer to selflessly help an organization that helps so many people to achieve their dream! I was glad to see that you also have a good time doing it!

The evening of the supper at the house will live forever in my memory. I thought that fifteen picnic tables in my front yard would be excessive; little did I know it wouldn't be enough! I'm planning on framing a photo of the event; when the entire group gathered in front of and on top of the house, it created an amazing visual display of great magnitude. It was truly evidence of the power of passionate and dedicated people, and what they can accomplish.



When last you were in Rushford, the house looked a lot different than it does today. The finishing touches will be applied to the interior in the next several weeks, for an intended move-in date of December 1st. Presently, the house has some seasonal decorations to personalize it; namely, pumpkins (from both our own backyard garden, and the gardens of local well-wishers), and a Minnesota Vikings doormat. I still need to get a flagpole to display a matching flag that will wave up until we win the Superbowl early next year. ☺ Thanks to an amazing and inspired girlfriend, my daughter will have the pink room of her fantasies. The centerpiece of Gabe's room will be framed artwork salvaged from the walls of our destroyed trailer house. Although we narrowly avoided the disaster of the flood, our

previous residence was destroyed, with a few of our belongings remaining, including some hand-painted Spiderman murals on Gabe's bedroom wall. Their restoration will be a constant reminder that by walking hand-in-hand with the Lord, we have been led to greener pastures. We now know firsthand the kindness and love of our fellow man; we have seen with our own eyes how there is no room for doubt when you have the Lord on your side.



Come spring we will experience the thrill of biking around our new neighborhood for the first time. Oh, we've gotten much use out of our bikes over the summer, don't get me wrong, but it will be great to not have a steep, nasty hill to climb up in order to get home. Annika's first big-girl bike went over really well! She went from a toddler trike to a two-wheeler with training wheels with almost no difficulty. The beautiful bike should last her for years! Gabe has enjoyed his bike all summer, too. Even though we live just a block away, he still likes to ride it down the hill to school. He has traded his allegiance from his scooter to his bike. And me? Well, mine's purple! What more do you need?

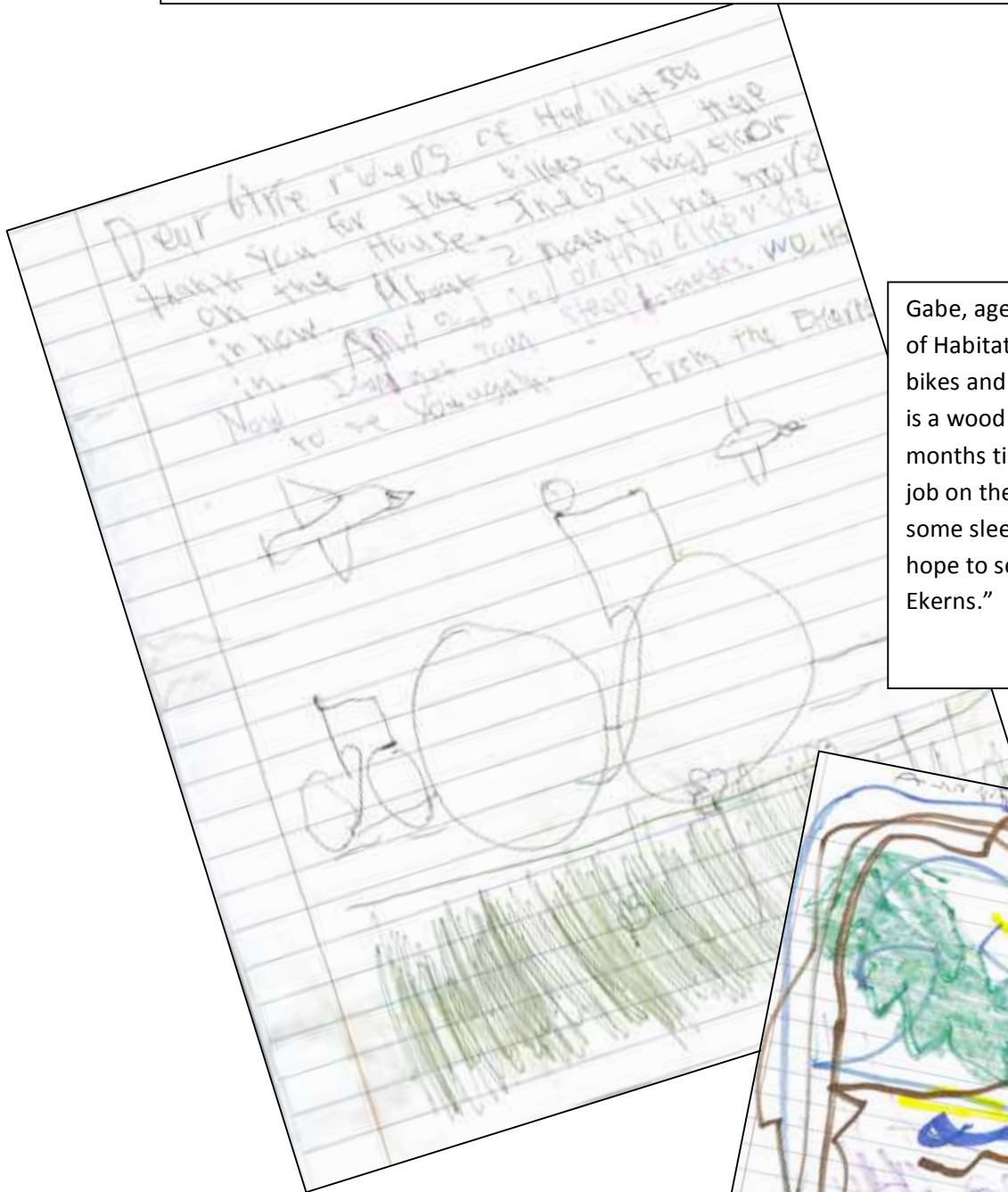
I would love for anyone who lives near to come to the dedication and open house, coming up November 21st at 4pm at the house (30457 S. Whitmore St.)! See the project you helped out with come to fruition! Having a home to settle into will afford us the stability to move forward with our lives, and give back to the community in a deeper way. I feel so honored to have been the Bike Home Lady for 2009! You all know where I live now, so next time you come to ride the Root River Trail, swing over for some coffee and cookies! I can't begin to express my gratitude for all you did for us, and my thrill at being involved in such a wonderful project and organization. In summation, thank you, thank you, thank you!!!

Sincerely,

Kristin, Gabriel, and Annika Ekern



Gabe and Annika Thank You!



Gabe, age 11, says, "Dear bike riders of Habitat 500 thank you for the bikes and help on the house. There is a wood floor in now. About 2 months till we move in. And good job on the bike ride. Now I can get some sleep do to the neighbors. We hope to see you again. From the Ekerns."

Annika, age 4, drew a picture of her new house and is excited to have a pink bedroom!

