



KERRI MARTIN WITH STUDENT AT SECOND LIFE BIKES // PHOTO BY SRS PHOTOGRAPHY

ASBURY'S SECOND LIFE BIKES CHOSEN FOR A&E PROJECT STARTUP

BOOST FOR GROUP'S CAMPAIGN TO BUY BUILDING; CONNECTION FIRST MADE AT TEDX NAVESINK

ASBURY PARK – Now this is a helluva triCity story, involving links between a couple groups that this newspaper has backed from their beginning.

It's primarily about Asbury's Second Life Bikes. But it's also about the power of the local TEDxNavesink group to connect people in furtherance of the values of innovative and broad-minded action that we all share.

Coincidentally, triCity Publisher Dan Jacobson features TEDxNavesink in his column this week. The group is encouraging those in the area to apply to give a "TED talk" at the second annual TEDxNavesink gathering in May at Red Bank's Two River Theater.

And it's a connection that formed at last year's TEDxNavesink that led to Second Life Bikes getting a big boost in its crowd-funding campaign to buy its Asbury Park building — the group was just selected to participate in A&E network's "Project Startup" initiative.

Under the leadership of Executive Director Kerri Martin, Asbury's Second Life Bikes has grown into a remarkable force. The non-profit sells and refurbishes donated used bikes, as well as providing repair services. In the process, it gives training to local kids in bicycle repair and a whole lot of other life lessons to boot. Second Life Bikes also provides inexpensive transportation for people in our community. Even better, as it's gained in prominence, attracting the attention of national television networks and publications, Second Life Bikes furthers the progressive and broad-minded reputation of today's Asbury Park.

For the past three years, Second Life Bikes has resided in a cavernous old warehouse on Main Street. To walk into this 7,500 square foot space is one of the best experiences in Asbury Park. It's filled to the brim with bicycles and often humming with activity. This is something we don't ever want to lose.

And we don't have to. The building's owner has been extremely reasonable with the rent, and he's now giving the group a chance to buy the place for \$750,000. That would cement the future of this uniquely Asbury organization. It would be heartbreaking if Second Life Bikes ever had to move.

First step is for Second Life Bikes to raise the \$75,000 initial deposit to purchase the building. And for that, they've turned to RocketHub.com, a leading crowdfunding website. As of last weekend, Second Life Bikes had raised close to \$20,000 toward the goal, which must be met by February 28. [To contribute, visit rockethub.com and use the search function to find Second Life Bikes. They'll take it from there.]

Here's where the A&E network comes in. They've partnered with RocketHub in a joint "Project Startup" initiative to boost those with unusual potential who are seeking crowd funding on RocketHub.com.

Last week, Second Life Bikes was selected for Project Startup, which means financial support from A&E — the network contributed \$5,000 to the crowd funding campaign last week, and more could be coming — as well as exposure on-air, on-line and in A&E's

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magazine. That will hopefully give Second Life Bikes the push to meet its \$75,000 crowdfunding goal for the deposit needed to buy its building.

This all came about because of TEDxNavesink, which held its first conference last year. The event is organized by volunteers with a mission to promote "ideas worth spreading." TEDx is the grass-roots version of the immensely popular TED conferences — the group licenses the TEDx name to those who want to hold their own conferences on issues of more local significance. A TEDx event must meet various requirements of the parent TED organization.

Second Life Bike's Kerri Martin was one of the speakers at last year's TEDxNavesink. So was RocketHub co-founder Alon Hillel-Tuch. Meanwhile, Jennifer Crews — a Second Life Bikes board member — is a lead organizer in TEDxNavesink.

That's what led to the connection between Second Life Bikes and RocketHub, an example of TEDxNavesink connecting people to further innovative initiatives and groups in our region. That's a big mission of TEDxNavesink, as well as this newspaper. It's why Second Life Bikes chose RocketHub as its crowdfunding website — which now led to their selection as an A&E Project Startup participant.

"The reason we chose RocketHub was because Kerri, Alon Hillel-Tuch [one of the speakers] and I met through our work on TEDxNavesink 2013 and decided

to do this together," said Crews. "Alon gave us some extra support to get going."

So let's hope this Project Startup thing ends up big for Second Life Bikes. Here's how it was described on the RocketHub website:

"You and your idea could be featured on A&E TV and projectstartup.com. Those chosen by A&E Project Startup have a chance to be featured on-air, online, and in A&E's magazine, The Idea Book for Educators. Plus, launch a project on RocketHub, and A&E could become one of your funders. A&E Project Startup has committed significant funds to pour into select RocketHub projects."

And from the A&E website:

"We've found great synergy between A&E's unique brand of original programming that emphasizes the entrepreneurial spirit and RocketHub's mission to liberate ideas; and we believe that Project Startup will support a new wave of entrepreneurs and independent thinkers."

The A&E website also has a video about Project Startup which concludes with a slogan for the initiative: "Where big ideas become real-life success stories."

No question Second Life Bikes is a big idea that started in the head of committed bike-lover, environmentalist and social activist Kerri Martin. It grew from a

small after-school program she ran for kids at a local church to a small space on Memorial Drive to its now nationally-noticed operation on Main Street.

Here's the pitch by Second Life Bikes on its crowdfunding page on Rockethub.com:

"We change the Destiny of People and Bicycles. To continue to do that we must have a permanent home. Second Life Bikes is a community bike shop and youth earn-a-bike program in Asbury Park, NJ.

Since 2009, we have been giving new life to old bikes. Youth ages 12-18 can earn a bike through work hours while learning mechanics alongside job and life skills. The general public can buy an affordable bike here, get repairs done, use tools and partake in events and classes.

We have the opportunity right now to buy the building where we are currently located. The landlord is selling it to us for \$750,000. We need \$75,000 to start the process. After that, we are going to look to social investors and generous donors to help us decrease the mortgage.

Leaving 21 Main Street would be a heartbreaking setback to our organization's mission and the Asbury Park community we so love to serve! We have a prime location accessible to all and the space to keep reaching more people. Lives, young and old, can be changed through bicycles. We have seen it already."

THE DRAMATIC INTERIOR SPACE AT SECOND LIFE BIKES // PHOTO BY SRS PHOTOGRAPHY



THAT WILL HOPEFULLY GIVE SECOND LIFE BIKES THE PUSH TO MEET ITS \$75,000 CROWDFUNDING GOAL FOR THE DEPOSIT NEEDED TO BUY ITS BUILDING.