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North Quincy High grads helping kids with cancer to vacation on the Cape

By Katherine Isbell

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QUINCY — Members of North Quincy High School's class of 1986 are coming together to support a nonprofit organization working to renovate a Falmouth inn so it can be used to give children fighting cancer a place to be with family and friends.

Tim O'Connell founded the organization, called Tommy's Place, after donating a vacation on Martha's Vineyard to the family of an eight-year-old fighting cancer. Named for Tommy Leonard, the founder of the Falmouth Road Race, the group aims to create a place where children battling cancer can vacation with their loved ones, free of charge.

"A lot of kids get Make-A-Wish, but some kids are not well enough to do something like that," said Wendy Hayden, the director of development and major gifts for Tommy's Place.

The organization purchased the former Elm Arch Inn in Falmouth in June and needs to make extensive renovations in order to turn the 17-room inn into a vacation home for visiting families. The plan is to have uniquely decorated bedrooms, a game room and a home theater, as well as a pool, sports area, fire pit and koi pond. The goal is to make Tommy's Place warm and welcoming rather than a hospital-like environment.

Hayden became involved after she learned what O'Connell was planning with the house. She wanted to help out while visiting Quincy, her hometown, from Colorado, where she now lives. After learning that a lot of fundraising was needed for the dream to become a reality, she became a member of Tommy's Place and posted about it on Facebook.

After seeing Hayden's post, many of her high school friends reached out, wanting to help.

"You hope when you need something, people will come through for you," said Hayden.

The group's benefit for Tommy's Place will be from 7 p.m. to midnight Friday, Oct. 26, at Great Pond Hall, 120 Bay State Drive in Braintree. There will be a live and silent auction, as well as raffle items. Music will be provided by DJ Mark McGillicuddy.

"If you saw this house, you'd know how much work we have ahead of us," Hayden said.

Hayden called the group's goal "so tangible," saying that once they get the money they need to renovate the house, they have ways to keep things going.

Tickets are \$25 each and can be purchased in advance by contacting one of the event hosts, including Wendy Hayden at wendy.hayden3@gmail.com. To donate, visit gofundme.com/tommysplace.

For more information about the organization, visit tommysplace.org.

