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Norwell High grad bikes coast to coast

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NORWELL — It's the question asked annually by many college students who make it to graduation day: "Now what?"

For Kevin Luo, who graduated from Norwell High School in 2014, the answer was a long bicycle ride across the country.

"This is something I had always wanted to do, to bike across America, and I had just graduated from university in May, so it was the perfect time," said Luo, who received a degree in computer science and math from Northeastern University.

Luo began his journey on June 14 joined by three medical students from the University of Connecticut. The group had shipped their bikes to Seattle and rode back toward the East Coast along the Canadian border, hitting 13 states over the course of 63 days in what they called the "Coast to Coast Bike Trip."

The trip raised money for Mental Health Connecticut, a nonprofit organization established in 1908 that works to improve mental health services for Connecticut residents, educate the public about mental health and fight discrimination against people with mental illnesses. The bicyclists ended up raising more than \$13,000 for the organization.

The group connected with other bicyclists online to find homes where they could stay overnight. Other times, in the wilderness, they set up camp for the night. The distance the four bicyclists covered each day depended on the terrain they encountered.

“In the mountains, we could only do about 40 miles,” Luo said. “In the plains we could do 80 to 100.”

Luo’s favorite part of the trip was “definitely going to Montana.”

“It was such a beautiful place. You have the Rocky Mountains in the east and it’s just an incredible sight,” he said. “In the west, it’s incredibly flat, and you can see the sky for miles around.”

Another highlight of the trip was being able to see a different part of the country.

“Just seeing the whole country,” Luo said. “I’d been to the East and the West Coast, but I’d never been to the middle of the country.”

Over the course of the trip, something that surprised him was the kindness shown to the group by strangers.

“It really surprised me how nice people were,” said Luo, “In the middle of nowhere, if our bikes broke down... or they’d give us a bottle of water.”

The group dipped their bicycles’ tires into the Pacific Ocean in Washington at the beginning of their trek and did so again in the Atlantic Ocean upon arriving in Milford, Connecticut, at Silver Sands Beach, completing their coast to coast journey.

Would Luo make the cross-country trip on his bike again? Yes, he said, but give him a few years in the meantime. He is thinking of training for a triathlon and is about to move to San Francisco to start a job as a software engineer at Google.

“Honestly, this was one of the best summers I’ve ever had,” he said.