

# DeHart says he will focus on housing

By Henry Gargan  
Staff Writer

As the son of a preacher, Jon DeHart lived in seven different towns before he turned 16.

Now that he's raising a family of his own, DeHart said he is happy to call Chapel Hill home.

A local businessman and father of three, DeHart said he plans to file for a seat on the Chapel Hill Town Council later this week with affordable housing as the key-stone of his campaign.

According to the Orange County Board of Elections website as of Wednesday morning, DeHart will run against Lee Storrow, Laney Dale, Augustus Cho and Jason Baker.

DeHart said his work as a mortgage lender for Wells Fargo gives him an understanding of the issue that other candidates lack.

"What I do for a living and what I'm interested in are totally intertwined," he said. "Housing affordability is what I do, what I live and everything I breathe."

DeHart said he hopes to make it easier to live in Chapel Hill by expanding the commercial tax base and easing the burden that the town's high property tax places on residents.

"One of the first questions I ask



DTH/JOSH CLINARD

Jon DeHart, a local businessman who is planning to file for a seat on the Chapel Hill Town Council, sits in his office by photos of his family.

as a mortgage broker is, 'Are you moving to Chapel Hill?'" he said. "The majority of the time, the reply I get is, 'No, I can't afford to live in Chapel Hill.'"

DeHart, who currently serves on the town's transportation board, made an unsuccessful bid for a council seat in 2009 but said he has improved his strategy.

"I hope to do a better job of defining myself and getting more people to know me," he said. "I've formed a lot of good relationships since then, and that's the key part."

Council member Laurin Easthom is a neighbor of DeHart's and said he shows great concern for his community.

"He's a hard worker and an involved member of the neighborhood," she said. "He doesn't do anything halfway, and he is ready, willing and able."

Duane Hall, DeHart's campaign manager, said DeHart's persistence will make him a great candidate.

"Even when we were young, he was always the responsible one," said Hall, who co-led N.C. State University's Young Democrats with DeHart in 1988. "He's still probably the hardest-working person I know."

Contact the City Editor at [city@dailytarheel.com](mailto:city@dailytarheel.com).

# Carrboro biker brings donations to Mexico

By Caitlin Ball  
Staff Writer

On an intense training day, Ascarry Arias can be found biking around Carrboro for four hours.

During easy workouts, he bikes for at least an hour and lifts weights for two more.

But Arias doesn't bike as a hobby or to keep in shape — he's training for a 2,330 mile bike trip from Greensboro to Ixmiquilpan, Mexico.

As president of Vidas de Esperanza (Lives for Hope), a nonprofit based in Carrboro, Arias will set out on an 18-day fundraiser on Aug. 1 to provide the Ixmiquilpan community with supplies ranging from construction equipment to children's toys.

A native of Ixmiquilpan, Arias returned home after living in the United States for 11 years in 2003.

"I realized what I escaped from — the reasons I left were still there," he said.

At the time, Arias was studying sociology and Spanish at Greensboro College and turned to his professor Cheryl Brown for help.

"He talked to me when he got back," said Brown, who is now the vice president of Vidas de Esperanza. "He said, 'Listen, kids are still hungry, they still don't have shoes. Nothing's changed, except I can make a difference now.'"

Although it started out small, Vidas de Esperanza now aids more than 8,000 people annually

by providing a combination of free clinics, health programs and donations.

"Vidas helps break through the barriers put up by social classes, economics, languages, cultures and governments to bring something as basic as a blood sugar level check to those without," said Emily Silva, a journalism student who has been to Mexico with Arias twice and is currently the director of marketing at Vidas de Esperanza.

Arias said his organization's work is especially difficult because it works with a fragile community in a country known for corruption.

"It's so hard to get the trust of the people you're helping, especially in Mexico, that I cannot promise them I'm going to do something and then not do it because the trust sort of goes away," he said.

For this reason, Arias said he never considered postponing his trip when he recently re-injured his back — despite being advised to do so by his trainer.

"They've been lied to and promised things by not only their own government but other agencies that have come in," Brown said. "If we say we're going to do it, we're going to deliver no matter what, and I think the community certainly understands that now."

Arias raised \$40,000 when he first completed the route two years ago and said he hopes to raise even more this time.



DTH/ERIN HULL

Ascary Arias stands with the bike he rode to Mexico two years ago. Arias is making the 2,330 mile trip to Ixmiquilpan again this August.

Silva said raising this money is especially important because without this help, there are people who would be left with nothing.

"While Vidas' volunteers help those less fortunate than ourselves, our mentality isn't that of charity and sympathy," she said. "Rather, it is of empathy and understanding that right now, it's our job to share what we have."

Contact the City Editor at [city@dailytarheel.com](mailto:city@dailytarheel.com).

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26 TU CHRIS WEBBY\*\* (\$14/\$16)  
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