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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Professor to bike 2,000 km to raise solar energy awareness

MADISON, Wis. – A University of Wisconsin-Madison professor is biking 2,000 km around the Upper Midwest beginning on July 28th to increase awareness of solar energy and raise funds for a solar energy project in Puerto Rico.

The bike journey, known as #BiketheSun, will take James Tinjum, Ph.D., of UW's Department of Engineering Professional Development to 50 solar energy sites across Wisconsin, Illinois, Iowa and Minnesota. Riding an electric bike prototype with a plan to bike 160 km per day, the trip will take Tinjum about two weeks to complete.

"Solar is an energy solution that provides clean, renewable, domestic energy across the U.S.," said Tinjum. "In the last year, if you include rooftop solar, about 2.5 percent of our nation's electrical supply came from solar. Although this energy source is growing, there is still a lot of room for expansion."

Along with bringing attention to solar energy, the purpose of #BiketheSun is to raise funds for Solar Para Niños, a solar installation project at a non-profit shelter in Puerto Rico for abused children. The panels will reduce the shelter's energy costs by as much as \$1,000 per month, allowing the shelter to invest more money into educational and counseling services the children. The project will help provide long-term, sustainable relief after Hurricane Maria devastated the island last September.

"Puerto Rico's power grid was completely knocked out during the hurricane and electricity was not restored across the island for as long as nine months after. Renewable, distributed energy sources like solar will provide more resilient and reliable power, particularly for when another natural disaster occurs," Tinjum said.

Puerto Rico has the highest electricity rates in the U.S., according to Tinjum. Even though the island has excellent solar resources, it produces over 95 percent of its electrical energy by burning imported natural gas, coal and oil – which are not only expensive, but environmentally unsustainable.

"With the installation and promotion of more renewable sources such as solar energy, institutions like the children's shelter will substantially reduce their monthly energy bill, as well as move toward a more sustainable use of energy," he said.

Last summer, Tinjum embarked on a 2,000-km bike ride called [#BiketheWind](#) to raise awareness about wind energy, so he's familiar with long trips triggered by good causes. To prepare for this year's ride, Tinjum is biking upwards of 24 hours a week, getting in hours by biking to "everything," including work, groceries and intramural soccer matches.

Tinjum departs for his journey on Saturday, July 28 from Madison, Wisconsin.

To keep up with his journey, visit solarparaninos.com/bikethesun/ and follow #BiketheSun on social media. Visit solarparaninos.com/donate/ to donate to the Solar Para Niños project fund.

