

## Regional News

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### CHARITY DRIVEN BY LOVE

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When Kirk and Kris Tobias' mother, Karen, was in hospital to receive treatment for breast cancer, she made sure to reassure other patients about their conditions.

After she died of cancer at 53 in July 2002, the two Markham brothers decided to do something to honour her memory.

The fundraising bike ride the pair started that year -- called Ride For Karen -- has since raised enough cash to send hundreds of children with cancer to summer camp. The ride begins and ends in Maple.

"The essence of what we're doing is a direct manifestation of the values she imparted on us," said Kirk Tobias, 34. "She wasn't a victim (of cancer), she was an advocate. Everything we do is trying to continue that, and her legacy."

The annual one-day ride, which takes place Sept. 10, raised \$100,000 last year and saw 320 people participate. As a result, 185 children with cancer went to camp. All told, the event has raised more than \$250,000 since it started.

Part of the appeal of organizing such a fundraising event is getting something positive from a negative experience, Mr. Tobias said.

"It's very personally satisfying, and I think that everyone who rides feels the same way," he said. "For us, we want to build hope for people who are battling the disease."

Participants can raise money online or by canvassing door-to-door. The ride takes place in Vaughan, and riders travel either 160 kilometres or the much shorter 25-km route.

Working to raise money for a cause such as cancer can also help the healing process after losing a loved one, Mr. Tobias said.

The lives of many of those who volunteer their time to the event have also been affected by cancer.

Many who can't ride participate in some other way, for example by preparing the food for riders.

Some local bicycle mechanics even donate their time to help repair bikes on the road.

"People who volunteer have said to me the reason they



Kirk Tobias, 34 (left), and brother Kris, 37, will embark Sept. 10 on a fundraising bike ride they started in 2002 in memory of their mother, who died of cancer that year. So far, along with hundreds of participants, the fifth annual Ride For Karen has raised more than \$250,000.

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do it is that there's a real family feel to it," he said. "There's just this pervasive desire to do something positive and make a difference. It's very gratifying and you end up smiling from ear to ear for days on end."

The desire to glean something positive from a negative experience also inspired Pier Angelo DeMezzo, 37, to establish a fundraising event of his own.

Mr. DeMezzo's mother has had breast cancer for the past three years, while his father has battled leukemia for the last 13.

He organizes a yearly corn roast in Woodbridge, with the money from the sale of food, drinks and raffle tickets going to cancer research at Toronto's Princess Margaret Hospital.

The notion for the roast came one day as Mr. DeMezzo was driving, thinking what he could do to help those with cancer. In the past two years, he has raised \$20,000 and hopes to raise \$25,000 this year.

"It feels great. I get big satisfaction out of it," Mr. DeMezzo said of the event. "It's like I can do something to give back. Maybe I can't do much for my mom right now, but this is something I can do. If I could find a job doing something like this, I'd quit (my current job) right away."

The corn roast takes place Sept. 16 from 12 p.m. to 2 a.m. at 7642 Islington Ave. The bike ride is Sept. 10 and starts at St. Joan of Arc High School in Maple. For more information, go to [www.rideforkaren.com](http://www.rideforkaren.com)

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