

Mother's cancer death got wheels turning

The donors Kirk and Kris Tobias

THE GIFT: \$675,000 and climbing

THE CAUSE: The Ride for Karen

THE REASON: To help send children with cancer to camp.

When Karen Tobias died from breast cancer at the age of 53 on July 4, 2002, her son Kris, a competitive cyclist, went out for a long bike ride near his parents' home north of Toronto. "I want it to be sort of a celebration ride of mom's life," he told his brother Kirk.

Kirk, 36, took the idea a step further. "I said, 'let's put up a small website and some posters, and let's see if other people would like to join us,'" he recalled. They also discussed turning the event into a fundraising venture to support three Ontario camps for children with cancer.

"We wanted to help people battling the disease instead of donating to research," said Kirk, a management consultant.

About 50 people showed up for the first Ride for Karen, covering 160 kilometres, and they donated about \$40,000. The event has grown ever since. Last year, 350 people participated, raising \$260,000 and more than 500 are expect-



Kirk, left, and his brother Kris want to help people who are battling cancer, instead of donating to research. Last year's event raised \$260,000. FERNANDO MORALES/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

ed for this year's ride on Sept. 7. The brothers have also attracted a sponsor, Bank of Nova Scotia, which means that 100 per cent of donations go to the three charities.

Kirk said he is amazed at the number of people, about 100, who don't ride but come

out and volunteer.

"I'm in awe as somebody who is an organizer and a participant to see the number of people who want to give back and help as part of the healing process," he said.

Kris, 39, has been cycling for about 20 years and he said

many people find the long ride cathartic.

"As friends have said to me you do something like that and it clears your head. We were able to take that to the next step in terms of getting other people involved."

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