

A legacy worth riding for in York region

Annual 'Ride for Karen' cycling event continues to raise money for people with cancer

By Carmine Bonanno

Karen Tobias may have lost her battle with breast cancer nearly three years ago, but the adoring essence of her life continues to live on through the charity event organized in her honour, Ride for Karen.

Ride for Karen is a cycling event that raises money for people living with cancer and the people that care for them. The ride takes place on Sunday September 11th, with registration beginning at 7:30 a.m. at St. Joan of Arc Catholic High School in Maple.

During her battle with the disease, Karen wanted to make a difference in the lives of those suffering from cancer and she had one goal in mind – improving hope.

With this goal in mind, Kirk and Kris Tobias, Karen's sons, decided the best way to carry on their mom's legacy was to create the Ride for Karen. The event, which has been running since 2002, originated from the need for Kris to ease his mind after his mom's passing.

"He wanted to relieve some stress and since he's a competitive racer, he decided to call up some friends and go for a ride," race organizer Kirk says. "But I



Karen Tobias

told him that if we were going to do something, let's do it right. The event started from a personal need to helping those who are less fortunate."

Over the past three years, Ride for Karen has raised over \$150,000, which has been used to help furnish cancer care facilities, send kids with cancer to camp and to provide resources for cancer support centres. Kirk says he hopes the event raises another \$50,000 this year.

Ride for Karen organizers have both short and long term goals for the event. In the short term, organizers want to raise money to send children with cancer to camp and to work with the camps to fund programs that will benefit those

living with cancer and those caring for them.

In the past, money raised has been used to send kids with cancer to Camp Quality, Camp Trillium and Camp Oochigeas.

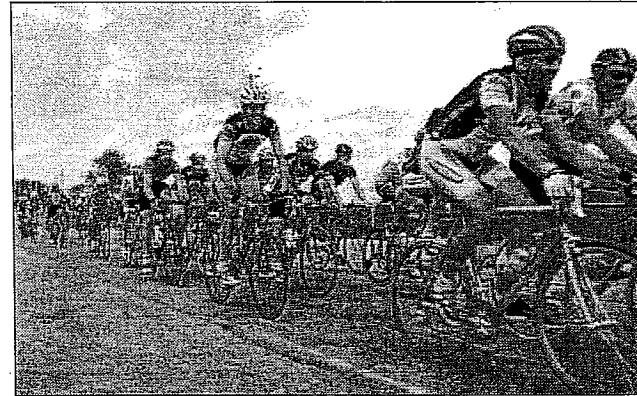
Long term goals of the event include supporting both cancer care facilities and non-medical organizations that are striving to make positive environmental changes for those suffering from cancer.

Ride for Karen consists of two courses – a 160 km course for advanced riders and a 25 km course for intermediate riders. The 160 km course starts at St. Joan of Arc and heads out as far east as Kennedy Road in Newmarket. The course then swings back westwards reaching Innis Lake Road, before heading back southeast towards the starting point.

The 25 km course also begins at St. Joan of Arc and runs along Teston Road between Keele Street and just west of Kipling Avenue.

"We wanted to create a course that is a bit challenging and well supported," Kirk says. "Hopefully all the participants will enjoy the ride, regardless if it's the long or short course."

Kirk says he expects approximately 200 to 225 riders to participate in this year's event, an



Above: A group of riders cycle along the advanced course during last year's event.

increase from the 175 that cycled last year. Despite the rise in participation, Kirk says the event means much more than the number of riders.

"It's not necessarily about how many riders we have, but how much money we can raise, so we can help those suffering with cancer," Kirk says. "There is no need to be a top athlete or expert rider, we want people who are committed to making a difference to come out and have a good time." ♦

For more information regarding the event, including how to register or make a donation, visit www.rideforkaren.com.