

Aurora man cycles 200 kilometres for cancer research



By Jake Courtepatte

Michael Cornacchia had to take a big first step when he first signed up for a two-day, 200-kilometre charity bike ride two years ago.

He had to buy a bike.

The Aurora resident completed the 2016 Enbridge Ride to Conquer Cancer in late June for the second time. Participants ride from Toronto to Niagara Falls in support of Princess Margaret Cancer Centre.

‘I know some very avid cyclists, where 200 kilometres wouldn’t be much for them,’ said Cornacchia. ‘But for somebody who doesn’t cycle it can be quite a challenge.’

After some minor training, he admitted that taking to the road for the first time in 2015 was ‘a bit nerve-wracking,’ and the heat during the 2016 Ride didn’t make it much easier.

‘It’s just really satisfying when you reach the finish line though.’

Cornacchia first became involved with the event through his sister-in-law, who introduced him to ‘Team Lindsay’ a few years ago, a team that has grown to over 20 members and raises thousands each year.

‘I went to the finish line three years ago,’ said Cornacchia, ‘and saw her cross and thought ‘hey, this is something I could maybe do.’

Team Lindsay started with only six members eight years ago. The team was named after a Toronto woman who was diagnosed with brain cancer when she was eight months pregnant. Lindsay was able to cycle a portion of the ride last year for the first time, crossing the finish line with her family and friends.

Two out of five Canadians will be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime. Every day, 539 Canadians will be diagnosed with cancer and 214 will die from the disease. The Ride brings together communities of riders, survivors and their supporters for one common goal ? to conquer cancer in this lifetime.

Cornacchia is one of the millions of Canadians to personally be affected by the disease. When he was 20-years-old, he lost his mother to breast cancer.

Though the ride may still be new to the non-cyclist, he's taken part in the plethora of charities across Ontario that benefit the cause since her passing.

?I've done the CIBC Run for the Cure, and I've always been involved,? he said. ?So I guess I just thought this would be fun to do, but also something to challenge myself while also working towards a greater cause.?

As Canada's largest cycling fundraiser, the Ride to Conquer Cancer has raised over \$155 million for cancer research across the province since 2008.

To raise such a massive amount of funds, the preparation for next year's ride begins the minute the riders step off their bikes.

Team Lindsay puts on a number of events throughout the year, like 50/50 draws, a bowling night, garage sales and a successful annual boat cruise on Lake Ontario.

Cornacchia said the team is always open for more recruits willing to join, as well as sponsorship opportunities.

?We're just looking for other people, and corporations and businesses that want to work with us to help us out with these events.?

A link to Cornacchia's 2017 fundraising page can be found by searching for his name under the ?Donate? section of www.conquercancer.ca.