

Memory of fallen officer lives on in Ride for Styles



By Jake Courtepatte

More than 150 riders braved the elements early Sunday morning to cycle in the name of fallen York Regional Police Constable Garrett Styles.

To YRP detective Ken Bardai, the 6th annual Ride for Styles' chief organizer, it was a testament to Styles as a person.

“Seeing this many people out here this morning is proof of the impact Garrett had on both his peers and the community.”

The event, honouring the officer who was slain in the line of duty in June 2011, raised close to \$18,000 this year for Big Brothers Big Sisters of York, Victim Services of York Region, and the Aga Khan Foundation Canada, a non-profit that supports social development programs in Asia and Africa.

Since its inception, the ride has raised almost \$100,000 for charity.

With humble beginnings in October of 2011 as a group of eight YRP cyclists, this year's event featured both a 45km and 70km ride starting from Bruce's Mill Conservation Area in Stouffville.

YRP Deputy Chief Tom Carrique called the event a “celebration of Garrett's life.”

“This is a special event for us. This is an opportunity for our police service to connect with our community, and for us to ride side-by-side with them.”

It is also a special day for the Styles family each year, with Garrett's father Gary in attendance, a 33-year member of the YRP who Carrique said he “always looked up to.”

Mr. Styles said he is still humbled at the outpouring of support almost five years later.

“What more can you do?” he said. “It's a great way to remember my son, and what he did in his time at the police department and in his time in this world. We're very proud of him.”

Garrett's mother had a worthwhile reason to miss this year's event: they were expecting a new grandchild at any minute.

Following a moment of silence, the elite group of riders took off from Bruce's Mill behind a police escort, following the 70km route leading north to a memorial in Styles' name. The 40km grouping left shortly thereafter.

Despite the rainy conditions, and Carrique's own admission to dreading facing the headwinds going south, the ride went off without

a hitch.

?It's nice to see that the weather didn't discourage anyone, and in the memory of Garrett everyone is willing to be brave and get wet.?

Styles was a seven-year veteran on the force.