

St. Max students pedal past \$13,000



By Brock Weir

Although they didn't go very far, St. Maximilian Kolbe Catholic High School students went a long way to help conquer cancer Thursday, putting their pedals to the medal with the Inside Ride.

The school teamed up with Coast to Coast Against Cancer to raise funds for the cause and over 40 teams of six students faced off in the school gym to pedal their hearts out and have fun. This year's student efforts raised nearly \$14,000 for cancer research and in the three years the school has participated, they have collected over \$35,000 to combat childhood cancers

Coast to Coast Against Cancer was founded to "create a series of high quality, physically challenging, national and regional events to raise needed funding for worthy cancer charities," according to Larry Optis of Coast to Coast who oversaw Thursday's Inside Ride, and create a proactive way for people to get involved in the fight.

"We wanted an event that was year-round that student could relate to," said Mr. Optis. "With childhood cancer, every school we have gone into in every community has been touched by it in some way and I think students really relate to that as a way of reaching out to their peers and making a difference, something meaningful in the community and it really gets the students engaged. It is a great show of spirit and energy and having a chance to dance around and have a good time and celebrate is a great component as well.

"Coast to Coast Against Cancer was founded by a group of guys who rode across the country in 2002 raising money for Cancer and most of our events are cycling specific. We do a couple of provincial tours every year as well. We do a tour across Canada with riders and it is just a great way of promoting health and wellness and promoting that benefit to the society as well."

Joining in the festivities was Grade 11 student Maria Agnello, who was part of the six member "Rockin' Riders" team. Cancer, she said, is a big part of her family and each member of the team raised \$50.

"It is great for awareness and helping people who are suffering from cancer," she said. "It is a sad thing because there are younger kids who are suffering from this and it is really nice to help them out."

In their countless visits to schools across the country with the inside ride, Mr. Optis said Coast to Coast typically sees schools raise

about \$10,000 in their first year and then after planting that initial seed it becomes somewhat of a legacy that students like to build upon in subsequent years.

?We typically do about 120 events per year from Cornwall to the London corridor and we also do a tour across the country, doing the 20 big major cities in Canada in three weeks,? he said. ?Fundraising is anywhere between \$10,000 and we had a school has high as \$110,000 in Mississauga.