

\$50 for 50 challenge benefits local food programs

As summer inches closer and restrictions lift, more and more people are hopping on their bikes and hitting the trails to get some sun and have some fun.

So, while you're out getting exercise and enjoying the fresh air, why not do so to help your community?

This week, the Aurora-based York Region Food Network (YRFN) and Vaughan's Amdur Bicycles teamed up to launch the #50for50CycleChallenge, a fundraising campaign to have a positive impact on food security and environmental sustainability throughout York Region.

Set to take place between June 28 and July 4, the #50for50CyclingChallenge will ask participants to commit to ride 50 km on their bikes between that window, donate \$50 to the cause, and share photos on social media using the hashtag in order to spread the word and encourage others to do the same.

"One of our business's main values is sustainability," says Miriam Amdur, co-owner of Amdur Bicycles, which buys and sells used high-end bikes. "Ours is a sustainable business and knowing the YRFN was under a lot of pressure because of COVID-19 and their services are in really high demand at this time, we felt this would be a great partnership. They have similar values to our business and we're really looking forward to helping them as well."

"From a personal standpoint, I was always interested in what the York Region Food Network is doing. They are really leaders in the community when it comes to food security and as a leader in this business, I have aligned my interests with what is going on in the community as well."

When Amdur Bicycles approached the York Region Food Network with their fundraising idea, Executive Director Kate Greavette says she was not only excited for the possibilities but grateful at the opportunity to increase the sustainability of ongoing community food programs.

"We have been finding that throughout the duration of COVID, demand for our services has increased dramatically, so we're acquiring more resources just to make things happen," she says. "Since March 16, we have produced 3,500 ready-to-eat meals that have been distributed to people who aren't able to leave their homes now. We have served 611 takeaway breakfasts on Tuesday mornings, distributed \$16,500 in grocery gift cards to folks in the community, and we have also distributed over 1,300 Good Food boxes." She stats for what we have done in a year in ten weeks.

"There has been a little more stress on us to make sure we have adequate budgets for food, for packaging, just to make sure we can serve

the community. This is just a great opportunity to let people know what we're doing, let people showcase this great young bicycle company and the green practices they are really promoting and be able to get outside and do something active when there's just not too much available right now.?

A \$50 contribution might not seem like a lot, but it makes a big difference for the YRFN. According to Ms. Greavette, \$50 can provide for three-and-a-half Good Food boxes for clients in need and based on how they prepare their meals in-house, \$50 can help to complete nearly 20 individual ready-to-eat meals.

?We're really conscious about supporting local as much as possible and now that we are in the growing season we are putting as many dollars we can back into local farmers, processors and suppliers,? she says. ?Our focus is to keep the funds in the community as much as possible.

?There's quite a lot of older adults who have reached out looking for services, a lot of people who are not able to leave their homes and don't necessarily have the social networks to rely on for grocery and meal deliveries. We have a lot of people who, because they are at home now, there are a lot of mouths to feed because they are no longer supported by breakfast programs [and] any extra support is really, really helpful right now. A lot of people have been laid off and are tightening their purse strings and accessing our services [and that] has been proven to be beneficial.?

?This is a great way when we have to spend more time at home and in our communities to stay active and make a difference while we're apart,? adds Ms. Amdur. ?One of our slogans is to be together while we're apart and I think that cycling is an activity that embodies that.?

Timing, notes Ms. Greavette, is everything.

?For a family, your challenge over the week is to ride up to 50 km,? she notes. ?You can do it in a day or across multiple days. It's something to look forward to and, as an individual, you can do it with others in a physically distant way quite easily, but it is a great way to support some of the food access initiatives that have been supporting the community, supporting farmers, and making sure we can purchase local and good quality fruits and veggies.?

For more information on how to take part in the #50for50CycleChallenge, visit amdurbicycles.com/events.

By Brock Weir