

Lake Ride benefits Southlake, homeless youth



By Brock Weir

On any given night, up to 500 youth could be homeless in York Region. That was a statistic which ?overwhelmed? Aurora resident Christine Gardner, particularly as this is ?right in our own back yard.?

Rather than simply tucking that figure away in her mind, Ms. Gardner decided to do something about it and this year, for the first time, 360 Kids, the local charity for homeless youth, will be joint beneficiaries of this month's Lake Ride, along with Southlake Regional Health Centre.

Now cycling into its fifth year, the Lake Ride is a 60k or 100k cycling ride which sets off from Newmarket on Sunday, May 31, to travel the south shore of Lake Simcoe.

Founded by Dr. Gerry Schep and Phil Allen of Apple Storage, Ms. Gardner eagerly participated in their first Lake Ride, joining the event's planning committee shortly thereafter.

?I love cycling,? says Ms. Gardner. ?Here we had an event basically in our own back yard, and I love riding in York Region. The love of cycling [was enough to keep me coming back], but supporting our local hospital and supporting various charities in need throughout York Region.

?We had a small committee of three in 2013 and then it grew. In their first year, they raised \$3,500. In 2012 it went from 87 riders to 130 and they raised \$7,000. In 2013, they raised \$7,000 but we then split it with Southlake and the Special Olympics Provincial Games, which were hosted by the York Regional Police. In 2014, we had 187 cyclists and \$10,000 was raised, split between Southlake and the York Region Centre for Community Safety.?

This year, the Lake Ride is already up to 230 riders, with an ultimate goal by May 31 of signing up 250 riders with a fundraising goal of \$15,000.

?Back in December my daughter, who works for TD Bank, asked me if I knew who Michael Braithwaite is,? says Ms. Gardner, of her first introduction to the Executive Director of 360 Kids. ?TD had done some work with them through the Christmas holidays, and I started following him on social media before we connected and met. I was overwhelmed by the statistics. It was heart-wrenching for me to think that on any given night up to 500 kids could be homeless in York Region. I find that astounding. That is right in our own backyard, so I took it back to our committee and everyone was right on board and we're thrilled.?

Interested cyclists can register for the Lake Ride up until the morning of the event itself by visiting www.thelakeride.com. Registration is \$150 and for the first time this year participants will have the option to raise money for Southlake, 360 Kids, or both.