

Schomberg cyclist Ortepi holding fundraising garage sale

By Jeff Doner

Jason Ortepi has found a way to do two things he loves at the same time ? cycling and raising funds for a worthy cause.

The 36-year-old Schomberg resident has been cycling for various charities for the past five years, including The Princess Margaret Hospital Foundation, Ride to Conquer Cancer and now the Tour for Kids.

?Every year I try to focus on a charity and the last five years has been the Ride to Conquer Cancer,? said Ortepi. ?This year it's in the same vein, but a bit bigger, it's called the Tour for Kids. It benefits camps for kids that have cancer and in Ontario those camps involved are Camp Trillium, Camp Oochigeas and Camp Quality Canada.?

Ortepi said the Ride to Conquer Cancer has generally been a two-day 200-kilometre event from Toronto to Niagara Falls. He knows the Tour for Kids will push him to the next level.

Participating with his sister-in-law, Ortepi said the ride spans four days and roughly 540 kilometres over a route that is spread out. He is hoping to break the days into 100-km. and 160-km. rides.

?The goal is to raise some money, my target is \$1,500, I'm about 45 per cent there,? he said. ?What the funds are used for is just basically for one or two things: help pay for entries into these camps for some of the kids and/or for general upkeep.?

Ortepi added that the three camps are not considered charities and rely exclusively on donations, making the Tour for Kids all the more important to their service and growth.

When asked about what drives him to participating in these challenging rides, Ortepi credited his father-in-law who pushed him into cycling.

?He kept drilling me and eventually I got into it. I fell in love with it and that sort of became my summer sport.?

As time went on, Ortepi said he wanted to use his cycling to get more involved.

?It became a lot more than just cycling, especially after the first event, because you could see the unbelievable amount of support that complete strangers would give you out on these rides and from after the first one, I just made a point of doing more of these things and giving back in some specific way that I could and have fun while doing it.?

He also said it was about changing the way he gave back to the community.

?Goal setting has become a very important thing to me in the last 18 months and I'm trying to set my sights high and I just want to raise awareness mainly about this charity and second, if people want to get involved or donate or support what I'm doing, that's great,? he explained. ?It's one of the things that I've been trying to develop a little more and there's an element of giving that I probably didn't have many years ago and this is the way that I want to show that.?

However, it's not easy, as getting ready for 540 kilometres in four days takes a lot of training.

?As Belgian cyclist Eddy Merckx once said, ?Ride lots,? replied Ortepi about his training regimen. ?It really is a matter of riding lots. I ride with a club, so being part of a club for the last seven or eight years, it's a club of all ability and riding styles. I've learned a lot from riding with all those people and have become a better cyclist. It's definitely a kind of ride lots attitude.?

To help raise money for the Tour for Kids, Ortepi, with the help of his young family, is holding a garage sale at his home on 38 Church St. in Schomberg on May 11 from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. The rain date is May 18.

?This has sort have been my charity drive vehicle for the last four years,? he said. ?Every mother's day weekend I hold a garage sale and all the funds go the Tour for Kids. It's donated items that we sell and my kids usually bake a bunch of cookies and sell lemonade and everything we sell goes straight to the charity.?

For more information on visit Jason Ortepi's website at <http://www.jasonortepi.com/tour-for-kids.html>.