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In Becel Ride for Heart

Family and friends are ready to 'Motor for Matt' this Sunday

EAMONN MAHER
Staff Writer

What began as a way for a Georgetown South family to honour their deceased son has grown into an outpouring of support, which will culminate in this Sunday's Becel Heart & Stroke Ride for Heart in Toronto.

Fifteen-year-old Matthew Barker passed away last June, a week after collapsing in his basement, the victim of a rare heart disease called ARVD. His aunt, Janet Olson, thought it would be nice to honour the Grade 10 Christ the King student's memory by participating in Sunday's 21st-annual Heart & Stroke ride.

Matthew's parents, Joan and James, his 14-year-old sister Melissa and stepbrother Jason Black also committed to making the 25-km bike ride that will wind along the Don Valley Parkway, and the "Motoring for Matt" team has been gathering steam over the past couple of weeks.

A fund-raising goal of \$1,000 was initially set by the family, but that figure was quickly surpassed, now almost reaching the \$20,000 mark as of Tuesday afternoon. The local contingent now boasts 21 riders and they say there's room for late entries for the event, which drew close to 20,000 participants last year.

"At first we were hesitant because we didn't know how long the ride was going to be— 25K, 50K or 75K— but we decided that we'd give it a try," said Matt's mother Joan, who works for the Dufferin Peel Catholic School Board's transportation department.

"My older sister was very persistent in get-



ting this going and my daughter told her friends and everyone at Christ the King has been very supportive. It has just snowballed from there."

Photo by Eamonn Maher

James, Melissa and Joan Barker are among 21 family members and friends currently signed up to ride in this Sunday's Becel Heart & Stroke Ride for Heart in Toronto. Their team— Motoring for Matt— is named in honour of the Barkers' son Matthew who died last year of a rare heart disease called ARVD.

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