

Man cycles to help end poverty

BY RACHEL MACLEAN

MORNING STAR STAFF

With each pedal stroke on a 6,000-kilometre journey, Vernon's Clare Kooistra is biking to end the cycle of poverty.

Accompanied by 220 cyclists from members of the Christian Reformed Church of Canada and the United States, the End the Cycle of Poverty - Sea to Sea Bike Tour leaves from Seattle on June 30, and rides through America and parts of Canada on their way to New York.

The ride is raising money to create clean drinking water, better farming methods, and medical resources for the poor.

"I have done one before, and it was challenging, and I really enjoyed the cycling," said Kooistra. "It is also a really good fundraising issue.

"We can't help everyone all over the world, but we can make a difference in some people's lives."

In 2005, Kooistra participated in a Canadian Sea-to-Sea ride, but only committed to the journey from Regina to Ottawa.

The ride raised \$1 million, this year the ride hopes to raise \$1.5 million.

To gear up for this event, and to raise the last \$3,500 needed for Kooistra's \$10,000 goal, there will be a fundraiser called End the Cycle of Poverty - Lake to Lake Bike Tour that leaves from the East Hill Community Church parking lot at 2 p.m. today.

Participants get sponsored on a dollar amount per kilometre for the 27 kilometre ride that includes



PHOTO SUBMITTED

WITH THE Canadian flag proudly waving behind him, Clare Kooistra takes a ride on his recumbent trike as he trains for the 2008 End the Cycle of Poverty - Sea to Sea Bike Tour.

a stop at Kalamalka Lake and Okanagan Lake, and everyone is welcome to participate to help with the cause.

"The issue really motivates me," said Kooistra. "In the west we have so much, this is one way to make a difference."

As some people around town may have noticed, when Kooistra takes out his bike for training it looks a little different than a normal bike.

It is a recumbent trike that has two wheels in the front and one wheel in the back, so he is extremely low to the ground with his back to the road and his legs stretched out in front of him.

"A lot of people look

at me intensely," said Kooistra. "Some people honk or wave. I try to respond if I have a free hand.

"A lot of people stop me to ask questions (about the trike), it is a real conversation starter."

It was a personal choice for him, the trike is very efficient and aerodynamic, and is great for long rides.

On his long ride throughout America, Kooistra is looking forward to seeing the country, which is easy to do on a bike, and meeting great people.

The cyclists will also be stopping in communities along the way to volunteer.

For the Vernon ride

there will also be a barbecue at the end of the bike tour, and Kooistra reminds cyclists to bring their own water.

Riders are encouraged to pre-register for the Lake-to-Lake ride, but can also register the day of.

For more information on either events call Kooistra at 549-2322, or e-mail at cmkkoistra@shaw.ca, or Frances and Martin Vegt at 542-1996.