

GCASA counselor completes 400-mile bicycle trip

By Joanne Beck jbeck@batavianews.com | Posted: Friday, July 22, 2011 3:29 am

BATAVIA — Jim Morasco can now check another item off of his bucket list.

The GCASA counselor and associate pastor just completed an eight-day bicycle trip along the Erie Canal. He logged 400 miles.

“The first 60 miles was tough. I didn’t know what to expect. There were more hills than I thought there’d be,” he said Thursday. “The people you meet ... sharing stories about your lives, that’s what makes it for me.”

He was part of more than 500 bikers in the annual Cycle the Erie Canal event. It runs from Buffalo to Albany on the canal path, with stops at area high schools, colleges and other venues suitable for camping. Organizers provided the tents, first aid and sustenance while participants put in the pedaling power.

Morasco’s trip wasn’t just one of personal enjoyment. He used it to raise money and awareness for Justice For Children Advocacy Center and Peaceful Genesee. He reaped more than \$1,200, which will be split between the two nonprofit groups.

He’s a past member of the Justice For Children GLOW Foundation Board, which he said gave him a deeper appreciation for what the Center does. It is a safe house of sorts for victims of alleged sexual abuse to tell their stories while medical, legal and law enforcement officials gather information to help convict perpetrators.

As a founding member of Peaceful Genesee, a nonprofit formed to promote a more peaceful lifestyle, Morasco believes there is a connection. Each group strives to “counter some of the damage that takes place on a daily basis to members of our own community.”

He got plenty of peace on the bike trip, he said. Some of the local residents had set up water stations and a group of kids sold lemonade and cookies on a party barge in Brockport, with signs — ala “Burma Shave” style — directing the thirsty bikers to the spot.

One man who had asked when the bikers were to arrive bought Morasco breakfast once he learned the Batavian was one of the pack.

“I met a lot of great people,” he said. “I had a lot of time to think and meditate. We would catch up to each other on the stops, depending on your pace.”

He saw bikes and stayed at places that were as assorted as the people. One stop was just outside of the zoo in Syracuse and another was at Fort Stanwix in Rome. There were tandems, mountain and road bicycles ridden by people of all ages and backgrounds.

“That’s the beauty of it, there were families, older people and younger, some people from England. The average age was 51,” the 54-year-old said, noting his run-in with Mother Nature. “I almost got run over by a deer. It jumped out of the bushes.”

Donations may still be made to Morasco’s cause. Please send checks in his name to: The Children's Advocacy Center, 108 Bank St., Batavia, NY, 14020.