

Hitting the trails for curling



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By Kristena Schutt-Moore

The parking lot and fields surrounding the Wilberforce Curling Club were filled with four-wheelers, ATVs and UTVs of all makes and models on Saturday, Aug. 24. The seventh annual Wilberforce ATV Run had roughly 130 participants, who were excited to hit the area trails.

The day started with a hearty breakfast served up by curling club volunteers and registration. Then it was all hands on the handlebars as riders prepared for the 90 kilometre ride ahead. There were four checkpoints along the route.

Riders started at the curling club and made their way to Tory Hill then on to Hadlington and around Pencil Lake to the Five Corners. From there they travelled up to Gooderham and past Greens Mountain and then rode the Rail Trail back to Tory Hill and then back to the curling club for a roast beef dinner. Altogether the trail ride took roughly six hours to complete.

The trail route was designed for beginner and intermediate riders. Much of the route like the Rail Trail was easy to ride on, but there were areas for drivers who liked to climb rocks and run through the mud to have some fun on the intermediate sections. The ATV Association also waives the trail permit fees for riders participating in the event.

Funds raised through this event go towards the curling club's youth programs and curling rink maintenance. The Wilberforce Curling Club teams up with the Wilberforce Elementary School every year to teach curling to students from Grades 4 to 8. They also create a junior mixed competitive team if students are interested in getting more involved with the sport and the ATV ride helps cover the cost of the program.

Riders came from all over Ontario to enjoy the area's trails, the amazing scenery and to support the club and local youth. For others it was a way to come back to the community, like a homecoming. Ron Haley and his family moved out of the area several years ago, but return every year for this ride and stay all weekend at a local camp.

?It's a great event, it helps the community, it helps the kids and it's fun. I bring the whole family and we just spend the day riding together.?

The Wilberforce ATV Ride is growing in popularity. Last year the event brought together 109 ATV enthusiasts and this year they reached 130 riders. There are already plans in the works to help build the event and bring more people to the community to enjoy the trails and everything the area has to offer.