

Old Hastings Snow Riders win several awards from OFSC



By Nate Smelle

On Sept. 13 and 14, more than 350 volunteers, representing 179 community-based snowmobile clubs from throughout Ontario gathered in Muskoka for the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs' Annual General Meeting. The event is held each year to officially kick off the snowmobiling season and give their members an opportunity to reconnect, collaborate, and discuss the shared challenges and successes each club has experienced over the past year. As part of this annual event the OFSC gives awards to the most outstanding volunteers from its member snowmobile clubs. This year, the Old Hastings Snow Riders snowmobile club walked away with several awards for their hard work and dedication. As one of seven member clubs in the OFSC's District 2 – a region of seven member snowmobile clubs representing over 2,000 kilometres of trails throughout eastern Ontario – the Old Hastings Snow Riders have been maintaining local trails and actively promoting snowmobiling for more than 35 years. As a result of the club's efforts throughout the 2023/2024 snowmobiling season, the OHSR took home the Outstanding Communications Award, as well as the OFSC's highest honour of Outstanding Club of the Year. Several of its volunteers were also awarded for their contributions to the OHSR and the snowmobiling community over the past year. The recipients were chosen by fellow club members for their efforts and volunteerism for the local Old Hastings Snow Riders snowmobile club and their names were forwarded onto the District level. This year's winners from the OHSR include: Craig and Karina Laton, Outstanding Family of the Year; Karen Challinor, Brenda Welsh Outstanding Woman in Snowmobiling Award; Steve Mason, Outstanding Volunteer of the Year Award; and, Riley Wilton, Outstanding Youth of the Year. Having been snowmobiling since he was two years old, Riley started volunteering with the OHSR club three years ago. Highlighting some of the reasons why he was named the OFSC's Outstanding Youth of the Year, club secretary Karen Challinor told Bancroft This Week about how Riley took the initiative to launch his own YouTube channel where he posts

weekly trail reports for the club throughout the season. Explaining how Riley uses the channel to promote the club's activities, Challinor said "He takes great pride in his videos and is completely unscripted. He then shares them with his classmates, teachers and OHSR Facebook page." In addition to promoting the OHSR club online, Challinor said Riley also consistently steps up to assist the club whenever he can. For instance, she pointed out how at the 2024 Vintage Sled Swap Meet, he sold OHSR logo stickers to raise money for the club; and participated in the 2023 Bancroft Santa Claus Parade on behalf of the club. Challinor said he also helps with maintenance, clearing of the trails and cleaning the clubhouse. Speaking further to how Riley exemplifies the spirit of volunteerism and acts as a role model to other youth, Challinor shared a story about how he showed his father, OHSR club president Mike Wilton and another volunteer how to fix a trail grooming machine with a ratchet strap. When the third volunteer went to get a special tool to join the track on the machine, she said "Riley insisted to do it with straps, and the track was back together before the third volunteer returned with the tool." Challinor added, "Riley has always puts fun into everything he does." The Old Hastings Snow Riders are a not-for-profit volunteer organization with over 350 kilometres of trails to maintain and thousands of snowmobilers visiting the local trail network annually. With winter just around the corner, Challinor told Bancroft This Week that the club is always looking to welcome volunteers and newcomers to the area, adding "Any area of expertise is appreciated and will be valued." For more information on the Old Hastings Snow Riders snowmobile club; or to join the club email: ohsrvolunteers@gmail.com.