

Rally leads to global exposure



Rally of the Tall Pines brought national-level racers to the Bancroft area last weekend. Photo by Rob Sztuka

By Nate Smelle

Quenching their need for speed hundreds of rally fans lined the roadsides of L'Amable over the weekend for the 45th annual Rally of the Tall Pines.

With the Canadian Rally Championship (CRC) series beginning at the Rallye Perce Neige Maniwaki in Quebec each year, the Rally of the Tall Pines is the last competition in a series of six.

Combining four rallies in one, the Rally of the Tall Pines has drivers competing on the national level and the regional level; and in both two-wheel-drive four-wheel-drive cars.

The competition is also a part of four rally championships: the Ontario Regional Rally Championship, the Canadian National Rally Championship, North American Rally Championship and Canada-U.S.A. Eastern Rally Championship.

Skilfully driving their way to the front of the pack in the two-wheel-drive category were Martin Walter and Ferdinand Trauttmansdorff. Close behind in second was the 17-year-old driving sensation from Jamaica, Fraser McConnell and his champion co-driver Natalie Richard from Halifax, N.S.

Competing in what was only his second rally, McConnell and Richard also finished third overall in the regional rally. Steering their way into third place were Bruce Leonard and Zoltan Kovacs.

In the National four-wheel-drive category, Sylvain and Simon Vincent won first place, with Brandon Semenuk and John Hall coming in second, and Jeremy Norris and Jeff Hagan in third. Subaru came out on top as the winner of the manufacturers' championship.

As it has been since 2003, the Dungannon Recreation Centre acted as the hub for the rally. Grateful for the opportunity to hold the rally on municipal roads in the Town of Bancroft, the Townships of Wollaston, Tudor and Cashel and the Municipality of Marmora; and for the support of many local business owners, Tall Pines co-ordinator Ian Wright said it is important that the Rally of the Tall Pines returns the favour to the community.



The top drivers in the regional four-wheel drive category gather for a photo by the main stage at the Dungannon Recreation Centre on Saturday, Nov. 28. From left, third place finishers Jonathan Cox and Laurens Wit, winners Jeremy Norris and Jeff Hagan, and the third place team of Bryce Baker and Derek Vincent. Photo by Nate Smelle

Starting in 2007, Tall Pines organizers launched the first ever Green Initiative Program for a National Rally in Canada.

As part of this program, a portion of the competitors' entry fee is donated to the Bancroft Area Stewardship Council to help support its tree and shrub planting program.

Wright said rally organizers also make a conscious effort to reduce, reuse and recycle throughout the weekend. This year the rally is giving back to the community in a new way.

Selling Tim Hortons coffee at the Golton spectator area and the iron bridge location raised funds for the Bancroft Community Cupboard Food Bank.

Rally fans appreciated these initiatives that benefit the community and the environment.

Arriving in Bancroft with her family on Thursday night, rally fan Katie Evans was especially happy to learn that proceeds from the event were being used to protect the local environment and put food on people's tables. Her first Rally of the Tall Pines, Evans said she was looking forward to coming back next year.

?I was amazed to see how the drivers could handle the speed on the rough roads,? she said.

?It was nice to hear that the rally supports the community in so many ways. It sets a good example for other rallies and sporting events to follow suit.?

Providing a boost to the local economy is one of the most significant ways the rally of the Tall Pines benefits the community, according to Wright.

?We rent every single cottage that 24-7 Cottage Rental can provide to us and we book every hotel room at the Sword, we book every hotel room at the Bancroft Motor Suites,? he said.

?We book up every bed and breakfast around town. We spent a lot of money on food. We use companies like a Imagine Print, we use Bancroft Trophies and we use Princess Sodalite for our awards.?

This year's larger than usual international presence at the rally gives the Bancroft area a lot more exposure.

?This year we had a competitor from Jamaica and we have a competitor from Ireland,? Wright said.

?There are teams here from Colorado, people coming from Wisconsin, New York, Pennsylvania. It was a big American influence this year, so there are a lot of American dollars being spent here, which is nice.?

For a complete list of results from the 2015 Rally of the Tall Pines visit www.rallyscoring.com.