

Annual Pondspiel brings back old-time curling



By Brian Lockhart

It wasn't that cold for a typical day in February but out on the lake at the Island Lake Conservation Area the wind chill factor got pretty high as the wind whipped across the open ice.

That didn't stop curlers from participating in the annual Great Canadian Pondspiel on Saturday, February 3.

The open ice event is an annual fundraiser for the Orangeville Curling Club and it gets more popular every year.

The ice conditions aren't exactly pristine on the lake but everyone is up for the same challenge so it all works out well.

This is the ninth time the Club has sponsored the outdoor event.

Curlers arrived from clubs all around the province with around 100 people braving the elements.

"This is our ninth annual Great Canadian Pondspiel. It's our main fundraiser for the year as well and in addition part of our proceeds today will be going to the Orangeville Food Bank," explained organizer and chair of the fundraising committee for the Orangeville Curling Club, Amy Reinders. "We have games taking place both on the ice out at Island Lake and here at the clubhouse."

Curlers were shuttled out to the outdoor ice and played two games before returning to the clubhouse for a third game on the indoor ice sheets.

"We have three different groups of curlers going out to curl on the lake. They get three games today - two on the lake and one at the Club. There's 32 curlers at a time on the lake," Ms. Reinders said.

Curling on the lake is difficult considering the ice is windswept and uneven but each game counts for points at the end of the day.

"Anybody can come out and try it. There's not a lot of strategy out on the pond. It's a little bit like shuffleboard in that sense because it's hard to keep the ice conditions really controlled. We have point system. If you win you get ten points, if you tie you get five, and if you lose you don't get any. At the end of the day the points are added up and we'll have an overall winner for the event and we'll have winners from each of the separate draws as well," Ms. Reinders explained. "We have a lot of repeat people coming back each year because they've had such a good time the previous year."

The Curling Club, which operates as a not-for-profit organization, keeps alive through membership fees and fundraising efforts. A significant cost of running a curling club is taken up in the electricity costs of running a powerplant to keep the ice in place.

The outdoor curling was going on all day beginning with the first games at 8:00 a.m., with a large group of volunteers helping out to make sure the day went as planned.