

FOIL to launch campaign to finish perimeter trail

By Tabitha Wells - Over the past few years the Friends of Island Lake (FOIL) have worked to make the trails around Island Lake Conservation area more accessible and enjoyable to everyone in the community. With the addition of boardwalks and extra trails that travel along the outskirts of the lake, it has become a popular spot for hikers, bikers and casual walkers to enjoy some of the hidden natural beauty our town has to offer.

Last year, the trails saw the opening of Bob's Bridges, a series of bridges designed by FOIL Co-Chair Bob Shirley. The bridges cross the water, linking the two islands and connecting the north and south shores of the lake. More than 300 metres of bridge and five lookouts are situated across the structure, providing multiple scenic lookouts.

"I first got to see that type of structure on Manitoulin Island," said Mr. Shirley. "I have a photographic memory - when I see something, I can just do it. Once we got the finances to start this, I was able to start building it."

So far, the community response to the trails and the bridges have been overwhelmingly positive. But that comes as no surprise to the Friends of Island Lake who started this project to provide more opportunities to the public to enjoy the area.

"I think that the community has always been interested in trails, and when they first started building them, they just decided that the goal would be to circumnavigate the entire conservation area," said Mike Walker, FOIL's Funds Development Chair. "It's a beautiful piece of land and to be able to see it by the trails really adds a lot of value to it."

The project however, isn't complete yet. The plan is to complete the loop and link the two entrances at Highway 10 & Home Hardware and the north entrance on Hockley Road.

"We have finished off a large chunk of the trails around Island Lake and last year we unveiled the bridge around some of the islands, but we still have 1.6km of trails left to finish," explained Mr. Walker. "That section that we need to finish will allow us to have a complete circuit, so we're just waiting for permission to commence our campaign to start fundraising to collect the money to complete it."

The final portion of the trail will cost about \$800,000 to complete and currently, they have managed to raise about one-quarter of the needed funds.

"We will be looking for major sources of funds through things like community partners as well as other funding sources such as grants and donations from people and industries within the communities," said Mr. Walker. "Even things like gift baskets for our gala events when we do fundraising dinners and things like that."

The funds raised will also allow for a lookout to be placed about halfway across the section, south of the cemetery. The plan is to be able to complete the loop within the next year to year and a half.

"It would be absolutely fantastic for people to be able to view the ducks and all the wildlife and everything; that would be unbelievable," added Mr. Shirley. "We're going to do it, it's going to happen."

On Sunday, May 10 FOIL will be hosting their Scrap Metal Collection Day as part of their fundraising campaign to complete the final 1.6 km of the loop. The event will run from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Island Lake Conservation Area, and will accept a number of items ranging from scrap metal to electronics, BBQ's, appliances and more.

"We've raised about \$25,000 now on the scrap metal program, and it's really a good way of cleaning the land up in Orangeville, Mono and the surrounding area," said Mr. Shirley. "We've had great participation from a lot of people over the years, so we're hoping to do well this year on that to try and raise the money. If we can do it right we can hopefully get it matched in a grant."

Everything that is collected will be taken to a scrap yard where the items will be weighed, which will determine their monetary value. All money earned from the drop-off will go to the trail completion project.

?We are hoping to raise at least \$7000 to \$8000 through this year's event,? said Mr. Shirley. ?But it's not just about raising the money, we're cleaning up the area and we're able to put money towards a good project in the area as well.?

For anyone unable to attend the event, they will also be offering a free pickup from May 1st to November 1st of this year. Donations worth more than \$50 will be eligible for a charitable tax receipt by request.

?If we could get another couple hundred thousand between raising money within the municipalities, the scrap program and the bass tournament, we'll be in a good position,? said Mr. Shirley. ?We're really hoping to have the final portion built within a year to a year and a half.?

For more information on the Scrap Metal collection day, or to arrange for free pick up, contact Mr. Shirley at 519-938-6443, Island Lake Conservation Area at 519-941-6329 or email recreation@creditvalleyca.ca.

FOIL will be hosting a donation day at the trails on May 25th to go toward the cost of completing the loop. Collection will occur at both entrances to the trails.

For more information, visit their Facebook page at www.facebook.com/Friends ofIslandLake.