

Opinion

MUSKOKA MOSAIC

Introducing Steve Fairhall

BY PAULA BOON

When Steve Fairhall became a ski patroller at Hidden Valley Highlands Ski Area in high school, it just seemed like a fun thing to do. But it wasn't long before keeping people safe on the hills became his full-time job.

Fairhall first joined the ski patrol almost 20 years ago. "My friends were doing it, and it meant free skiing," he says. "That first year I spent 63 days on the hill, and I was still going to school. I was there every weekend and every holiday. I just loved it."

After a few years away, studying music at the University of Guelph, Fairhall decided to join the ski patrol again in 1993. Then, in January 1994, a paid position came open. "I've been there ever since," he says with his characteristic smile.

Seven years ago, Fairhall was promoted to ski patrol supervisor. He is also an instructor and examiner of potential patrol candidates with the Canadian Ski Patrol System, which involves both first aid and on-hill training.

At Hidden Valley, Fairhall is responsible for lift evacuation training for everyone, the volunteer patrol, accident investigation paperwork and scheduling, among other things.

Each day he begins by sweeping the hills for dangers and obstacles. Then, he continues skiing with an eye on changing conditions, problems with signs or bamboo poles, and risky visitor behaviour.

"I want to be proactive in safety at the Valley," he says. "Preventing an injury is nicer than having to pick somebody up after they're injured."

Fairhall says since he began ski patrolling, the industry has changed from a take-care-of-yourself mentality to a if-something-happens-it's-somebody-else's-fault mentality.

The ski patrol itself has also changed. "There are more people now," he explains, "and it's not as strict. You don't have to do as many days, and now, with night skiing as well, the group isn't as close. You don't always see other patrollers as much."

Despite this, Fairhall still loves his job. In December each year he organizes equipment, does maintenance and upgrades on equipment and gets Hidden Valley ready by putting up tower pads and signs. When the season wraps up in March, he turns his attention to his off-season maintenance and landscaping business.

While his jobs year-round keep him physically active, sports are also an important part of Fairhall's life.

He has played soccer since the age of six and joins his friends at the Huntsville Soccer Club adult intramural league twice a week. He also coached an under-19 house league team until last summer.

In winter, Fairhall plays hockey two times a week. He took up the sport at age 25. "I had always loved hockey, and I went with friends a

few times," he says. "Then I saw a notice in the newspaper that said, 'Wanted: Crappy hockey players.' A couple of guys were putting together a league in Baysville."

About 25 would-be players showed up, and the league existed for a couple of years before changing to shinny. Since then, Fairhall says with a laugh, the level of play has risen drastically. "It's fun. Six or seven guys from Hidden Valley go play together," he adds.

Fairhall and his wife Kim are also busy parents of Jacob, who's almost two and a half, and Malcolm, age seven months.

"I play the guitar and sing to Jacob every night before he goes to sleep," he says, adding that his son has recently discovered the drums and enjoys exploring different sounds and rhythms.

Although the Fairhalls have only been parents for a short while, they've had lots of practice. Starting in 1998, they hosted about 10 international students in their home. Two stayed for an entire year each, one for six months, one for five months, and the others for a few weeks at a time.

"It was a good experience. We may do it again someday," Fairhall says. He flashes another smile. "Anyway, we're completely ready for when the boys become teenagers!"

Is there someone you'd like to see profiled in this space? Please call Paula at 789-5541 or e-mail pboon@metrolandnorthmedia.com.



STEVE FAIRHALL

LETTERS

Good Samaritan warms mother's heart

On Jan. 9 my daughter was driving into Huntsville from Port Sydney to go to school at about 8:30 a.m. The roads were starting to get quite slick and she ended up losing control of her car on the off ramp at Hwy. 141 and Hwy. 11. She found herself turned right around in the middle of the ramp. There were no damages or injuries, she was just a bit shaken. A man stopped to see if she was okay and proceeded to help her to get

turned around and on her way. I am unsure of his name but I would like to send my sincere thank you for helping my daughter.

In this day and age when we hear so many negative stories, it warms my heart to know that there are genuinely kind people who would take time out of their busy day to help someone else.

Thank you again!

Laurie Lupton
Port Sydney

Public health cautions area residents about flooded wells

The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit is cautioning residents with private wells in flooded areas to avoid any use of their water for human consumption.

Flooding caused by rain and snow melt this week could potentially contaminate water in drilled or dug wells, allowing harmful bacteria into the drinking supply.

If your well has been flooded, it could have been contaminated. Until you can get your well water

tested, use bottled water for drinking, making infant formula, juices, cooking, making ice, washing fruits and vegetables or brushing teeth, or boil your water rapidly for at least one minute before use.

Once flooding has receded, the well should be disinfected and tested several times before the water can again be used for drinking.

As well, homeowners should be aware that food items that have been in contact with flood water

should be thrown out. Canned goods remain safe, but the outside of cans must be thoroughly washed and disinfected before being opened.

Detailed instructions for disinfecting wells and information about food handling can be found on the health unit's website at www.simcoemuskokahealth.org, or by calling Your Health Connection at 721-7520, or 1-877-721-7520 weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Driscolls leave town

Yes, after 17 years we are leaving Huntsville. Don, head tennis pro at Deerhurst Resort and coach at Aktif Beamers gymnastics, is moving south and for myself, after building the gymnastics club for 13 years plus working for Debbie Deluca at the Centennial Seniors for 12 years I have a full-time job at a gym club in Alliston.

I am really missing teaching the gymnasts in our community, and will miss the elective and high school programs. It

is nice to work for someone else in an established, large club to update my coaching skills but not have the stress. Don is happy to be back in tennis again at the Notawasaga Inn. We won't be strangers. We will visit Huntsville as we were here 17 years.

Thanks to all the gymnasts, schools, executive members, seniors and Sports Rec for their support over the years. We will miss this community.

Don, Linda and Bedmer Driscoll

Not-so-merry Christmas for victims of tree thieves

As a new retiree, my husband and I have purchased property on Deerfoot Trail and have been looking forward to moving to the Huntsville area.

To that end, we invested in several mature spruce trees planted on the edge of our property to view from the house. Imagine our disappointment to find that someone has cut one down, presumably for a Christmas tree.

I understand that it is a time-honoured tradition to go into the bush for your tree, but taking one several feet from the road, on a subdivision street, is obviously theft, of almost \$400, I might add.

Did you remove the red nursery ribbon, or just use it as part of your decorations?

Gail Beattie
Toronto

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:

E-mail:

letters@huntsvilleforester.com

When sending letters to the editor be sure to include your name, address and phone number. Unsigned letters cannot be used.

Food safety first

With some areas of Simcoe and Muskoka experiencing power outages, residents could have some concerns with the safety of food in refrigerators and freezers. The following are some guidelines from the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit for those whose power has been off for an extended period:

Without power, the refrigerator section will keep foods cool for four to six hours if the door is kept closed. Refrigerator temperatures should be 4°C or less to keep food safe.

Without power, an upright or chest freezer that is completely full will keep food frozen for about two days.

A half-full freezer will keep food frozen for one day. The freezer temperature should be -18°C or colder for food safety.

To keep foods cold during a power outage, avoid opening and closing the freezer and the refrigerator.

If food is above 4°C for more than two hours, hazardous foods such as those containing meat, fish, poultry, dairy products and eggs should be discarded.

More information is also available by calling Your Health Connection at 721-7520 (1-877-721-7520), Monday through Friday 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m., or at www.simcoemuskokahealth.org.

Two events postponed

With the sudden arrival of warmer temperatures last week, the annual Muskoka Loppet has been postponed, as has the Hunters Bay Classic 3 on 3 Cure for Cancer hockey tournament.

The Muskoka Loppet has been postponed until Sunday, Jan. 27. Racers are encouraged to register

online in advance, or between 7:30 and 9 a.m. on race day. Forms and information are on the club website at www.arrowheadnordic.ca.

The three-on-three charity hockey tournament has also been rescheduled for Jan. 26 and 27 due to high water levels on the shoreline. Visit www.3on3.ca for more information.



HEALTHCARE HEROES

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Robinson's Independent Grocer

Tracy Robinson along with Independent Grocer Community Room and Special Events Co-ordinator, Maggie Rittenhouse, present a cheque for \$10,453.93 to Ray Ward, Chairman of the Huntsville Hospital Foundation.

The donation represents the last installment of a \$50,000 pledge Tracy and her husband Randy made for the day surgery campaign.

Their contributions funded the donor recognition program as well as helped to equip the surgical facility.

Robinson's Independent Grocer has hosted a mixed baseball event in Huntsville for years. All proceeds have gone to support charities in Huntsville.

We are glad the Robinson's chose our town to be their home.

Huntsville District Memorial Hospital Foundation continues to support:

- Huntsville District Memorial Hospital
- Fairvern Nursing Home
- Burk's Falls & District Health Centre
- Muskoka-East Parry Sound CCAC



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