

New program aims at reducing youth ATV injuries



By Bill Kilpatrick

According to statistics on the Ontario Federation of ATV's web page "Between 2016 and 2022, Ontario Provincial Police reported 151 deaths and over 1,500 injuries from ATV or side-by-side accidents, with loss of control being the leading cause." Their web page further pointed out that in 2018 SickKids hospital sent out a survey on ATV related injuries. The report by SickKids stated that over 900 physicians responded to the survey and reported 181 cases of ATV accidents including fatal accidents. Of these cases children aged 10 to 14 made up close to half of all reported accidents followed by youths 15 to 19 who made up 27 per cent of reported cases. Another significant finding of this survey is that the majority of injuries occurred during recreational use of ATVs at 83.2 per cent. Further to this, the survey concluded that "Most paediatricians who reported cases of ATV-related injuries practiced in provinces without legislated safety training for children, including Ontario, Alberta, Saskatchewan and British Columbia." As a result of these findings the Ontario Federation of ATVs has developed an interactive online ATV training program called Ready to RideOn designed for youths 12 to 15 years of age in the hopes of reducing injuries and deaths of young ATV riders. The course itself costs \$40 and takes approximately two hours to complete. The course covers such topics as safety basics, environmental awareness, trail preparation, maintenance tips, and also contains a simulation module that allows the youths to practice the skills that they have learned in the program. Twelve-year-old Riley Wilton, a Coe Hill resident who has grown up around ATVs and snowmobiles, took the course last month and found it both "informative and interactive." Riley said that he thoroughly enjoyed the course and would recommend it to any beginner riders as well as those who already have some experience. When asked if the course was practical and based on real life scenarios Riley responded with a resounding, "Yes," and explained that the course explored all types of terrains, clothing, and basic maintenance of the ATVs. Beth Wink, the program coordinator for the Ontario Federation of

ATVs spoke about some of the practical aspects of the course that prepare young people for other riders they might meet on the trails, "We're hoping to give them a bit more knowledge before they jump on that machine and go to help them be more mindful and give them the skills required for safe and responsible riding," said Wink. Wink also spoke about the importance of teaching respect on the trails when it comes to sharing the trails with other riders, "It's not just ATVs and side-by-sides that you run into, you come across walkers, horses, dirt bikes, and cyclists" because a lot of trails across Ontario are multiuse. We want to teach them right in the beginning [about] riders responsibility. Wink hopes that the government recognizes the utility of the program and eventually makes it mandatory for young riders given the benefits of lower accident rates in provinces with mandatory course requirements. She believes that the first step right now is to just get young people to take the course. This is exactly what members of the Coe Hill Riders ATV club want as well. According to a press release by the Coe Hill Riders ATV club they are in the midst of "establishing a process to help fund and promote youth to participate in the program." Secretary for the Coe Hill Riders, Roxanne Lambert, said that they currently have funds set aside for education and training that will be used to help offset the costs of the youth ATV safety program for those youth who are interested in taking the program. For more information please visit: <https://ofatv.org/ready-to-rideon/> or <https://torontosnowmobileatvshow.com/> or email Deb Scott, the secretary for the Coe Hill Riders at secretary@chatvc.ca