

Reopening of McGeachie not dampened by rain



By Michael Riley

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The grand reopening of McGeachie Conservation Area thrilled attendees on June 22, with over a dozen folks coming by for the celebrations, despite the rain. In addition to Carl Stefanski, the chair of the HDTI board and Dora Yateman, the HDTI vice chair, Beth Lowe and Kelsey Davidson were there representing CVCA, and Ang Moore from Mystic Hollow Homestead conducting a foraging tour for attendees. MP Shelby Kramp-Neuman and Hastings County Warden Bob Mullin were also there and shared a few words on the reopening, as did Limerick Township Councillor Glenn Locke. The reopening of McGeachie Conservation Area on June 22 was a huge success despite the rain. It was closed after the derecho that swept through and damaged the area in 2022. Bancroft This Week did an article leading up to the event called "Grand reopening of McGeachie Conservation Area June 22" in its June 14 issue. Lowe and Davidson answered a lot of the attendees' questions about the CVCA and McGeachie. Tim Pidduck, general manager and secretary/treasurer of CVCA, who unfortunately could not be there on June 22, told Bancroft This Week on June 12 that he was thrilled that HDTI suggested a grand reopening of McGeachie Conservation Area and that they were able to participate. "The derecho that passed through MCA a couple of years ago severely impacted the trail network and set it back on its heels for far too long. Through efforts by CVCA staff and volunteers (the Bancroft Area Stewardship Council, Rally of the Tall Pines folks and the Boy Scouts and Community Integration Association), the trail network has been restored for public use. Although the storm was severe, it does serve us as a reminder we need to take care of properties like McGeachie for current and future generations to simply enjoy and take away great experiences. If there is an upside to this storm event, then, it would be knowing and appreciating nature has the ability to recover from these natural disasters. Thankfully, with some human assistance, the area has started this journey. Maybe with some of the volunteer help, we could turn this recovery into a citizen science project and track its progress, especially since climate change may also have a say in this process," he says. HDTI is dedicated to non-motorized trails throughout Hastings County for the enjoyment of the environment, health benefits, tourism and increasing economic development. Stefanski says their board members and volunteers give their time for this not-for-profit organization by participating in this and other events. They'll also be involved in Bancroft's Canada Day event, the Madoc and Coe Hill fairs, the Hastings Snowshoe Hustle, the Marmora and area Canoe and Kayak Festival, water trails, and expanding their presence at the Tweed and Wilberforce fairs along with continued educational tours. Two horses were on hand from the the Ontario Mounted Special Service Unit (Ambassador Patrol) and Stefanski said they were a real crowd pleaser. "These animals are unbelievably calm and gentle and impressive looking. Lots of photos and questions for the riders [Josie Rowling and Jenn Allins]," he says. Ang Moore thought that considering the bugs and the weather, it went well. "I was actually expecting fewer people with the rain they were calling for," she

says. Stefanski told Bancroft This Week that he also thought it was a huge success, and said that attendees could not stop talking about the Moore's knowledge of foraging. "Everyone was amazed at the amount of what can be consumed in the wild and the medicinal benefits of other plants. Unfortunately, mushroom season has just past, but a sample of Chaga was presented and the health benefits if prepared properly. Chaga is a mushroom that grows on birch trees and for centuries has been used to boost immunity and improve overall health. The amount of generosity regarding the donation of non-perishable food items was outstanding with two large totes on their way to North Hastings Community Cupboard. To all that braved the rain, thank you for coming out to this event. It is understandable that the inclement weather kept people away," he says. Stefanski said he spoke with Ang Moore and the forest changes each season, presenting new and different offerings and said that due to that, another event of this nature will be held in the fall. "Hastings Destination Trails Inc. is currently working on several future projects," he says. "Happy trails to you!"