

Advocate invites community to take a guided walk on namesake trail

By Brock Weir

Fostering a trails system allowing Aurora residents to get everywhere they need to go as off-road as possible has been a long-held dream for Klaus Wehrenberg.

The trails advocate began promoting and pitching his vision in the early 1970s, urging and getting back to nature. In the intervening decades there have been successes and setbacks, but the Klaus Wehrenberg Trail near Downtown Aurora stands as a testament to his tenacity.

This month, this trail segment celebrates its 10th anniversary. Beginning June 20, the man behind the trail invites residents to come and take a walk with him on a series of excursions to highlight the beauty that can be found right in our own back yards.

‘It is about getting people closer to nature and to get them to understand the ecological treasures we have down there,’ says Mr. Wehrenberg. ‘We have springs, we have woodpeckers, and indicative species of old growth forest. It is just fantastic, but there aren’t that many people who go that far out of the way and don’t have a full understanding. They might walk through the trails for their own exercise, but sometimes they lack the tools to fully appreciate [their surroundings] in a way, so you have to provide them.’

‘It is appropriate to celebrate it a little bit to get more people appreciative of what we have downtown. We don’t have lakesides or any water here to speak of, but we have forests right downtown that are just outstanding.’

In the 1970s, Mr. Wehrenberg held a vision for a local trails network where ‘everyone could walk where they wanted to away from roads’ but at the time that wasn’t part of the municipal plan then. He began making headway in the 1980s with funding that eventually led to the development of a Trails Committee at Town Hall and, ultimately, a Trails Master Plan, which remains an evolving blueprint for the expanding trails network.

After the trails plan was approved, however, Mr. Wehrenberg stepped away from his advocacy work, feeling burnt out by the early 1990s.

Council’s decision to put his name on a stretch of trail came as a surprise, but it also reignited his passion, a passion for which he has provided a strong and active voice to this day.

‘I must admit because [having my name on something] is not important to me,’ he says. ‘But, it was important to me in the context of what I am doing because it gives me quite a bit of credibility. It also led me to increase my dedication. It was an incentive to make sure this work is continuing and I am doing that to this day.’

Two hour walks begin on Saturday, June 20, lasting for seven consecutive days through June 26 starting at 10 a.m. For more information, including your start point, contact Mr. Wehrenberg at 905-841-1026 or by email at ecopal@rogers.com.