

Rutland Herald

Pine Hill Park's 16 miles of wooded trails greet bikers, runners

By John Shramek

Staff Writer | April 21, 2014

Tucked away just over a mile from the heart of Rutland City is Pine Hill Park, the perfect tranquil destination for those looking to get outside after being cooped up during the frigid reign of a long winter.

Pine Hill Park features numerous opportunities for those looking to enjoy the outdoors, offering challenging elevation changes and tight corners for adventurous mountain bikers and runners as well as relaxing, hand-crafted trails and natural ponds for families who just want to get away from the commotion of downtown Rutland.

The park is promoted by a dedicated group of volunteers that mark, maintain and craft the 16 miles of trails and bridges that can be found on the 300-acre plot of land.

Shelley Lutz, a prominent member of the Pine Hill Partnership, said the drive to spend her time working on the park stems from the satisfaction she gets from seeing others enjoy the fruits of her labor.

"It's great being out in the pouring rain when people are going by and out of breath, but they still look up and smile and say 'Thank you,'" Lutz said.

Lutz will be seeing plenty of people enjoying the park again this summer with the Rutland Recreation Department taking advantage of this treasured resource, planning several budget-friendly events to get the community up and moving.

The Summer Sunset Series, for runners, and the Droopy Pedal Series, for mountain bikers, will each be held on three dates this year.

The Summer Sunset Series is a 5K race that will take place on the second Tuesday of June, July and August. This will be the eighth year the race has been held, and the start time for each race will be 6:30 p.m.

The Droopy Pedal, which had around 30 participants per event last year, will be held at 6:30 p.m. on the third Monday of June, July and August. That particular race offers participants an assortment of competitive distances, ranging from one lap at around 2.5 miles all the way up to four laps.

"The goal of our races is to be low key," said Jay Thomas, a program director for the recreation department. "We just want to see people getting outside. This is not an overly-competitive series at all, and even in the Droopy Pedal, the top riders around here are just

out there having fun with it.”

The ninth annual 10K Leaf Chase will also be held at Pine Hill in the middle of October.

The cost for participation in these events is \$5, but because the events are being sponsored by Rutland Regional Medical Center, the fee will be waved for kids under the age of 18.

Tim Vile, a frequent participant of the Summer Sunset race and a dedicated volunteer, believes the park and the events held at it are meaningful.

“It’s such a valuable gem for Rutland,” Vile said. “It’s great to see people coming to this area to use this park. That’s what it is all about.”

Lutz agreed with Vile, saying that Pine Hill has become a destination for tourists.

“It blows the minds of people to have this great resource in Rutland,” Lutz said. “People have moved to this area just for this resource.”

Riding a trail of confidence on a bicycle

By [Tom Haley](#)

Staff Writer | April 21,2014

Those taking the five classes in the Women’s Mountain Bike Clinic from Shelley Lutz will learn how to climb, descend, balance and brake.

More importantly, self-confidence comes as part of the package.

The first of the five classes at Pine Hill Park starts on May 1 for the clinic that runs through May 29.

That first session will pretty much be limited to the parking lot as skills are stressed that get the beginner and advanced beginner ready for the trails running through the woods of Pine Hill Park.

This will be the fourth year Lutz has held the clinic at Pine Hill and each time 15 to 18 riders have taken advantage of the opportunity.

Many want to be able to ride with their kids. Others know how to ride a little bit and want to learn the network of trails at Pine Hill.

Pine Hill Park is special to Lutz. She has put a lot into the facility as one of the volunteers helping to lay out the trail system and groom the trails into a treasure that has become a source of pride for Rutland.

It is a gem for hiking and Lutz says it is especially suited for mountain biking.

“It has got something of everything,” she said. “It has got some technical trails and it has got some climbing, although maybe not as much climbing as in some places.”

A real reward for Lutz comes later in the summer when she encounters a couple of women who became friends through taking the course and are sharing their joy of the sport with one another while traversing the Pine Hill trails.

It also gives someone interested in fitness and recreation a different means to enjoy the outdoors.

“Most everyone is coming from another sport,” Lutz said.

The appeal of taking a course with only other women is the way in which they interact with each other, Lutz said.

“Women are very supportive of one another regardless of what the skill level is. Everyone will help the not-so-good rider. That is huge,” Lutz said.

And through the five weeks, she sees the women grow as people.

“You will see them develop so much self-confidence. It’s pretty cool,” Lutz said.

Some of the riders might decide they would rather keep their bike on the road, but Lutz said “about three-quarters of them will stay mountain biking to a certain degree.”

And those who want to continue will soon have an addition to this treasure of Pine Hill Park. This season an extension of the venue will become available.

The grand opening of the carriage trail from Pine Hill Park to Proctor will be on May 17. This will offer a great new adventure for hikers and mountain bikers. The rider will be able to travel all the way from Pine Hill Park to the skating rink in Proctor.

“It’s been seven years in the process,” Lutz said.

There will be a ribbon cutting at Pine Hill Park and another at the rink in Proctor complete with a barbecue. Those who wish to bike or hike will have transportation

provided back to Proctor.

There are plenty of reasons to take the Women's Mountain Bike Clinic, ranging from being able to ride with your kids to taking in the scenic beauty served up by Pine Park's meticulously groomed trails with all their variety.

And, for those so inclined, there will now be the more ambitious journey from Pine Hill to Proctor.