



Friends of Foley Mountain still going strong at Twentieth Anniversary

Residents and visitors associate Foley Mountain with SPY ROCK- a large granite outcrop with spectacular views over the Village of Westport and Upper Rideau Lake. In fact, Foley Mountain Conservation Area owned and managed by the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority is much more than that- an 833 acre gem composed of natural woodlands, ponds, shoreline and a diverse array of both common and endangered species. The park also boasts a Visitor Interpretive Centre, the Silversides Outdoor Education Centre and 9 kilometres of impressive hiking and snowshoeing trails.

Back in the 1990s, government cutbacks were threatening the future of Foley Mountain. A group of concerned local residents rallied to keep the park and its facilities open. They formed an incorporated non-profit organization whose purpose is to help preserve and maintain Foley Mountain in its natural state for the enjoyment and education of present and future generations. One of the original founders - Don Goodfellow- is still on the present day Friends of Foley Mountain Board of Directors.

Over the past two decades, the Friends of Foley Mountain have worked successfully to enhance the Park's services and facilities through volunteering and by fund raising. Over \$300 thousand dollars has been raised and invested in the park. This has resulted in the development of the Children's Discovery Centre, the construction of the Jack Herbert mobility trail, the addition of the solar electrical system at the Silversides Outdoor Education Centre, the purchase of 40 sets of snowshoes (and their replacements last year), the yearly rental of reptiles for the Discovery Centre and many others. In recent years, the Friends have focused on supporting the award winning Children's Environmental Education Program and the new Forest Kindergarten Program. In 2018, over 2500 students got a chance to experience nature first hand with the guidance of certified outdoor education teachers in curriculum compatible learning experiences. The Friends are also subsidizing some of the costs for busing the children to Foley Mountain from regional schools as many School Boards are having to cut back on field trips due to budget constraints. This is an incredibly important opportunity for kids raised in an increasingly urban atmosphere, many who don't get the chance to experience nature first hand.

All of these enhancements cost money and the Friends of Foley Mountain would like to recognize its members, the many donors and sponsors, and the local business community who have supported them over the years; and to everyone who purchased tickets in the canoe/kayak raffles, the Community auctions in the past, or the recent annual Tapas Evening fundraising events.

The Friends of Foley Mountain would very much like to continue their success into the future. But they need the continuing support of the community. You can help:

- Become a member of the Friends of Foley Mountain- Visit their web site at www.friendsoffoley.ca for more information. A bonus- purchase a \$50 annual membership or higher and receive a complimentary annual vehicle pass to all RVCA Conservation Areas = a value of \$50.
- Purchase a ticket to the fabulous Tapas Fundraiser evening on Friday July 12th, 2019 at the Scheuermann Winery in Westport. Tickets available in advance from any Director, from Thakes Home Comfort Centre, or from the Winery.
- Volunteer to sit on the Board of Directors. A number of vacancies exist- come join an enthusiastic and committed team working for a great cause. Contact President Rob Struthers at r.a.struthers@live.com for more information.
- Attend the Annual General Meeting on May 29th at 7 pm at the Silversides Outdoor Education Centre at Foley Mountain Conservation Area. The evening will feature a brainstorming session on the future of Foley Mountain Conservation Area with officials from the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority staff who are initiating the 10 year review of the park's Management Plan.