

# TRAIL TALK



Oak Ridges Trail Association Quarterly  
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Photo Credit: Judy Pergau Volunteers Trail Building



Photo Credits Ed Lehming Trout Lily and Trilliums.

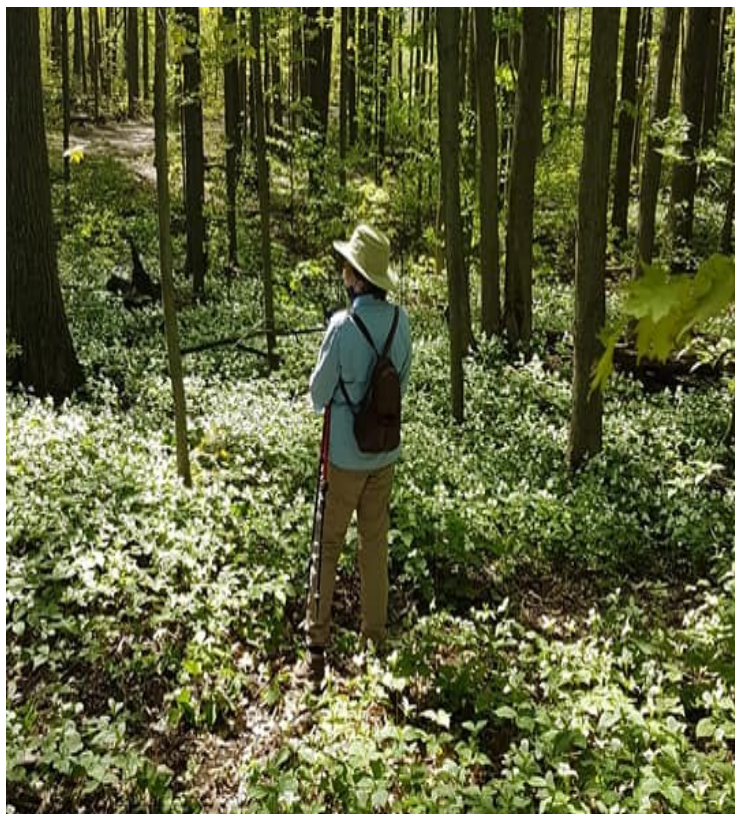


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***Building Pathways to an Active Lifestyle***

## AGM—LISSA DWYER



Special thank you to all our membership who joined the Zoom call on April 22 to 'celebrate' 2020!

There's no question that we'd all prefer to come together for a hike and meet at Ballantrae for a delicious potluck spread. But given the circumstances, we had a resounding turnout - with almost 70 devices tuning in.

It's also undeniably difficult to celebrate a year of hiking that couldn't happen. Thanks go out to our Chapter Chairs, Trail Captains and other volunteers who used the opportunity to get trail work done and put a positive spin on the year anyway. Judging by the feedback in the chat box, the presentation was very much enjoyed by many members. Hope you find time to enjoy the Annual Report which tells the story of the year and its successes on the trail.

Photo Credit: Fazyah Mohammed

### ORTA DIRECTORS and Chapter Chairs 2021—2022

President *^	Kevin Lowe
Past President *^	Wilma Millage
Vice President and Trail Director *^	Garry Niece
Secretary *^	Lissa Dwyer
Treasurer *^	Robert Alexander
Regional Director (East & West) *^	Brian Millage
Regional Director (Central)^	Frank Alexander
Board Member at Large^	Huw Evans
Board Member/Publicity^	Carol Dowell
Board Member at Large^	Weibo Cheng
Aurora Chapter Chair	Bruce Corbett
Caledon Chapter Chair	Neil McGeachy
King Chapter Chair	Ed Millar
Richmond Hill Chapter Co-Chairs	Weibo Cheng / Lisa Li
Scugog Chapter Chair	vacant
Uxbridge Chapter Co-Chairs	Brian Millage and Jon McPhee
Whitchurch-Stouffville Chapter Co-Chairs	Scott Heaslip / Caiti McClelland
Northumberland Chapter	vacant
* Executive Member, ^ Board Member	

The Oak Ridges Trail Association would like to thank Kevin Callan for his fantastic presentation at our zoom AGM. It was truly a delight. If you happen to miss it or would like to see it again, it is available with his kind permission for playback from our [News and Events Page on ORTAs website](#).

**Check out his website at [www.kevincallan.com](http://www.kevincallan.com) or You Tube channel: KCHappyCamper**

His Newest Book, *Once Around Algonquin*, is now available. Kevin Callan's *Once Around Algonquin* is an exciting tale of misadventure on the toughest route in Ontario's most well-loved wilderness. While sharing his love of this paddling paradise, Callan details some of the park's history and evolution, interweaving stories from the voyage. Chuckle along with the tales behind the blisters and bruises in this bromance adventure tale, all told with Callan's trademark humor. With a storytelling vibe, 30 chapters share insights and describe some of the challenges of canoe tripping for both the uninitiated as well as for the seasoned canoeist.

### *Lifetime Achievement Award—Brian Millage*

As presented by Kevin Lowe to Brian Millage. It is my very real pleasure to recognize the long time extraordinary contributions of Brian Millage by presenting him with a Lifetime Achievement Award. I have heard Brian and Wilma referred to on numerous occasions as Mr. and Mrs. ORTA. I think this is a very apt description. One might say their contributions span "Board to Plank". They have both served on the Board for numerous years and have both contributed to maintenance and boardwalk building among many other initiatives. Wilma we recognized last year. It seems only fitting to also recognize Brian this year.

Rather than list all the contributions for Brian, and they are many, it would be a much shorter list to outline the minimal number of things he has not undertaken for ORTA !

Brian we are indeed in your debt for all your contributions. I dare say we would not be in the enviable position we are today without your dedication and commitment.

Accordingly it is my honour to present you with the Oak Ridges Trail Associations lifetime achievement award.



### *Member of the Year Award—Michele Donnelly*



Most of you know Michele Donnelly as our intrepid Office Manager. The friendly voice on the end of the phone when you have an issue or a matter you want some assistance with. Did you know there is an additional side to Michele - volunteer extraordinaire! Apart from serving as the Adventure relay chair and a hike leader she is also solely responsible for the development, testing, refinement and operationalizing of the process we now use for hike management. When covid hit and we were still running guided hikes we needed some way to monitor the number of hikers in attendance for social distancing and tracking. Michele stepped up and developed our new system. Not only that but she also managed its operation helping hike leaders adjust and tweaking the system as warranted.

For this reason we recognize Michele Donnelly as our **Member of the Year** for 2020.

**Commendation Award**

**Bill Schoenhardt** – Bill is a teacher and Dept. Head at King City Secondary School where he has been running an outdoor education programme since 2005. His students do a natural history study on the ORM as well as hiking on our trails. He also has them participate in trail clean-up and repairs to encourage community involvement.

**Garry Conway and Pam Heron** – Garry has often been involved on photo projects for our trail which included the original ORTA Power Point presentation used for Publicity over the years. He and Pam have also been enthusiastic volunteers on our Adventure Relay. We wish them well as they are leaving Ontario for Nova Scotia where they have had a second home for many years. We will miss them.

**Trail Builders Award**

**Jim Rhyness** – an enthusiastic Trail Captain in Whitchurch-Stouffville for several years. He also served as co-chair for a period. Jim, as you can see by this picture, has been a participant in our Adventure Relay as part of the Stouffvillains Team which have designed one of the notable T-shirts for our race.



Picture Left to Right: Jim Rhyness, Garry Conway and Pam Heron, Bottom Picture William (Bill) Schoenhardt



“While I teach many subjects and am very involved with King City SS, I believe that it is my OEE course where I have the greatest affect as a teacher. Part of the program is always a hike from the school on the ORT to Pottageville with a focus on the natural and human history on the way. The class actively uses the property at Seneca College, Cold Creek CA and YMCA Cedar Glen. Virtually all of my students live on the moraine, many are naïve of it, and thus there is some strong learning about the Moraine's importance.” Bill Schoenhardt

(Pictured here at a campsite on one of the two day excursions Bill takes -off moraine- with a pot of “perogie explosion” for his students. More pictures on Page 6)

*Sanity during a Pandemic Lockdown - Brian Millage*

Not long after our return from a Belize holiday - the world changed. Suddenly we were told to "distance from others", maintain a small "bubble" of trusted family members and limit our social interactions. As hike leaders for ORTA, Wilma and I felt that our best contribution would be to continue hikes with modified numbers to give ORTA members safe outdoor exercise and at least some limited social connections. This was facilitated by limiting attendance to ORTA members, limiting numbers- at first 10, then 15, according to provincial guidelines- and requiring advance on-line sign up and waivers. Michele Donnelly put in many hours listing our hikes and assisting with the registration process. Finally, even those limited outings ground to a halt as successive waves of covid rocked the province. As emotional pressures mounted, more and more individuals and families started to explore the outdoor resources nearby. Thousands of new and experienced walkers hit the trails along the Oak Ridges Moraine and elsewhere - and behind the scenes they had a support team...



ORTA trail volunteers took up the challenge of keeping the trails safe for fellow hikers and other trail users. No longer were there hike leaders to keep the group on safe and interesting trails. Blaze markings had to be maintained or replaced, weeds and grasses had to be cut back keeping hikers safe from ticks, bridges and boardwalks needed attention, and fallen or leaning trees had to be safely removed. Often these actions were undertaken by single individuals or couples or sometimes in small groups, but the process continued. Many of these trail captains have been maintaining the trails for twenty years or more, and thankfully have been joined by a few new volunteers, and they have been a dedicated team to be proud of. They seldom receive accolades for their efforts though most have been commended at some point. See if you can identify some of them from recent photos. Pictured on front cover and this page are members of the Uxbridge Team, who not only look after local trails, but also volunteer to travel to Caledon and elsewhere when needed. Thank you Team. Similar thanks to all the other ORTA chapter trail volunteers who put in many hours per year keeping our trails safe.

Learning on the Moraine Trail—Bill Schoenhardt



Pictures of various environmental community service over the past few years and quotes from Mr. Schoenhardt students at KCSS.

- \* I learned how much we can love nature and everything around us by just listening to it you can learn what is out there and what you love about it. I also learned I had to take responsibility and how that improves on what I am doing.
- \* Interactions changed because the environment changed. Instead of socialising with mainly a few people we worked as a big team talking with everyone.
- \* What I would recommend to a student doing this class next year is what my dad told me before every trip is that I ask “what can I do to help” because when you help others, I feel you and other people have a better time. I don’t know how it works it’s just helping people makes me feel good about what I am doing.

First I would like to express our gratitude to the landowners of King who have gladly shared a small section of their property with neighbours and fellow hikers along the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail. Over the last 25 years we have appreciated the quiet trails of Seneca College, Mary Lake Monastery, and more recently the Nature Conservancy of Canada in Happy Valley, and several scenic farm properties and smaller holdings that allowed safe and serene off road passage through this beautiful area. This has benefited your neighbours and many other visitors to King Township, and never more so than during this stressful period of covid. I especially wish to recognize the Groombridge families, Bill Salmon and until recently the O'Hara family. With the passing of Mike O'Hara our long term trail use relationship between the 10th and 11th concessions of King has been severed, as the accompanying map reroute indicates. I still remember seeing the many bobolinks and orioles on their organic farm property. Now, instead of 3.5km of quiet forest and field trails, we will add 3 km of road.

All too often as properties change hands it is easier for a new owner or manager to say no to trails rather than look at the many years past without incident during which friends and strangers were able to share in the joy of walking forest or meadow trails. Currently, between Hwy 27 and the Caledon border, the Groombridge farm is the only remaining off road trail section. We are pleased to be able to share this beautiful property and to see Ontario farming through the seasons. If any other landowners in this region wish to reverse this trend, consider talking to the landowner on your back fence line about the possibility of sharing passage from one concession to the next and contact ORTA about the possibility.

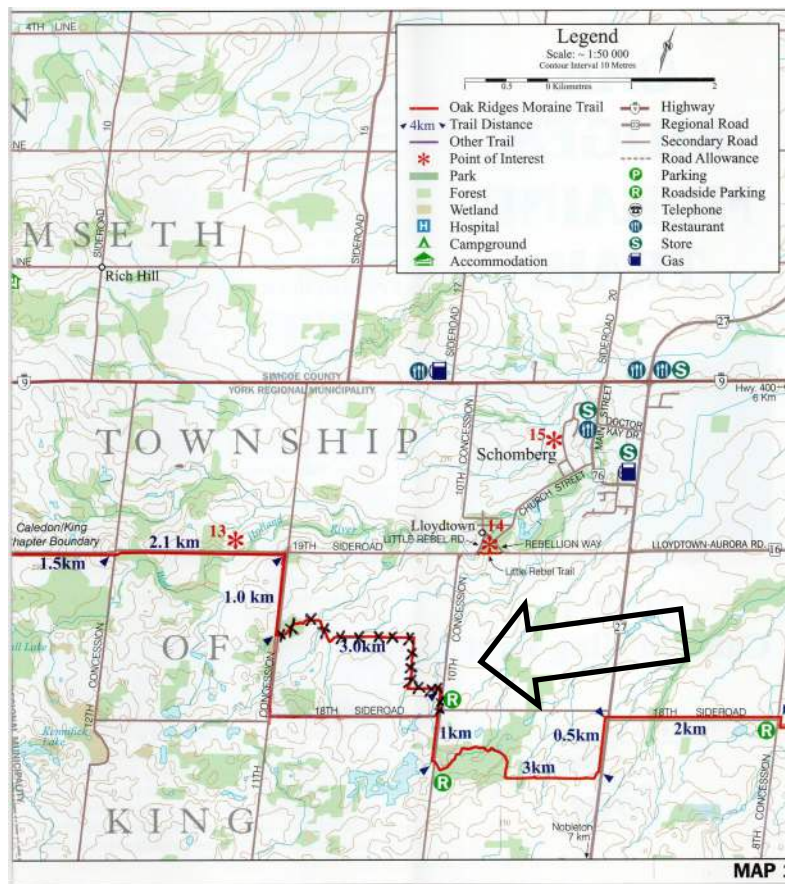
Finally, rest assured that our volunteer trail monitors are still out there working to keep your trails clear and safe for a short walk or an end to end hiking challenge.

Update to Map 1 of the ORMT Guidebook. Please do not traverse the X'd off portion. Trail now along 18th Sideroad.

**GUIDEBOOK UPDATE:**

Good news, the approved Edition 7 Oak Ridges Moraine Guidebook document is at the printers as this issue of Trail Talk goes to print.

It is expected imminently. As soon as it is ready, notices will be emailed to members and posted to our social media pages and website. Thank you for your patience.



*Building Pathways to an Active Lifestyle*

On behalf of Wilma and myself, we wish to thank Kevin for his remarks at the recent AGM and ORTA for almost two decades of challenges, excitement and good friends, and we thank you all for these Lifetime Achievement Awards. After meeting on an ORTA hike and subsequent wedding on the Trail in Uxbridge, we embraced the ORTA lifestyle wholeheartedly. How surprised we were as over 70 ORTA hikers joined us for our marriage celebration on trail- and many have returned yearly for the butter tarts and beverage. We teamed up with Stan Butcher as hike leaders to lead weekly Monday Trek hikes year-round and have continued for almost two decades while developing many friendships along the way. Writing the Monday Trekker Newsletter after each hike allowed us to stay in touch and bring hikers up to date about ORTA news. In 2003, Tom Rance passed the torch to me as Uxbridge Chair saying "almost all the work is done on this section of trail". WOW, what a sales job- it has been one of the busiest chapters ever since as nearly one-third of ORTA hikes have followed the many trails across Uxbridge. As large numbers of cyclists, skiers and equestrians discovered the variety of trail options between Skyloft and the Goodwood Tract of TRCA, I was asked to serve on the Duffin's Creek Watershed Stewardship Committee to share the hiking perspective with the other trail users and to give input from ORTA re future development and trail use- they were very surprised by the statistics of annual hikes, hikers and kilometres walked by ORTA groups, details assembled by Malcolm Hann as hike co-ordinator. More recently, even more attention has centered on this area as two legs of the Trans Canada/Great Trail now follow ORTA trails, one of which meets the northern terminus of the Rouge National Urban Park. If you get bored in Uxbridge, there is always more work to do on the Secord boardwalks.

In addition to our duties as hike leaders, Wilma and I have worked as a team bringing different suggestions to bear as we served as directors on the Board- Wilma as Publicity Director, making several revisions to the ORTA brochure, developing the PowerPoint presentation and event display panels, and later as President, and currently as Past President maintaining landowner agreements and relations along the Trail - Brian, as Uxbridge Chapter Chair and Regional Chair. In this latter position, I was very pleased to be able to negotiate a major route change for our Trail at the west end from Palgrave through four TRCA properties to Glen Haffy where we now meet the Bruce Trail. Wilma and I have enjoyed our positions on the Adventure Relay committee since 2007. This event not only showcased the Trail and the Moraine, but also brought over a hundred ORTA volunteers together annually as support staff cheering on the participants.

Finally, Wilma and I would like to recognize the friendships we have developed; with Board members over the years - what a team; with our trail volunteers who maintain the Trail and; the hikers with whom we have shared so many tales and trails.

Looking forward to seeing you all on the trail again,  
Keep on Trekking,  
Brian and Wilma

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