

Mathews plans record-breaking Moraine trek

By Mark Pavilons

Completing a marathon is a lofty goal, and one that's on many people's bucket list.

But a marathon a day, for an entire week?

That's the challenge Kelly Mathews has created for herself. She's put together the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail 300-kilometre hike (ORMT300), to raise money for both the Oak Ridges Trail Association and Seneca College's King Campus expansion.

She admitted such a feat is "ridiculously ambitious," but she's been contemplating it for some time. To do any less, she contended, would not be the call to action she's looking for. The previous "record" was a 213-kilometre hike in nine days.

Mathews, the manager of community recreation, camps and Outdoor Education Centre at Seneca College on Lake Seneca, is very much an outdoors person. She finds trail hikes to be a source of great mental health.

It's a solo, week-long adventure and Mathews has an admirable "bring-it-on" attitude. She'll need it. She plans on hiking 12 hours a day, from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., covering the equivalent of a marathon "42 kilometres or 26 miles. She'll have to maintain an aggressive pace of roughly four kilometres per hour, while carrying a backpack weighing roughly 38 pounds with all of her gear and sustenance for the week. She will be challenged, physically and mentally. The terrain is rugged in some parts and she'll be facing some almost vertical climbs.

Mathews chose to do it alone to push herself even further. Going with a partner or group removes the hardships. It's about pushing yourself, and that's what Mathews wants to take away from this adventure. She's even looking forward to all that Mother Nature can throw at her.

"I'm so excited to experience this," she said. She believes it will be "one of the greatest experiences I've ever had."

Mathews will subsist on water, sport drink crystals, corn chips, trail mix and power bars. She'll be travelling with both a cell phone and satellite phone, but will only be in contact with the outside world long enough to share some images on social media, and to check in at the end of the day.

She'll be sleeping in a tent each evening just off the trail. She will be living out of a backpack for the entire time.

Mathews hopes to raise \$5,000 on her trek and so far the support has been great. "Seneca is simply thrilled with her adventure.

Mathews also drew support from Seneca when she penned her first book, "Eaton Hall: Pride of King Township," the definitive, compelling account of this iconic residence.

She will begin her marathon Aug. 28 at 6 a.m. in Palgrave. She will end it Sept. 3 at Trent Hills near Brighton.

"A very important part of this challenge includes giving back," she said. Her goal of \$5,000 nets out to roughly \$17 per kilometre.

"Seneca College King Campus holds a special place in my heart. King Campus is not only the home of Eaton Hall, but several heritage-farming and residential facilities."

It also housed a portion of the former Schomberg and Aurora Railway between 1902 and 1927. The former rail line forms part of the ORTA side trail through King Campus today.

This land once belonged to Sir John Craig and his wife Lady Flora McCrea Eaton and before that, Sir Henry Mill Pellatt of Casa Loma, who sold 400 of the 700 acres to the Eaton family in 1922. King Campus permeates history and heritage. Seneca College purchased this land in 1971 and for the past 45 years, this property has evolved and developed to meet the ever-changing needs of the region.

"Over the course of the past year, Seneca College has been incredibly supportive of the research, production and celebration of my first book on the history of this land. It seems like a fitting way for me to say thank you by encouraging others to contribute to the next chapter of King Campus."

Donations will support the campaign to expand and modernize King Campus through infrastructure to revitalization and program development. This one of the largest expansion projects in Seneca's history and will add an estimated 140,000 square feet of much-needed space for classrooms, labs, a library, a learning centre and study rooms. Specialized facilities will include patient care labs, therapeutic simulation suites, computer labs and a hospital laboratory for clinical training.

"This is an opportunity to contribute to the future of King Campus, allowing it to continue its legacy of being responsive to the health, vitality and educational needs of York Region."

"The Oak Ridges Moraine Trail is a big part of my life," she added. "I can be found most weekends and many evenings hiking, trail running, walking or snowshoeing throughout. The trail is more than a way to get from point A to point B. The trail, for me, provides a much needed respite from every day life and noise. I can't imagine my community in Aurora/King without it."

Donations will also support the ORTA, a volunteer organization that works with the Oak Ridges Land Trust and the Oak Ridges

Moraine Foundation to ensure public access to the Moraine, while restoring its natural habitat.

From the Northumberland County Forest in the east to Mono Township at the base of the Niagara Escarpment in the west, the restored natural habitat will shelter animals and birds whose historic home on the Oak Ridges Moraine has been compromised first by agriculture and increasingly in recent years, by urban development.

For more information about the ORMT300 or to make a donation, visit Kelly's fundraising page at www.canadahelps.org/en/pages/ormt-300, or email her at kellymathews@hotmail.com