COQUITLAM CRUNCH CHALLENGE

Crunch for a cause Sept. 12 in annual Coquitlam event

Community Diversity Fund will get money

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TRI-CITY NEWS

There are hikes all around the Tri-Cities, vigorous climbs up Eagle Mountain, pleasant trail loops, lake excursions and picturesque shoreline walks.

But the Coquitlam Crunch is in a class by itself. It's a fitness hike with only two options.

Up or down.

Alex Bell only has eyes for the rise, however, as he once again organizes the Coquitlam Crunch Challenge, which takes place Saturday, Sept. 12.

He hopes the sixth challenge matches or beat last year's achievement of raising $4,000 for the Community Diversity Fund run by the Coquitlam Foundation. (This year, the fund gave out its first grant to the Tri-Cities Brain Injury Support Group to help fund social interaction and community recreational opportunities for brain injury survivors.)

It's a great cause along what has to be one of Coquitlam's most scenic walking routes.

Starting near Scott Creek middle school, the Crunch takes walkers along a 2.2 km uphill route along a BC Hydro cut line marked by information signs, decorated with nature's bounty of wildflowers, blackberry vines and the towers and transmission lines that carry power from B.C.'s Interior to the coast.

According to clubtread.com, the Crunch has a total distance of 5 km return, with an elevation gain of 280 m. In contrast, the Grouse Grind is a 2.9 km ascent, with an elevation gain of 853 m — a little longer and a lot higher.

Although less intense than the hugely popular Grind, it gets the heart rate up, with the average round walking trip about an hour. And with parts of it paved, it's possible to do some of the route in a wheelchair.

Dozens of people visit the Crunch every day, tackling the 437 stairs installed by the city of Coquitlam, and walking or running the gravel and partially paved route, which finishes at Eagle Mountain Drive.

On the day *The Tri-City News* visited the Crunch, Port Coquitlam Coun. Mike Forrest was on the trail with Pippa Van Velzen, past president of the Port Coquitlam Heritage and Cultural Society. Both had biked to the trail from PoCo.

Another group of three teenagers said the Crunch was a prelude to doing the Diez Vistas, a longer and more arduous mountain trail around Buntzen Lake. When asked if they were on the Crunch to get somewhere in the city or simply to hike, one girl answered:

"We went up and now we're going down."

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WHAT'S NEW THIS YEAR

The Coquitlam Crunch has a new four-hour format this year as well as the recreational category for individuals or families who can walk the Crunch at least once. The options are:

• Make it or Break category: Participants walk or run the trail as many times as possible between 8 a.m. and noon. Pre-register online at www.coquitlamcrunch.com or on the day in person at 7:30 a.m.

• Recreation category: This is for individuals or families and the official start time is 10 a.m., although people may arrive and participate any time between 8:30 a.m. and noon. Preregister online or register on the day.

There is an optional donation for participants of $20 for adults, $10 for youth or $40 per family but no donation of any amount will be refused and participation is welcome without a donation. (Donations to the food bank run by Share Family and Community Services will also be accepted.)

HELP NEEDED FOR CHALLENGE

Volunteers and sponsors are needed to make the event success. Among the jobs for helpers include assisting with site set-up, registration, water stations, verification stations and parking, ensuring safe road crossings along the route, tearing down tents and tables. To help, email coquitlamcrunch@gmail.com

ABOVE: DIANE STRANDBERG/THE TRI-CITY NEWS; BELOW: SUBMITTED PHOTO
Below: Laurel, Alex and Sierra Bell, founders of the Coquitlam Crunch Challenge, which will see walkers doing the popular Coquitlam Crunch (above) for charity on Sept. 12.