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Ladies get dirty in cancer fight



By Scott Dunn, Sun Times, Owen Sound
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Members of the Meaford's Mini Mudders team (in green) participate in a pre-mudding warm up dance routine at the bottom of the hill before setting out on the 5km obstacle course during the Bluewater Canadian Cancer Society's Mudmoiselle Ladies' Mud Run at Talisman Mountain Springs Inn on Saturday September 12, 2015 near Kimberly Ont. James Masters/Owen Sound Sun Times/Postmedia Network

KIMBERLEY - Mud-covered women bounded up and down hills and over obstacles during Mudmoiselle, fundraiser which vowed to "drag cancer through the mud" Saturday at Talisman Mountain Springs Inn.

They cheered for each other as they hiked the long, high hill, navigating 15 physical challenges along the five-kilometre trail.

The venue was the former Talisman ski resort near Kimberley in the Beaver Valley, where participants enjoyed sweeping views of forested, steep slopes culminating in the limestone escarpment face known as Old Baldy.

The 100-room conference centre and inn has been closed for years but it's amid an approximately \$4.5- to \$5 million renovation which owner Brian Ellis said Saturday he hopes to re-open by year's end. A nordic spa with outdoor pools, worth another \$4.5- to \$5 million, is to follow by the end of 2016 or sometime in 2017, he said.

There were about 340 Mudmoiselle participants on teams from Orillia, Barrie, Brampton, Hamilton and the Owen Sound area, local Canadian Cancer Society fundraiser Jen Wright said. The event's fundraising goal was \$120,000 for local programs and services. The total raised wasn't available.

Wright said mud-based events have been popular for several years and so the local Cancer Society chapter hopped in with the Mudmoiselle event to keep people motivated.

Groups of women and a few boys dressed in running gear warmed up to pounding music and dance steps led by Tyler Boyle at the base of the hill behind the Talisman buildings.

"You can't do it wrong," an encouraging Boyle repeatedly cried into his mic to get the group moving. "Make it a bit bouncy. Make it a bit bouncy."

Teams of a few to several participants were released in stages up the hill. The route included what one muddy woman called a manure crawl, where she had to wriggle on her hands and knees through mud.

The course ended with a 30-metre slide down a section of the hill covered in rubber sheeting and kept slippery with running, soapy water. Many slid head-first down and into a water-filled pool topped with clingy soap bubbles, then emerged covered in them.

Next they climbed over a pile of hay bales and each jumped over a low fire. Each waited at the other side and whooped in celebration when their teammates jumped it too. Then they ran down the rest of the hill, following a course marked by pink ribbon to an area where volunteer firefighters hosed them off.

Four women teachers – Elizabeth Doneathy and Holly Brown of Hepworth Central School and Caitlin Roach and Nancy Law of St. Vincent-Euphrasia school -- called their team Girls Gone Muddy.

"You go as a team and you link arms," Roach said of tackling the hill. "We all skied here when we were younger so we're happy to be back here and hope to actually be able to spend time here in the near future."

Each of them has had cancer touch their families, she said.

Talisman owner Brian Ellis and his partners bought the former resort last year from Grey Highlands which had taken possession of the property after two attempts to find a buyer through a tax sale had failed. Seeing all of the activity on the site Saturday, Ellis said "It feels great, it feels alive. It feels like Talisman is back and it's coming back with a vengeance

On May 12 Ellis signed the agreement to purchase the 200-acre property for \$1.8 million. He put \$1 million down while the municipality holds two mortgages for the remaining \$800,000 to be paid over the next eight years at \$100,000 annually.

He recently advised council the resort's water rates are too high – he called them "virtually unsustainable" Saturday -- and so he's seeking relief from council. Without using any municipal water yet, Ellis said the municipality wants \$150,000 from him "just because we have a water allocation."

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