

Trail alliance joins TrailRider effort

By Barb Brouwer
OBSERVER STAFF

Debra McDonald is another step closer to riding the trails, thanks to the Shuswap Trail Alliance.

A former forester and outdoors enthusiast, McDonald has lost most of her mobility to MS and longs to be back in the woods.

She also believes everyone with mobility issues should be able to access the great outdoors.

Her wish was granted recently by a group in Vernon that made one of their TrailRiders available for her to try out.

Developed by the British Columbia Mobility Opportunities Society (BCMOS), the TrailRider is a specially designed wilderness access vehicle.

"With one wheel,

and 'sherpas' back and front, the TrailRider can tackle any terrain," says the BCMOS website.

After an unsuccessful attempt to get an Aviva Community grant for the \$6,900 needed to buy a new TrailRider, McDonald is searching for other funding sources.

And the trail alliance has happily stepped in to help by creating a reserved account through which donations can be made.

"We're set up to receive and hold funds on Deb's behalf to purchase a TrailRider and we'll work with Deb and others with logistics," says trail alliance co-ordinator Phil McIntyre-Paul. "Right now we're working on insurance, waivers and brainstorming to see how it can be housed, etc."

Because the trail alliance is a charitable organization, tax receipts

are available.

"The key is if folks do send a donation, they will have to make cheques to the trail alliance but clearly mark it 'TrailRider project.'

Donations can be made by mailing a cheque to the Shuswap Trail Alliance, PO Box 1531, Salmon Arm, V1E 4P6, or call the alliance at 250-832-0102.

"Deb's the champion of this and she's not re-inventing the wheel," says McIntyre-Paul. "This is a good thing, we've been wanting to look at getting better accessibility to the trails for a long time."

McDonald is grateful for the help and says she will continue to work towards getting at least one TrailRider

and an accompanying "mummy bag" for the Shuswap.

"I am very optimistic, it's gonna happen," she says with determination. "It's just gonna happen. That's really my message, to get people out there (in the outdoors)."

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