



## Beaver Valley Area Steps it Up

July 2008



Communities in the Beaver Valley area in the West Kootenays are joining forces to get people moving.

The Village of Montrose, Village of Fruitvale and the Regional District of Kootenay Boundary Area A are partners in the Beaver Valley Get Active program. The program encourages residents to participate in the ActNow BC Activity Challenge: a province-wide program designed to get people moving and leading healthier, more active lifestyles through an online tracking tool at [www.actnowbc.ca](http://www.actnowbc.ca). Spearheading the Beaver Valley Get Active initiative are the Mayors of Montrose and Fruitvale and Area A Director Ali Grieve.

Walking is the activity of choice in the challenge, and the pedometer program has been particularly popular among older adults.

*“They like the challenge because it gives them a motivation to get going – especially some of the seniors, they really like that,”* noted Sharon Toupin, Beaver Valley Recreation Program Coordinator. *“They have said they feel better and their bones don’t seem to ache quite as much.”*

Those who signed up received an ActNow

BC pedometer for \$5, which goes back into funding and promoting the program. From April to June, participants took part in the Walk to Vancouver challenge. Earlier this year, the program had people walking to Castlegar as a virtual destination. The challenge received such a positive response that the Beaver Valley Get Active committee extended the distance and duration of the challenge.

*“We had a really good response from that and everybody kept asking me if we were going to do another one,”* Toupin recalled.

Toupin then calculated how many steps it would take to reach Vancouver. Residents of Montrose, Fruitvale and Area A heard about the challenge through a brochure in their mailboxes, newspaper advertisements and word of mouth. In addition to the revenue from selling the pedometers, the advertising and printing of brochures were funded through a grant from the Regional District.

Toupin keeps track of steps for those who aren’t logging them online then compiles those steps to log them as a group online. Two destination points were identified for prize draws. Those who reached the half-way point (Keremeos) and those reaching the final destination of Vancouver were entered into a draw for a chance to win prizes. Before the challenge was up, many had reached the virtual destination.

*“There have always been a few people who we always saw walking but there are more now,”* observed Village of Fruitvale Mayor Libby Nelson. *“The pedometer program has been an instigator to get people chatting about how far*

*they’ve gone and what they’re trying to do. Some are surprised at how little and some are surprised at how much they were walking.”*

Many people are choosing to walk on their own but for those who want to walk with a group, Nelson and Toupin have formed a walking group. They and a few other women meet twice a week starting from the seniors’ manor. In poor weather, they walk in the arena. They plan to run another walking challenge to a different destination this fall.

### BEAVER VALLEY REACHES NEW HEIGHTS

People of all ages looking for more of a challenge are hiking the newly-developed, two-kilometre Antenna Trail above Montrose. The trail provides the perfect opportunity to get out walking while taking in spectacular views of the Columbia Valley. And it’s bringing people in communities together.

The trail was the original road leading up to Montrose’s first television antenna. The trailhead starts in Montrose then runs into Area A of the Regional District for a one-hour ascent.

Montrose Mayor Art Benzer, Montrose locals Hans and Loren Koerber and a team of volunteers helped bring community groups together to re-develop the trail. They first obtained permission from the private owners of the land the trail runs across. Then in the spring of 2005, a crew of 19 BC Forest Service firefighters rebuilt most of the trail as part of their training and as a service to the community. A number of volunteers from Montrose and

# Kootenays – Beaver Valley

Beaver Valley then finished off the trail development.

*“The volunteers have just been fantastic,”* Benzer stressed.

The Montrose Youth Action Team was also pivotal in getting the trail developed. The Regional District provided a grant for benches and signs. The Kootenay Columbia Trail Society in Rossland took on the newly-developed trail and provided the trail insurance through a Regional District grant. The Trail Society supplied an agreement template for the private landowners.

In 2006, the trail officially opened to a crowd of approximately 150 people as part of the Village of Montrose’s 50th anniversary celebrations. This June, the latest extension of the trail—the Flag View Point overlooking the Columbia River, Beaver Valley and Village of Montrose—was officially opened during Montrose Family Fun Days. The point contains a wooden bench that was donated from the Cominco Arena when the arena was upgraded to become an Olympic Live Site venue. Volunteers split up the bench and brought it to the top of the hill to assemble it at the viewpoint next to a Canadian flag.

Benzer hears from residents at the bottom of the hill that the trail is extensively used throughout the year. Residents from surrounding communities at higher elevations come down to use the trail when their local trails are still covered in snow. Loren Koerber can see the trail from her window in Montrose and sees people up on it frequently. Her 80-year-old neighbour has even hiked the trail.

*“I have never seen so many people up on that trail, it just amazes me,”* Koerber said. *“I really think that we’ve increased that traffic by fixing up the trail and putting in the view point.”* The goal is to eventually extend the trail to Fruitvale and Trail.

*“We want to try to start connecting these communities,”* she said. Her husband Hans works in Trail for Teck Cominco and is involved in the company’s workplace wellness program. The Koerbers have also always kept their five kids active.

*“I really think that’s what BC has got to start doing—we have to get more active,”* Loren said. *“The more we can get people back outside and away from sitting is huge—I’m glad the government is getting involved with that.”*

She recognizes the need for increased activity in the province to reduce obesity rates, and passes her passion for active living onto her children.

*“That’s why I get them involved so they will remember and hopefully continue with something else one day themselves,”* she added.

The Regional District is recognizing parks and trails as a priority in its review of Area A’s Official Community Plan. So it looks like future generations will have opportunities to keep active on more trails. In the meantime, adults and older adults in West Kootenay communities will continue setting the pace for active living.



## Beaver Valley Highlights

- Villages and Regional District are working together to run active programs and projects
- Mayors of the Village of Montrose and Village of Fruitvale are leading their Active Communities initiatives
- Organized a Walk to Vancouver and a Walk to Castlegar pedometer challenge through the ActNow BC Activity Challenge
- Received pedometers through the ActNow BC Activity Challenge pedometer grants program
- Formed walking groups with older adults
- Re-developed a hiking trail in Montrose and Beaver Valley
- Formed partnerships with community groups and individual volunteers
- Connected with BC Forest Service forest firefighters to clear the trail
- Regional District of Kootenay Boundary is reviewing its Area A (Beaver Valley) Official Community Plan

## Beaver Valley Info

- Populations:** Montrose 1,086; Fruitvale 2,083 (BC Stats 2005) and Area A approximately 2,125.
- Regional District of Kootenay Boundary Area A (Beaver Valley) makes up rural lands surrounding Fruitvale and Montrose
  - Beaver Valley area is surrounded by Champion Lakes Provincial Park, the Canada-US border, City of Trail, Regional District of Central Kootenay and the Columbia River
  - 84% of respondents in a 1996 survey of residents reported their quality of life as good to excellent

[www.rdkb.com](http://www.rdkb.com),  
[www.village.montrose.bc.ca](http://www.village.montrose.bc.ca),  
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