

THE OTTAWA HOSPITAL FOUNDATION

Robert Merkley has been involved with The Ottawa Hospital Foundation since 2002, and has worked on the Foundation's Legacy Campaign and the 20-20 Campaign.

But it wasn't until 2009 that he first helped to come up with the concept of Ride the Rideau.

The president of Merkley Supply Ltd. – Ottawa and area's oldest and most comprehensive masonry boutique which supplies materials to 80 per cent of the residential, commercial, industrial, institutional, and home renovation projects in the region – had participated in the Ride to Conquer Cancer in Toronto. He thought a cycling fundraiser would be a great idea for The Ottawa Hospital Foundation, and Ride the Rideau was born.

The inaugural event, a 100 km ride from Ottawa to Merrickville, attracted more than 300 riders and raised \$940,000, said the central Ottawa resident.

This year, The Ottawa Hospital Foundation has doubled the fundraising goal to \$1.8 million.

Over the past two years, Merkley, who is also president of the Greater Ottawa Home Builder's Association, has been an advocate for Ride the Rideau. He's been instrumental in bringing members of the construction industry on board. Last year, 15 members of his office staff joined his team, The Brick Peddlers, and this year, he has over 50 members participating in the Sept. 10 event so far.

"We do a lot of strong-arming," he joked.

This year, Merkley has stepped up his support, with Merkley Supply Ltd. becoming a sponsor.

Merkley believes anyone can get involved.

"I'm 57 years old and not the most athletic, but I found it well supported," he said. "And many of my office staff hadn't ridden in many years."

With event sponsors covering all of the administration costs of running the event, all funds raised by riders go directly to support cancer research at The Ottawa Hospital.

More and more people are getting involved in fundraising for cancer research, and for good reason, said Merkley.

"Cancer touches us all," he said. "Everyone knows someone who's been affected by it, treated for it, or has sadly, succumbed to it. I lost my cousin to cancer, and we've lost three employees in the last 10 years to cancer."

But there's good news.

"I like to note to people that 10 years ago, the survivability of cancer was less than 30 per cent, and now it's more than 70 per cent," he said. "It's climbing, due to research, and research requires funding. That's what we're doing it for."

To support Robert Merkley's ride, sign up or to volunteer, visit www.ridetherideau.ca.



Robert Merkley's team, The Brick Peddlers, is returning to Ride the Rideau this year.



This space donated by Metroland Media

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City has tree watering in the bag

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Newly planted trees will be getting a bagged lunch thanks to a new pilot project.

Instead of seeing city workers turning a hose on saplings, get used to the sight of a green bag hanging off of new trees.

The bags will give a drink to 1,500 new city trees with a steady trickle of water directly onto their root systems.

For the first three years of their lives, the city waters trees to ensure they receive enough nutrients to grow. But there is a lot of labour – and wasted water – involved in that process.

The bags will reduce the amount water used by between 40 and 90 litres per tree.

Each Treegator (the commercial name the bags are marketed under) holds 64 litres of water, which seeps out over a five- to nine-hour period. The bags will be refilled every five to eight days – the same schedule as traditional watering.

But watering with a hose leads to a great deal of evaporation and runoff, which wastes more water, said city spokesperson Jocelyne Turner.

The pilot-project trees will be located in parks, boulevards and along streets in Gloucester-Southgate, Beacon Hill-Cyrville, Rideau-Vanier, Rideau-Rockcliffe, Capital, Alta Vista and Gloucester South-Nepean wards.

The city paid \$30,000 for 150,000 of the bags.



Photo by Laura Mueller

This Treegator at city hall is one of the first of 1,500 watering bags that will be affixed to city trees as part of a three-year pilot project aimed at reducing water waste.

GRAB THE HANDLEBARS OF HEROISM

Seize the opportunity to change the world for the better—support cancer research at The Ottawa Hospital. Every hero has a date with destiny: yours is September 10, 2011. See you at the starting line.

REGISTER TODAY AT RIDETHERIDEAU.CA



A 100 KM BIKE RIDE TO FUND LOCAL CANCER RESEARCH WITH A WORLDWIDE IMPACT

10TH SEPTEMBER 2011

