

October 16, 2006

Stepping It Up

As we enter the fall of the season, baseball's playoffs are in full swing. Players are stepping up to the plate, in an attempt to deliver for their club. A season that stretches for the better part of nine months is getting down to the nitty gritty. Who will step up and come through for their team?

I'm often asked about what benefit an individual will receive from joining the Trailblazers. To me, the answer is simple, but their question is somewhat backwards. What would joining our club do for us - The Trailblazer faithful? That answer can only come from our devoted members, many of whom give so much to the cycling community and seemingly get little in return.

But that return on investment is big for our volunteers. People like club Vice President Jerry Adams, who along with unsung hero Steve Kiker have built 6.5 miles of trail in 5 months time. Suddenly folks in the Sherman Branch Park region of southeastern Mecklenburg County have a reason to go play in the dirt. Many have recently stepped up to the plate and joined the dynamic duo in putting additional sweat equity into the effort. And to a man or woman that has helped, I know they are all excited by their newfound passion and the spirit shown by their fellow volunteers.

Frankie Pietras, a long time Trailblazer member, current club Treasurer, club Trail Coordinator, and former two term club President, continues to plow forward on the trail reconnect at the USNWC. Tireless volunteers like Kim Rodden, Joe Recore and Scott Trotter (to name a few), have invested countless hours in their efforts to rebuild and replace what may have been lost during the construction phase of the park. Some like to sit back and criticize the Trailblazers for the loss of trails, while others, like these volunteers, see the glass is half full and drive themselves "full steam ahead" to make the trail better than ever.

Over the past couple of months, we have received donations from participants in our local races. Individuals that come out to race their friends week in and week out, to test themselves on Trailblazer built and maintained trails. Then taking their prize money and donating their winnings back to the club in an effort to say "Thank You" for what the club has provided for them. Within the past week, a loyal Trailblazer dropped us a check for \$2,500, and apologized for not being able to donate his time. But money always helps. And we sincerely appreciate the gift!

We enter the fall season looking for members to step up and volunteer for the executive board of the club. Unfortunately, no one at this time has seen fit to throw their hat into the ring. As President, I told the membership that I would accept the position for one year. That time is coming to a close and it looks as if I will remain as club president by default. I am however fortunate to have a board of directions that stands behind me and will return for a second year. In addition to Jerry and Frankie, already mentioned above, Jennifer Dilworth, our "Girl Friday" and secretary will also return.

To those that can't seem to find the time to get involved on any level, I challenge you to look at your life and your schedule and see where it is that you can indeed fit in to the inner workings of the Trailblazers. I am a single dad, raising an 18 year old son on my own, trying to prepare him for college and the future beyond. I have a 21 year old daughter that graduates college in the spring and needs help in preparing for grad

school. I have recently taken on more responsibility on my job. A 50 hour work week is getting to be the norm. I try to maintain a 120 mile relationship. My ride time is slowly dwindling. But you know what? For the love and belief in the friends that I have made in this community, and the Tarheel Trailblazers and Dirt Divas, it's worth all the effort. All the juggling of my time and my life, to help in some small way to provide our community with a trail system we can all be proud of.

In the weeks ahead, we have several big events that need our attention. Rick Hoffarth has led a crew to build the Harrisburg Half Short Track. Rick needs volunteers to assist him in registration, timing, and scoring over the weeks to come with his fall, Short Track Race Series. Volunteer, race, but throw your support behind his effort. Contact Rick at rickhoff@carolina.rr.com

Race promoter extraordinaire, Neal Boyd, will putting on a 12 hour race ("The Tree Shaker") at Renaissance Park this coming Saturday, Oct. 21st. Neal has been working on this race for the past two years. Help him to make it a success! Volunteer, lend a hand, race, hang out, but support his efforts! Contact Neal at: nealboyd@charlottesportscycling.com

On Saturday, November 5th, the USNWC will celebrate their Grand Opening and have invited the Trailblazers and their sisters at the Dirt Divas to man (woman) a tent and to lead some small group rides around the trails. Volunteers are needed! Contact Tom Mathews at: president@tarheeltrailblazers.com

On Sunday November 6th, the Dirt Divas and Trailblazers host their second annual "End of Season" party at Anne Spring Greenway in Fort Mill, SC. Your presence is requested, as we say thank you for all the efforts that our volunteers have put forth this year.

Then on Sunday, November 12th, the Trailblazers host the second annual "Southside Spanker on the Northside" (it's a long story, don't ask) a 30 and 50 mile supported road ride, leaving the Charlotte Motor Speedway and the "Big Stampede". This is a huge fundraiser for our club and once again, volunteers are needed! Contact Neal at: nealboyd@charlottesportscycling.com

We will be starting efforts to construct a new trail at Jetton Park in Cornelius this fall. It will be the first "Off-Road Hand-Cycle Accessible" mountain bike trails in the region. Join us, help us to provide those less fortunate to have a park they too can enjoy. Contact Tom Mathews at: president@tarheeltrailblazers.com

Please, take a long, hard, look at YOUR club, see in it the fun it has given you, and step up to the plate. Volunteer, support YOUR club. We're only as good as our membership.

Paraphrasing President John F. Kennedy, "Ask not what your club can do for you, ask what you can do for your club".

Sincerely,

Tom Mathews
President, Tarheel Trailblazers

Posted At : 6:24 PM. | Posted By : tom