

IN THE HILLS™

A magazine of good eating in the Headwaters region

Ted Forrest

By [Jeff Rollings](#)

[Back Issues](#), [Local Heroes](#), [Winter 2014](#)

November 17, 2014



Ted Forrest: One of our [2014 Local Heroes](#)

Bike Buddy

Nothing is more calming for the soul than the feeling of the sun on your face and the sights, sounds and smells of a trip along a trail. Ted Forrest, the inspiration behind Erin's wheelchair bike program, makes this experience a reality for those who might not otherwise get the chance.

Retired from a career in the printing industry, Ted was an avid recreational cyclist. Six years ago he discovered that Wellington Terrace, a long-term care facility in Fergus, has wheelchair bikes that enable residents to tour the nearby trail system with volunteer riders.

Ted signed up as a rider and has been volunteering there ever since, picking up and delivering some residents right to their rooms. "I like to joke that it's the first time I've been allowed to ride my bike in the house," he says.

After a while, Ted says, “The penny dropped,” and he thought of introducing the concept to participants in ARC Industries East, which provides work and support for adults with intellectual disabilities.

ARC, which had recently opened a new facility close to the Elora Cataract Trailway in Erin, welcomed the idea. Ted then partnered with [Erin PhysioFitness](#) and set about raising the \$7,500 needed to pay for a bicycle, helmets and shipping, as well as to set up a small reserve for maintenance.

At the time, the Erin Rotary, Optimist and Lions clubs were looking for a project they could carry out together. “None could do \$7,500 on their own, but they could all do \$2,500,” says Ted. “I was invited to make a presentation to all the groups and walked out of each with a cheque. Then we ran a general campaign to raise funds for the second bike.”

The general campaign was supported by the Erin Legion and local residents, and the bikes were delivered in 2013.

The program operates two mornings a week and has proven highly successful, with what Ted calls a “good core” of six volunteers and three ARC staff, who all took training. The training was mostly common sense and “revolves around compassion,” Ted says.

Then there is the full slate of happy passengers. “The passenger is king,” Ted adds. “If they decide it’s too cold, or too windy, or they don’t want to go any farther, we immediately turn back.” Volunteer riders also carry a two-way radio so they can reach the ARC office if necessary.

Though the normal route is along the rail trail, the bikes also made an appearance last year in the Erin Santa Claus parade.

Ted’s sights are now set on expanding the program to include seniors and other wheelchair users. The goal is to “see the bikes get used for more hours,” he says. As things unfold, he would also like to establish a process that allows potential passengers’ family members and friends to take them out for rides.

Not content just to oversee the program, Ted is also one of the riders and has clearly made a host of friends in the ARC community. “It’s very rewarding,” he says. “I’ve taken non-communicative people out, and along the way they’ll start singing. Eventually it became my fix just as much as theirs.”

03:27



[Ted Forrest](#) from [Mick Partlett](#) on [Vimeo](#).

Ted Forrest: One of our [2014 Local Heroes](#). Video by [Mick Partlett](#).

Jeff Rollings is a freelance writer living in Orangeville.

Copyright © 2015 In the Hills