



DEREK WOOLLAM / SPECIAL TO THE CHAMPION

READY TO RIDE: Evan (left) and Tyler get ready to take part in Track 2000's new Mud, Sweat and Cheers program.

Foster kids given chance to race

By Steve LeBlanc
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Milton's Track 2000 is now in high gear with a program designed to introduce the thrill of racing to foster children throughout Halton.

The local BMX facility is in the midst of its inaugural series of racing nights — dubbed the Mud, Sweat and Cheers program — for youths with the Halton Children's Aid Society.

Roughly 30 riders — mainly ranging from 11 to 14 years of age — have come out for the first two sessions, with three more scheduled this summer.

While still in its infancy, the program — made possible through a recent grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation — has already been met favourably by its participants.

"The instructors are really nice and it's a lot of fun racing and being with my friends," said 13-year-old Tyler.

Added 13-year-old program-mate Evan, "I've made some friends here and am having a lot of fun, especially with the jumps and stuff."

Bikes are on loan to the riders during Friday night sessions, with free instruction and refreshments provided as well — the latter by Milton's 2-for-1 Pizza.

The program is also supported by Norco Performance Bikes and Felt Bikes/Spaso Sports Inc., which collectively will award two lucky participants with their own bikes during a season-ending draw in September.

The first recreational program of its kind in Halton, Mud, Sweat and Cheers has received rave reviews from all those involved, including Halton Children's Aid Society executive director Tina Blatchford.

Its biggest benefit, she stressed, is helping children in foster and group homes realize that they're not alone.

"There's a misconception about these kids. They're not bad kids, just kids who've had bad things happen to them," said Blatchford. "That can make them feel different and strange, but this type of program shows them that there's other kids in a similar situation. From the very first night on the track they (riders) took ownership of the club. Overall, it's been a very positive experience."

Steve LeBlanc can be reached at sleblanc@haltonsearch.com.

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