

A Lasting Endeavor

Troop 17 member builds bike stunt for Eagle Scout project

By Matt Baldwin - Whitefish Pilot - September 9, 2010



Matt Kennedy isn't a mountain biker — he's a rock climber. He's more likely to be found scaling the 5.10 rated climb "Room with a View" at Stone Hill near Eureka than tearing up the trails or hitting the jumps at Spencer Mountain.

In fact, Kennedy, 17, rolls around town on a \$95 Wal-Mart cruiser bike — an unlikely sighting on any technical bike trail. Every extra dollar he earns

at his part-time job at Coffee Traders goes toward climbing gear.

Yet despite Kennedy's cycling greenness, the Troop 17 Boy Scout chose to dive head-first into an ambitious Eagle Scout project to help revamp the Armory bike-jumping park. Last week, Kennedy, with the help of local trail-builders Jake Christiansen and Pete Costain, pounded the final nail into a 60-foot long, 3-foot high, all-wooden bike stunt that sits behind the dirt jumps.

"Jake came to me and said they'd be re-doing the whole bike park," Kennedy, a senior at Whitefish High, said. "I don't know a lot about biking, but I thought it would be a great project, so I jumped on board with it."

Kennedy thinks the park could present the same experiences for other kids his age that he's found while rock climbing.

"For me, climbing's been somewhat of a savior," Kennedy said. "It came along in my life and kept me out of trouble. The way I see it, somebody can use the bike park, and maybe they'll find that biking is going to be their thing. I'd love to see something I've put energy into help someone become active, to get excited and go be outside."

The project was no cakewalk, Kennedy said, but he wanted it to be a challenge.

He put in 50 hours before a single piece of lumber was cut, raising money and talking to contractors about building advice and safety issues. Christiansen sketched the original design and Kennedy made tweaks along the way.

“One of the biggest parts of the projects is being able to take advice from people and react to it and make an efficient plan,” Kennedy said about the design process.

He tapped into some of the knowledge he’s gained at school while planning and designing, too.

“Finding square footage of things that are angled certainly brought out some of my math skills,” he said. “I have some carpentry skills from building and design classes at high school, but it’s basic carpentry.”

All the material used, including 900 board feet of lumber, was donated from local businesses. **Rocky Mountain Lumber Co.**, Western Building Center, May Lawn and Home Care, Midway Rental, T-Bend Construction, Malmquist Construction, Glacier Cyclery, KNOX on Wood and Stevens Brothers Concrete all donated to the project.

“Almost everywhere I went, the community was ready to give,” Kennedy said.

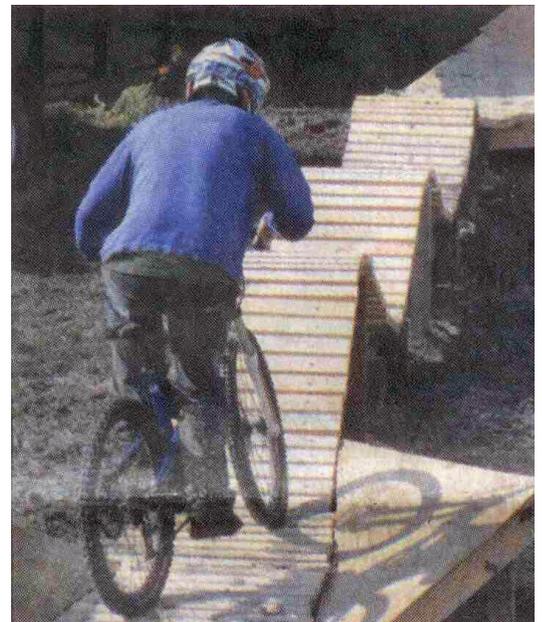
Kennedy met with Christiansen and other helpers Aug. 28-29 to piece together the stunt, which features four banked walls and three rollers. All together, nearly 140 labor hours were put in that weekend, including a day in a pouring rain Sunday.

Kennedy says he’s happy with the final product and even noted that, “It’s fun to ride, too.”

The stunt is just one element to the refurbished park — a pump track and skills area is currently being constructed by the Flathead Fat Tires club — which could be completed this fall.

Kennedy points out that unlike the stunts at Spencer Mountain, these features are approved by the city parks and recreation department and are covered by the city’s insurance. They will be here for years to come, and Kennedy likes that aspect of his project.

“I wanted to do something that would last,” he said. “I wanted something that I could build and the community could use it and keep coming back and use it.”



Along with scouting, Kennedy is involved with the Church of Nazarene, runs on the Bulldog cross-country team and telemark skis. He says Troop 17 has kept him motivated to reach the highest level in scouting, which he’ll garner with the completion of the project.

“At this point, being an Eagle hasn’t really hit me,” he said. “There are a lot of motivated kids at Troop 17 and it’s nice to be among them. Having that group pushes you to do well.”