

Blueridge Good Neighbour Day inspires a real sense of community

by Justin Beddall DEEP COVE CRIER JUNE 2016

If you live in Blueridge there's a good chance you know your neighbours. Not just the ones who live next door but people who live blocks away and all around the community.

If you're trying to figure out why it's so tight-knit, look no further than the Blueridge Good Neighbour Day, which hosts its 19th annual celebration on Sunday, June 5. Eric Andersen, chairman of the Blueridge Community Association, first had the idea for a local community celebration back in the mid-1990s and got some help from *X-Files* actor Don S. Williams, who lived in the community at the time. In 1998 the community came out for the inaugural Blueridge Good Neighbour Day. "It really gets people together, creates a sense of community to be working towards a common goal," said Anderson. Unlike events in other communities that have a commercial base to tap into to support entertainment, food and activities, Blueridge has few businesses, so organizers had to get creative with sponsorships and applying for grants to keep on budget. Over the years they've developed a strong base of support and this year they have Stong's, Nesters Market, CIBC and Deep Cove Brewers and Distillers participating. The first-ever Blueridge Good Neighbour Day was well received, recalls Andersen, who noted: "Of course it was a lot smaller."

Last year the event attracted nearly 1,800 residents and was put on by a planning committee of 15 and nearly 60 volunteers on the day of the event. Andersen said they try to include new events and kids entertainment each year but there are some perennial favourites that don't change, such as the bouncy castles. "We try to keep all the entertainment (for kids) at no-cost, you only pay for the ponies. Everything else we try to do for free," said Anderson. The financial goal of the event is to break even, he explained. Thanks to social media, Andersen said former Blueridge residents are getting news about the event and returning so they can catch up with old friends.

Andersen's favourite part of day? "It's just meeting some old friends and people you haven't seen in a while. It gets people out to meet their neighbours, not just next to them but in their community."

Each year's event has a new theme—superheroes, Olympics and western, for example – and this year they will celebrate "The United World of Blueridge," something inspired by the recent arrival of Syrian refugees to the community. Kids are invited to decorate their bikes and wear clothing that represents their heritage and participate in the parade. (Arrive at the intersection of Berkley and Hyannis for a 10:45 a.m. start of the parade, which will travel down Berkley and end at the school.) This year's event includes live music, international food trucks, concession stands, beverage garden (ID mandatory), kids carnival, gladiator joust, bouncy castles, rides and games, silent auction (cash/credit) and popular pie eating contest.

Blueridge Good Neighbour Day at Blueridge elementary takes place June 5, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. [i](#)