

JUSTIN SKINNER | Jun 29, 2010

Walking group celebrates 20 years

Some 23 years after being attacked by a stranger while taking a break from cycling in High Park, North Toronto resident Christa Kroboth is celebrating a milestone.

Three years after the vicious attack in a rest room in the popular park, Kroboth started up a walking group, guiding others through various green spaces in the city.

Now that group, dubbed A Stroll in the Park, is celebrating its 20th anniversary with a series of anniversary walking tours over the coming months.

Kroboth started the group after her own harrowing attack, which left her shaken, and a bicycle accident which caused serious injuries that prevented her from cycling.

She took to walking to keep fit, but was still scarred from her ordeal in High Park.

"There was a guy hiding behind the partition at the washrooms and he just grabbed me," she said. "I choked him and he let go so I was able to get away, but when I rode home, I just started shaking uncontrollably."

Kroboth came up with the concept for group walks to help other women feel safer as they walked through the city's public parks. Soon, however, she realized there was more demand for those services than she had expected.

"Even though I started it for health and safety in numbers, it became a singles thing," she said. "I just thought single women would come, but then men started to come along too. Both men and women walking through nature trails can feel unsafe."

Over the past 20 years, the club has seen countless members come and go, many of them making a love connection while walking through the city's green spaces.

"We hear about one or two marriages every single year from people who met just gathering together to casually go for a walk," she said. "I've had people call me up who met on one of our walks to tell me they have kids now."

A Stroll in the Park walks have hosted people from across the city and around the world. For many, the club is a way to get in shape and enjoy the outdoors while ensuring they are safe as they hike nature trails. The walks are 10 kilometres long, though participants have the option of stopping after five kilometres. As they go through the parks, walkers can also learn a bit about their surroundings.

"We have what I call an information minute where we'll discuss the history of the park or discuss a particular plant or tree," Kroboth said.

A Stroll in the Park members often get together for optional dinners after walks and take trips to scenic destinations such as Algonquin Park.

The club is hosting a number of walks to celebrate its 20th anniversary.

For full details and more information, call 416-484-9255 or visit www.astrollinthepark.com