

THE DRIVING FORCE MOTORIZED REC SCOOP

Deerfoot's Winter UTV Showcase & Night Ride

CATHY LAREAU

Saturday, January 25 I ventured out to Deerfoot Lodge and Resort on the Chippewa Flowage for their first Winter UTV Showcase & Night Ride event. I didn't ride my Wildcat there as my day outside of this event was filled with other tasks I had to do. I felt a twinge of envy when I pulled up and saw all my fellow UTVers gathering on the lake, and I was there only with my car.

I found Deerfoot's Operations Manager, Robyn Stryker, inside organizing a table of door prizes. Stryker explained how the idea came about for this new event: "It was the brainchild of me and my father, I asked him to help me figure out how to bring people out and about when we have no snow. Maybe something with UTVs, get them out and excited to ride" Her dad suggested some type of contest or agility test for UTVers.

Deerfoot owner, Amanda Wilson, loved the idea and the two of them began planning their first UTV Showcase, which came together with the support of many volunteers and sponsors.

I am sure riders were rejoicing over Saturday's forecasted temperatures in the low 20s; a heat-wave compared to the recent sub-zero temps we've had. No one counted on the howling, arctic wind that came that day though. Most riders, clothed in snowmobile gear, were not fazed by the biting gusts, but I found myself hovering near the warm bonfire whenever I got the chance. Plus, that put me close to the Musky, Sno & ATV Country promotional table, where they were selling scrumptious fundraising pudding shots, and showing off their Alliance PistenBully snow groomer.

I glanced around the frozen landscape to see many different side-by-sides lined up in groups that spread out from



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UTVs showed up in full force.



Snowmobilers showed up as well.

the shoreline, and more kept coming! The entry to the lake was bordered by tables covered with merchandise, promotional items, and refreshments, and manned by volunteers.

It was a busy day on the Chippewa Flowage, but relentless blowing snow clouded the view of nonstop snowmobilers as they zipped along the staked lake trail near us. Curious sledders pulled up to see what was going on, and a group riding antique snowmobiles cut through on their way to their next vintage run destination.

So many different makes, models, and styles of buggies! Motorsports enthusiasts

mingled with each other as they walked around to check out the different set-ups.

Kevin Bushnick, from the Sawyer County Search & Rescue came in a rig outfitted with more equipment than I've ever seen - and I believe he won the best overall award in the Accessory contest.

Brent Schroeder, Ashley Schroeder and Mark Woyak from Hayward Power Sports hauled in three demo machines from their new Can-Am and Polaris lines and donated some great giveaway prizes.

The RAVEK Off-Road group of Brandon and Stacey Westphal, and Travis and Julie Moses

came loaded with RAVEK products from their enticing line of UTV lighting and comfort accessories, to help promote this event.

Our regional director from the Wisconsin ATV Association (WATVA), Greg Olson, shared a spot at the bonfire with me while we talked about the inaugural Let's Ride Expo, a state-wide celebration of motor sports opportunities, coming to Oshkosh on May 2-4, 2025.

Throughout the day, riders ventured in and out of Deerfoot to claim their door prizes, warm up a bit or grab a complimentary pulled pork sandwich. I ran into many familiar faces - neighbors from when I lived on the flowage, folks I've ridden snowmobiles or ATVs with, and people connected to motor sports in some way.

The agility events began mid-afternoon, and onlookers gathered to cheer for their favorite drivers. One-by-one, riders shot through the timer gate and tried their best to navigate the challenging agility course set up by the RAVEK Off-Road crew.

Ride/ from A12

The tug-of-war games were entertaining. The battle between Jimmy Goodie and Richardson threw up huge plumes of blowing snow as their machines fought for traction, while the crowd kept trying to guess who would win.

After the judging of the Best Accessory contest was complete, the Deerfoot crew gathered all the contestants for a fun little award ceremony, which included 'Olympic style' medals for the winners. Here is a list of all winners:

Agility Course Sport Division: Brett Carlson, Cullen Keuth, and Dane Lihрман

Agility Course Utility Division: Eric Roberts and Jimmy Goodie

Tug-o-War Champs: Jimmy Goodie and Mike Bateman

Best Accessories Contest:

Pavement Princess — Holly Christison

Loudest Stereo — Jimmy Goodie

Coolest Lights — Gene Richardson

Best Overall — Kevin Bushnick

It was all smiles and laughs near the end of

the day — riders showed off their winning medals, others handed out some good-natured ribbing to those who didn't win. Under a beautiful setting sun, UTVers said their goodbyes to each other as the night ride group prepared to head out.

Gene and Michelle Richardson organized the last activity- a night ride on the Chippewa Flowage. Gene and Michelle hold several themed ATV rides throughout the year and draw riders from all over to the Hayward area. Many of their regular riders from the Minnesota and western Wisconsin areas came today to try their luck at the contests and ride the flowage that night.

This first UTV Showcase was a success, and I hope it will become an annual event. Amanda Wilson and Robyn Stryker expressed gratitude for all the volunteers and support from the many sponsors who made this event so special.

These great ideas, born out of the threat of another poor winter season, prove just how resourceful and innovative our northwoods business community can be!