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daring. The third year, Chassie used the entire yard to build the run and an annual tradition was born.

There's still a toboggan party every Family Day weekend, but now kids come from all over the neighbourhood to use the hill throughout the winter. "They start knocking on my door as soon as it snows to see if the hill is open yet," says Chassie.

It all depends on the snowfall and Chassie works on the run for the entire winter – whenever it snows, he shovels. Fifteen centimetres of snow gives him a good base to start with and he begins building from the bottom of the hill, adding twists and turns as he goes. Once it's built, it takes Chassie 60 to 90 minutes to clear new snow from the track. "At 8 p.m. when it's quiet and the stars are shining, it's really pleasant being out there."

He keeps an array of saucers and carpets by his back door for the neighbourhood kids to use. There's even one that seats up to six at once. The kids often challenge each other to see who can go the farthest at the end of the run or who can get highest on the banks, which are actually a safety feature to keep kids from flying off the track.

"One year, this little 4-year-old girl – she was just a featherweight – came flying down and ended up skating along the top of the bank yelling 'Woohoo' the entire way."

Chassie may have started the run out of a desire for fun, but he keeps going for the memories it creates. "When I was a kid, we went to my uncle's for a Labour Day party every year and I have fond memories of them. It may be a different time of year, but our toboggan parties are reminiscent of those times. It's free fun and it's something everyone can do."

In Huntsville, Chris Petterson takes a slightly different approach to building his snow run. The treed hill behind his old farmhouse offered up the perfect straight-away for tubing. "About three years ago I noticed that there was a clear path going up the hill, but there was a lot of dead brush on it. I started cleaning it up and there were piles of it everywhere — it started to look a lot like a sled hill. I couldn't wait for the snow to fall so we could try it."

Since that first year, Petterson has learned what adjustments are needed for a smooth ride. In the sum-





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mer, he starts to plan the path the runs will take and his wife Michelle provides design guidance. When fall comes, he gathers sticks to build up the walls and then rakes leaves up and over the piles to cover the branches. He has also begun using hay bales left over from Sandhill Nursery's fall maze to build the sides up even more and make them smoother. After the snow falls, he and his daughters walk up and down the hill in snowshoes to pack it down.

There are now two runs more than two metres across that join together part way down the hill, but they differ in how steep they are at the start.

"I had to move some huge rocks to get the join of the runs smoother. Some friends helped and we did a lot of digging and backfilling to get it right. And I kept building the sides higher and higher until it started to look like a luge run. I'm not sure what made me do it. It's not good for toboggans — the walls are too curved — but it's perfect for tubes. Every year it gets bigger and better and safer." The walls are more than a metre high and Petterson estimates that it takes more than 20 hours to prep the run for the season.

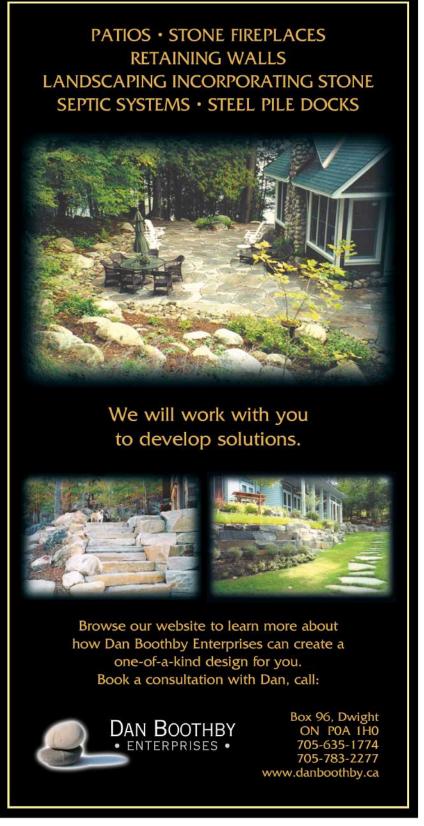
He has added floodlights and Christmas lights in the trees for night tubing, "It's so much fun at night. The tree boughs full of snow hang over the run in certain parts and it's almost like going through a tunnel. I'm really hoping we have a lot of snow this year."

He's also trying to set up a pully system to haul the tubes up to the top of the hill. "I have some design ideas in my head, but I'm not quite there yet. And there are always lots of little details that I want to change. I don't know if I'll ever perfect it."

The hill is visible from Brunel Road, especially at night, and cars will often stop to watch the fun or to ask questions. He's amused by the attention it gets, but he continues to build it for his two little girls who are now seven and nine years old.

"I started it because I was running out of things to do with them, while my wife was at work on the weekends, that didn't cost money. But now it's become something we do all the time. They love it and it puts a smile on my face."





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