Making Peace ?reminds us to open our hearts?



By Brock Weir

Bonnie Kraft had to do some digging.
A self-described ?bit of a flower child? in her youth, she knew she had to find the metal peace symbol she wore around her neck for five straight years during the height of the Vietnam War.
To her, it's not a symbol of the past but a potent symbol of our present, where we have to go to the future, and it was just what she wanted to wear around her neck while attending Wednesday night's grand opening of the Making Peace exhibition, now on display at Town Park.
Ms. Kraft, a Grammy Award winning music producer and Board Member of the Aurora Cultural Centre is the only single individual listed as a name sponsor for the international photo exhibition, which arrived last week in Aurora from Toronto.
Asked why she stepped forward as a sponsor, her answer is clear.
?Because I believe in its message,? she says. ?This exhibit is powerful and, for me, brought back memories of the 60s and 70s when young people organized a movement and, with inspired leaders, brought change into the world.
?It is time for that to happen again and an exhibit like this shows us it is possible. The images remind us that we all need to open our hearts with compassion and find ways of healing our world.?
Ms. Kraft was among those at the standing-room-only opening held at the Centre's Brevik Hall, a stone's throw from the photo exhibition at Town Park, and a welcome respite from Wednesday night's heavy rain.
Brought to Aurora by Music Aurora, with support from Council, numerous community organizations, and the Astin Family Foundation which provided the resources to bring the exhibition to Canada in the first place, the opening was an evening of celebration and reflection also attended by Barb and Robin Hannah, granddaughters of Canada's only Nobel Peace Laureate Lester B. Pearson.
?When the opportunity to host this event came forward it was really taken up quickly by Council, brought forward by Councillor Abel and we all saw the incredible benefits this could cause,? said Mayor Geoff Dawe at the opening, which was also attended by Councillors John Abel, Wendy Gaertner and Tom Mrakas.
Assembled speakers, including Councillor Abel and Greg Smith of Music Aurora, along with Shawna White of the Aurora Museum & Archives, paid tribute to the Town Staff who worked hard in the early hours of the morning the previous Tuesday to haul the exhibition to Toronto.
?It is truly an honour to host this international photo exhibition in our beloved Town Park, which is celebrating its 150th anniversary this year,? said Ms. White. ?Throughout its history, Town Park has been a gathering place for the community and I can't think of a better topic to bring people together for mindful discussion than the notion of Making Peace. Getting this message out to the younger generation is very important and I am happy to report the response from schools has been tremendous. So far, we have over 600 schools booked for tours and we expect that number to grow.?
According to curator Ashley Woods, the Aurora stop is only the second time the Making Peace exhibition has been in North

America ? following Toronto.
?It was supposed to go to Atlanta and Washington as well, but due to recent circumstances that was not the case and Toronto was to become the first time the show opened in North America,? said Mr. Woods.