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Canada 150 will go out with a bang at Family First event

By Brock Weir

2017 has been a year of celebration as the country has marked 150 years since Confederation, but the year will truly go out with a bang as fireworks take centre stage at Family First Night.

Family First Night, an annual New Year's Eve tradition in Aurora, will close out the year with a spectacular display, the crowning moment of an evening of family-friendly fun.

Family First Night will take place Sunday, December 31, at the Aurora Family Leisure Complex from 6 ? 9 p.m.

Festivities include free skating and swimming from 6 ? 8 p.m., reptile and magic shows, and plenty of children's activities.

?As we traditionally do at this event, we will be celebrating the New Year coming up,? says Shelley Ware, Special Events Coordinator for the Town of Aurora. ?With 2018 being the Year of the Dog, we will have dog-themed crafts and activities, but to really showcase the finale of Canada 150, there will be a spectacular fireworks show that evening and we have chosen 9 p.m. so that all ages can see it because not all ages will be up at midnight. And, because of our cold temperatures, the fireworks will be even more spectacular because the cool air enhances the colours.

?In addition to that spectacular show, there will be different things going on within the complex, such as providing kids with the supplies to make their very own time capsule and other cool features. This year, based on feedback, we're going to have three reptile shows versus two, because it is always such a popular activity. We have a fantastic musician, the Pickpocket Magician, and Mad Science as well with their ongoing demonstrations which kids always love to get their hands on.?

Each year as Ms. Ware and her team plan the grand finale for the year about to pass, she says she always looks forward to seeing the event unfold through the eyes of the children. The magicians, she says, never fail to spread genuine magic for both the young and the young at heart ? and although she shies away from the reptiles themselves, she is always excited to see others interact with them first hand.

Each moment builds a memory and, for families who come out December 31, there will be plenty of building blocks to build memories of your own.

It's a brand new feature and the perfect selfie opportunity. A teaser? You might just find some of these items in your Christmas stocking this year.

Fine, think LEGO blocks only much, much bigger.

Family First will, of course, be the last Special Event hosted by the Town of Aurora this year, but this has been no ordinary year. Canada 150 has meant that each of the municipally-hosted events has carried with it a Canadiana theme, whether it was special themed activities at Arctic Adventure in February, the Canada Day spectacular, or the Concerts in the Park series featuring all Canadian performances.

?Every single event, I am always fortunate ? and I always emphasize fortunate ? I have been able to walk away with a special memory that, at the time, I don't think can ever be replaced,? says Ms. Ware. ?Aurora is about being in good company. It is about creating connections, sustaining connections, and whatever your New Year's plan rituals are, or the traditions that you have, come out to the complex, see the energy, feel the energy in the building, and also meet and talk to the neighbours that are sitting beside you during the reptile show, or in the magic show, or where kids will see their classmates at the event.

?Friendships are made and friendships are often rekindled and that is what this event can do. Whatever your traditions are, it would be nice if you can incorporate this one into it because it is from 6 ? 9, strategically planned to be earlier in the evening to accommodate most schedules.?

And, she says, come prepared with your skates and swimsuits if you want to hit the ice or hit the pool.

For more on Family First Night, visit aurora.ca/firstnight or call 905-726-4762.