

2020

THE AURORAN PROGRESS EDITION

Presenting the AURORA Progress Edition

An annual report highlighting local businesses in Aurora



LOCAL GOODNESS

FOOD IN MOTION

BACK TO FAMILIAR TERRITORY

By Brock Weir

When large parties and events, your bread and butter, are put on the backburner, what's a catering company to do? For John Cosentino of Aurora's Food in Motion, the answer is to think smaller and more intimate in order to make the greatest impact.

Over the last few years, the Vata Court-based business has found success catering large events in the community both public and private. But, after COVID-19 forced the cancellation or postponements of so many of these, including weddings for more than 10 people, they have been forced to re-think their business model to continue reaching the hearts, minds and, most importantly, stomachs of regular and new patrons alike.

Food in Motion is now putting new energy behind their "Chef at Home" experience, a popular package during the holiday season, as they focus on "micro-events" within Aurora and beyond.

"It is our job as a service provider to be able to work with the customer or event planner in order to make sure everybody is safe and respected," says Mr. Cosentino. "We have been discussing here what is going to happen once patio season is done. People are still going to want to be social and have friends over, but weather permitting they are not going to be able to do that for so long. So, we're putting together a push on our Chef at Home concept, an intimate dinner where you can bring a chef into your home and we can wine and dine you in the comfort of your own home."

"We bring in a full staff, provide you with a meal, clean up after ourselves, and it gives you that dining-out experience in the comfort of your own home."

The Chef at Home concept could prove

the making of Food in Motion in this "new normal" where the day-to-day has been something of a challenge. From the early days of the pandemic, they ran a highly successful program where residents were able to sponsor meal and food packages for frontline workers.

As we settled into the new reality, they spearheaded new ways of keeping their name before the public, including hosting weekly cookouts from their parking lot. This venture allowed them to reach a different clientele, including employees from nearby businesses who were looking to experience fresh twists on firm favourites on their lunch hours.

But summer has come to a close – and so have the cookouts. Now, it is time to get back into familiar territory.

"For the last five years, we have become known for really elaborate charcuterie boards that showcase artisan cheeses, cured meats and things we cure and preserve in-house," says Mr. Cosentino, emphasizing the importance of shopping local. "Now, those kinds of boards are frowned upon, so instead of that, we have condensed those and we're going to start doing charcuterie cones where everything you could ordinarily get on the board is contained in the cone."

"It is really heartwarming to see how the community came together for small businesses and promoted one another and supported one another. Everyone who supported Food in Motion during the pandemic haven't gone unnoticed."



For more information, including how to book the Chef at Home experience, visit foodinmotion.ca



T.H. OLIVER

Your trusted specialists for nearly a century

By Brian Lockhart

Anyone who is familiar with the business world knows that staying relevant for ten years is a real accomplishment.

Keeping a business active for 20 years is outstanding, and anything beyond that is remarkable.

Oliver Heating and Cooling in Aurora is coming up on 100 years of serving the community as a leading expert in their field.

Established in 1924, TH Oliver began operating at a time when heating systems were much different and refrigerators where not yet a household appliance.

The business has thrived on a reputation for great service and the willingness to stand behind the products they sell.

The fact that their reputation is so solid, has resulted in many of their customers now seniors who have dealt with the

company for decades and continue to rely on them as a trusted source of heating and cooling products and services.

Much of their business comes from word of mouth referrals from customers who are so satisfied with their service they recommend them to friends and family.

Serving York Region and the surrounding area, Oliver Heating and Cooling sell and service furnaces, water heaters, gas fire places, and even do oil to natural gas conversions.

Their teams of specialists are all licensed and qualified to work on today's heating and cooling systems.

"We are a full service shop," explained Oliver Heating and Cooling office manager, Teresa Fiorito. "We're very service oriented. We do furnace installations, AC installations, and

humidifiers. We service all makes and models. We have a great reputation because we support the product and support our installation. We are always looking at the newest advances in HVAC technology. We also do a lot of gas fireplaces."

A modern gas fireplace is designed to fit seamlessly into an old style fireplace opening and replace a wood burning unit with modern gas efficiency and safety while maintaining the charm and ambiance of real flames.

When you are starting from a blank canvas on any home renovation, we have the right model for you.

"We also keep on top of WiFi thermostats and technology," Teresa explained. "We sell Daikin brand furnaces and air conditioners with an excellent 12-year parts and labour warranty."

With the current situation, the staff at Oliver Heating and Cooling have adapted to providing excellent service while maintaining a safe environment for both their technicians and valued customers.

They know that even during challenging times, heating and air conditioning units are an important part of every home and must be properly maintained.

"We have new precautions in place with both our customers and our staff," Teresa said of the way they interact with clients in their home. "We will e-mail our customer ahead of time to let them know what to expect from our technician and what we expect from them. All of our technicians have masks and sanitizer. Customers have been very receptive to this. As new procedures guidelines roll out from public health, we update as needed based on those recommendations."

After nearly a century serving York Region and the surrounding area, Oliver Heating and Cooling has become the trusted source for all your home heating and cooling needs and back up their reputation with excellent customer service.

By telephone, you can dial 289-796-0164 and speak directly to a comfort specialist.



Oliver Heating and Cooling is located at 136 Wellington St. E., in Aurora. You can visit on-line at www.tholiver.com.

AURORA SUCCESS STORY

AURORA HYUNDAI

DURING CHALLENGING TIMES

By Brian Lockhart

In the face of adversity, you can recognize a well run and organized business by the way it adapts to a changing situation.

When the COVID-19 pandemic became a reality, the team at Aurora Hyundai quickly put a plan together so they could continue to serve customers from both the showroom and the service department.

While many automotive dealers panicked and closed their doors, Aurora Hyundai General Manager and Operating Partner, Carman Widdess, and his team went into action to devise a way that would allow them to continue to operate.

Carman knew that many of his loyal customers would be in a bad situation if their automobile needed service and they had nowhere to go for repairs. Others would be in need of a new car or SUV to continue going to work – especially those who were front line workers at a time when we needed them most.

“It always comes down to your people,” Carman said of his staff who stayed the course and allowed the dealership to remain operating.

While the showroom itself had to close its doors for a period of time, the team worked around this by offering alternative methods of doing business.

Because the service department remained open while so many others closed shop, Aurora Hyundai had customers arriving from quite a distance around southern Ontario.

“We had our two top techs and our service manager, parts manager, and a helper in the service department,” Carman explained. “We had three managers in the showroom. Even though the showrooms were locked up and people weren’t allowed in, we found a way. You could go



on our website and you could build and price your vehicle on-line.”

Customers responded to this method in a very favourable way. In fact once the showroom was again open to the public, people returned to the dealership in appreciation and Aurora Hyundai had its best month of sales ever in July.

Carman and his staff took the recommendations of the Health Department very seriously and followed a strict protocol to ensure the safety of both customers and staff.

“We did it right,” Carman said. “We sanitized every hour – we still do it now – we segregated our service department seating so people could sit six feet apart. With the nice weather many people chose to stay outside. We were setting up appointments to go to the customer’s house. We disinfected all the cars as well as all the customers’ cars that came in for service.”

Providing great service has always been a noted feature of the dealership. After visiting for the first time during the lockdown, many new customers are returning after having such a positive experience with the staff and quality of service.

Aurora Hyundai also realized that with an uncertain economy and many people suddenly either out of work or having to

take a substantial decrease in income, they could help to keep people mobile during difficult times.

They offered six months of deferred payments as well as 84 months at zero per cent.

“We offered very strong incentives to give people assistance where they needed it,” Carman explained. “Some people just needed time before they made their first payment.”

Hyundai is having a stellar year. The company has launched two all new vehicles – the Venue and Sonata. In addition, they have redesigned and refreshed the look on several vehicles including the popular Santa Cruz mid-size truck.

Aurora Hyundai adapted to a difficult and changing situation by using good business sense, a well thought out plan, and by continuing to offer superior service to customers through challenging times.

305 Wellington St. E., in Aurora.
You can visit on-line at
www.hyundaiofaurora.ca.



WE ARE A TEAM

ANGELA JONES DOUG SABISTON

NO MATTER THE TRENDS,
ANGELA AND DOUG ARE
YOUR GO-TO EXPERTS
FOR BUYING AND SELLING.

By Kinjal Dagli-Shah



Angela Jones and Doug Sabiston make a great team of realtors. And not just because they have both won the Royal LePage Directors Platinum Award as well as the Lifetime Award of Excellence. They are personable, patient and knowledgeable in what they do.

“I have been selling real estate for over 20 years. I got into the business when my two children were young. I started with Royal LePage in Aurora and have been with them ever since,” said Angela, who along with Doug specializes in the property markets of York Region, East Gwillimbury, Simcoe and Toronto as well as Caledon, Stouffville and Uxbridge.

Angela and Doug met at Royal LePage over 15 years ago when he first got into the business. “We have since built a life together, both personally and professionally. We have a great partnership – we both focus on residential while Doug is also an expert in commercial properties,” said Angela, who grew up in Toronto but has lived in Aurora for 33 years.

As full-service realtors, Angela and Doug are present for their buyers and sellers from start to finish. “What sets us apart is that when you call us, you get us. With large teams, people sometimes get shuffled around but we’re just a call or a click away. We remain with our clients right from when they are thinking about putting their house for sale until after they close,” Angela pointed out. The team also has a full-scale network of painters, stagers, photographers – along with a storehouse worth of furniture, artwork and knickknacks – should clients need them. “We help our sellers get their house ready for sale by offering suggestions on painting and quick home improvements that maximize their return. We also offer professional staging and supply art and furniture as needed. It’s unbelievable how staging can transform rooms, resulting in more money in our sellers’ pockets. We believe that real estate is about relationships and we have built our business on repeat and referrals, which is our greatest compliment. “Some of our clients have even referred their children to us,” said Angela, a mother of two herself. “It’s important to us that the experience is great for all and maybe even a little fun.”

Angela and Doug also love working with home buyers, and ensure that they have a smooth experience buying and moving into their new abode. “I especially love working with firsttime buyers. There’s an opportunity to educate them. when they get too attached to a house. In a time of bidding wars, it’s easy to get disappointed and I always tell them that when you get the house you really want, you’ll forget about all the others.” Angela has seen tears and emotions at close quarters but she advises her buyers that it’s all about strategy. “The idea is to not overpay and go in at a price point you can afford. It’s also about managing expectations – you can go in firm versus conditional when making an offer but it depends on the buyer’s comfort level. We always advise them to talk to their mortgage specialist beforehand to make sure they can go in

firm. In the end, it boils down to each family’s risk and comfort level and we always respect that,” said Angela.

With the COVID-19 pandemic, the real estate market went quiet in the first couple months but has heated up lately. “It has been a very interesting year. We have had to do things very differently and going forward, some aspects of the business like signatures will be done virtually. But interest rates are low and we are seeing more people from Toronto are moving up here since some have enjoyed working from home and want a smaller community.” Angela also observed that since the pandemic, many sellers who wanted to downsize earlier are now happy to have the space and property.

No matter the trends, Angela and Doug are your go-to experts for buying and selling.
Here are some tips from the team:

Tips for Buyers:

1. Hire a Realtor!! Realtors are very helpful, knowledgeable and resourceful. Find one you like and can trust.
2. Get preapproved. Your realtor can recommend a good mortgage broker.
3. Try not to get discouraged if you lose out on a house. There is always another one.
4. Look past the staging, make sure the house has good bones.
5. If you’re not sure where you want to live, drive through neighborhoods and get to know them.

Tips for Sellers:

1. Talk to your Realtor before you’re going to sell. We can provide tips on where to spend money to make money and where not to bother.
2. Make sure your house is decluttered. If you’re thinking of selling a year or two down the road, start decluttering now.
3. Fresh paint is huge in getting bigger returns.
4. Check to see when your mortgage is up for renewal to avoid paying penalties. Also make sure you can port your mortgage if you are thinking of buying a bigger home.
5. Try not to overprice your house to “test” the market. In our experience, it can backfire and you will get less in the long run.



Give us a call
905.717.6027
www.liveworksellaurora.com

Oakridge's

FASHION INC.



A STORY OF GRATITUDE

By Brock Weir

The early weeks of the pandemic were quiet for Deb Clark, owner of Oakridge's Fashions.

"I doubt I will ever forget March 20th, the day when Oakridge Fashions was mandated to lock its doors amidst the COVID-19 outbreak," says Deb Clark, Owner of Oakridge Fashions. "As I turned out the lights and locked up the store, I wondered if my dream of owning this lovely little shop was coming to an end. In the days that followed, as my inbox filled with generic 'We're All in this Together' emails, I felt nothing but alone with worry, mounting bills and no solutions. Then one day, I opened a box that was sitting by my desk and there it was – a sea of spring jewellery. I took it as a message from the universe that it was time to stop crying and get busy."

With her husband, Joe, behind the camera and their daughter, Emma, joining her in front of the

lens, Oakridge's launched a series of videos designed to show customers what was in store and introduce them to online shopping with oakridgefashions.com. By email and by phone, Deb and daughter Emma helped long-time customers navigate the world of online retail.

"Customers immediately responded," says Deb. "They not only made purchases but sent emails to say 'We're here for you. We've got you. Please keep going and save our store.' Their feedback was a shot in the arm of encouragement to do everything I could to keep our little store alive."



Deb Clark and family dogs delivered orders to customers.

S.O.S (Save Our Store) became our mantra.

As online orders came in another new daily routine began. "I loaded the orders, along with a personal note of gratitude, in the car each day and delivered them myself as far away as Burlington, Barrie and Bowmanville. It was the highlight of my day to stand on a customer's doorstep and say thank you.

Behind the scenes, away from the cameras, Deb and Joe's son, Joey, took on the heavy lifting of managing the store's business office through the crisis. "I have no idea where I would have been without Joey taking on this important role. It allowed me to focus on customers."

Ms. Clark was able to welcome customers back to the bricks-and-mortar store on May 19 and doing so was an emotional experience. "I really believe there were some women in those early weeks who were purchasing a little more than they needed, and their generosity wasn't lost on me," she says.

The keyword for moving forward into this "new normal" is "relationship." It was always a cornerstone of Oakridge's but it has become especially important during this pandemic. "Everything we do is about our relationship with our customers – not just what we are doing for them but what they are doing for us."

"If I had one message for our customers, it is that in this pandemic, where everyone is trying to cope and help one another, they have, and are continuing to make a huge difference to this one small business."

"It's true, I will never forget the day I locked up the store. But now, it is our customers' support that I will really always remember," concluded Deb. "Our entire family is grateful."



Visit us in store or online at
Oakridgefashions.com
14800 Yonge St.,
Aurora L4G 1N3
905 726 4063



DEDICATED TO YOUR BUSINESS



From left: Sandra Watson, Events Manager, Sandra Ferri, President & CEO, Seanna Murray, Member Relations Ambassador.

SUCCESS STRATEGY

AURORA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

SUPPORT AND ADVOCACY FOR LOCAL BUSINESS

Aurora Chamber of Commerce: The Aurora Chamber of Commerce (ACOC) was poised to have a great year in 2020, with record membership numbers, exciting events, and a renewed focus on Advocacy.

And then came the pandemic, wreaking havoc upon the local economy. As businesses shuttered, or offered much reduced services, its effects were quickly felt far and wide.

The Aurora business community was no different from anywhere else, with many of our businesses closing, or reinventing themselves with curbside pickup or online sales and services.

During the first few weeks, businesses had many questions and concerns. Government programs were complex, and getting support was not immediate. And in many cases, the initial offerings needed modification to ensure all businesses could be helped.

Throughout this time, the ACOC began weekly meetings with businesses and government leaders to answer questions, keep people informed, and provide an opportunity for owners to bring their concerns to those who could make a difference. These were well attended, and impactful for all.

We also planned and delivered several "Bridge to the Future" online events, where panels of local business owners and government leaders shared best practices with regards to pivoting, new business models, marketing and sales, and reopening safely. We received excellent feedback on these as well.

As everyone became more clear on the severity of this pandemic, Aurora was one of the first Towns to launch a Business Continuity Task Force. Put together by the Chamber and the Town of Aurora, the Task Force included prominent members of the business community, including the

Aurora Economic Development Corp., the Business Improvement Association, and businesses, large and small.

Together the Task Force discussed issues impacting the local economy, and looked for action items to support our businesses. The Explore Aurora Marketing Campaign was a result of this Task Force, and Phase 1 was generously funded by Magna International, Treasure Hill, and Enbridge.

The ACOC managed this campaign, implemented by Watershed Marketing, with a key deliverable being ExploreAurora.ca. This website was developed on a platform donated by Addison Marketing Solutions.

Aurora is known for its support of local businesses and charities, and the Explore Aurora Campaign provided residents and businesses with an opportunity to share information about their local favourites, and keep their dollars local. The Aurora Chamber, with Town of Aurora support, will continue to oversee the campaign through future phases.

Looking ahead, the Chamber has decided to go online with their two Fall Summits. The Women's Summit will take place over two half-days: the morning of October 27 and afternoon of October 29, and we are fortunate to be featuring Samra Zafar, author of A Good Wife, and Lead, Purpose Communication at BMO. Also featured is Avery Swartz, Author of See You on the Internet, Founder and CEO of Tech Camp, and CTV's Your Morning resident tech expert.

The Business & Technology Summit will be taking place mid-November

— stay tuned for more details.

And the Business Awards are undergoing a process renewal, and will return better than ever in Spring 2021.

The Chamber is always looking at ways to keep members engaged, and for opportunities to host face-to-face events, like the Women of Influence Luncheons that have taken place at the Armory over the past two months.

As we look to the future, the keyword will be ADVOCACY! The Chamber has been an advocate for our members, and will be looking at what is needed as we emerge from the pandemic. Sector specific round tables are being planned for this Fall, and the findings will form the basis for our advocacy work this year.

If you are interested in participating in a business round table, or if your business is looking for support and information, reach out to the Chamber today.

Indeed there is much uncertainty during this pandemic, and many pivots are needed to simply stay in business. Rather than going it alone, join an organization that can share best practices, new technologies, and help you navigate the many avenues of support. Becoming a member of the ACOC is part of today's strategy for success.

The Aurora Chamber of Commerce is located at 14483 Yonge St. Aurora: 905-727-7262 | www.aurorachamber.on.ca



AURORA MUSIC ACADEMY

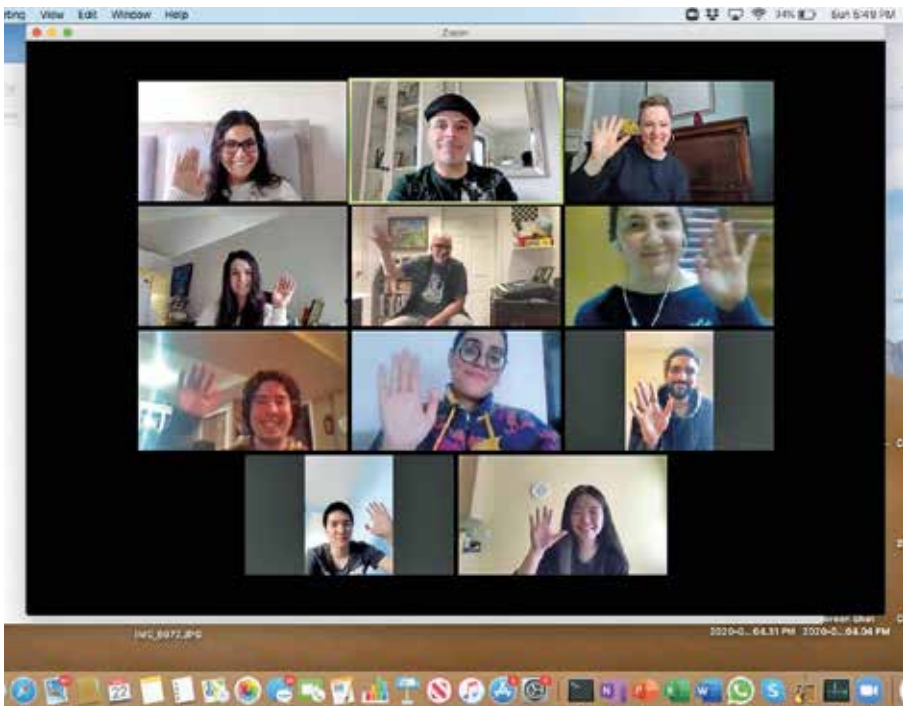
AURORA MUSIC ACADEMY: BUILDING COMMUNITY ONE NOTE AT A TIME

By Brock Weir

The images are seared into our minds: residents under lockdown in Italy settling down on their balconies to perform for their neighbours in a sign of hope, lone bagpipers playing familiar tunes in solidarity with frontline workers changing shifts, and people rhythmically clapping or banging pots and pans as these heroes made their way home at the end of a long day.

These scenes reminded people that we were all in this together, and the simple thread that bound them all?

Music



classes in both formats as well as offering supplemental programs for elementary and high school band students who are no longer able to practice in their traditional school environment.

"We want all our students to be passionate and excited about music," says Mr. Mason, outlining his criteria for success. "Are they really into their music? Are they enjoying it to the point where they can play for their friends? It is not about conservatory exams alone – we do that – but we want kids to be able to play for their friends and feel good about themselves.

"Everybody recognizes that music is powerful and this has only reinforced my philosophy," says Paul Mason, founder of the Aurora Music Academy, which offers lessons in piano, guitar, voice, violin, drum, ukulele and bass.

Mr. Mason, an educator for more than 20 years, first opened the Aurora Music Academy in 2017 with a vision of "positively influencing lives and building community through music."

It is a vision that quickly resonated with the community and, by this time last year, they had outgrown their first space. Earlier this year, they re-located to much larger premises on McClellan Way near Bathurst Street – a move which came just at the right time.

The extra elbow room has allowed Aurora Music Academy to carry on programming in a socially-distant atmosphere while allowing the business to install the infrastructure necessary to make remote and online learning opportunities as seamless as possible for students and families alike.

"Our goal is to create an amazing space – because we want to BE amazing," says Mr. Mason.

A key component of that is building community both within and beyond the Academy.

Everyone who takes part in private lessons at the Aurora Music Academy is invited to play with other students. Teaching someone to play guitar is exciting, says Mr. Mason, but to teach them to sit with two other guitar players, learn how to count in a song and play chords while someone else is playing melody "takes this to another level of music-making and enjoyment!"

"We can do some spectacular things," he says.

These spectacular things continued in earnest when circumstances forced most of these interactions into a virtual realm. A longtime proponent of online learning as both a teacher and a student, Mr. Mason and his team "didn't miss a beat" translating their lessons for platforms such as Zoom.

"We were ready to jump right in," he says. "The parents really appreciated that and it went really well keeping everyone active with their musical learning. From a student's perspective, learning on a screen is not too foreign. However, parents want to feel comfortable that learning through Zoom is indeed effective.

"I believe we proved this early on. In addition to the 'online' lessons, we went above and beyond by offering FREE ONLINE ACTIVITIES, ranging from ukulele, to musical theatre, to art and even Zumba! We tried to go the extra mile."

By the time Aurora Music Academy was able to re-open their doors, the school set to work striking the right balance between socially-distant in-person lessons and distanced in-person learning options. Flexible classrooms have been easily adapted to maintain distance between students and teachers, a reconfigured reception area has allowed for group practice, and even the parking lot is being utilized for some new programs, including percussion circles involving every day objects akin to Stomp and Blue Man Group.

"We want to be a community academy that is offering exceptional music lessons to everybody," says Mr. Mason, noting the school also offers free guitar lessons for parents of students. "To me, a musical success occurs when everybody is engaged, the kids are loving it and their house is filled with music. Houses filled with music are even more so when their parents pick up something and get involved."

But it is not enough that houses are filled with music, Mr. Mason's goal is to have music created by students ringing throughout Aurora. Over the last few months, the Aurora Music Academy has been using their online platforms to hold virtual recitals for local retirement residences and, just a few months ago, the Academy began talks with Kerry's Place Autism Services on new programs tailor-made for individuals living on the autism spectrum.

"Part of my education is how music effects the brain and the impact it really has," says Mr. Mason. "We're building this program and we want to slowly accommodate students and families."

As schools resume, so are activities at Aurora Music Academy. In addition to in-studio and online lessons, they are bringing back group



"On top of that, I want everyone to play guitar and sing! Piano players can pick up guitar usually in a few weeks. Guitar leads to singing and singing with a guitar and, all of a sudden, you're 'that guy.' By 'that guy' I mean when you're 12-years-old hanging out with your friends, you're 'that guy' when you can play Green Day and AC/DC and it gives you an edge and confidence. When you're a teen, you're really 'that guy' because people are asking you to pull out your guitar. When you get into your 20s at university or college, it is amplified again and you're 'that guy' in residence. You're the ice breaker, life is good, and you're moving along."



For more information on the Aurora Music Academy and the wide-ranging programs they offer, visit auroramusicacademy.ca or call 905-900-0094. The Academy is located at 330 McClellan Way (Unit 5).



BACKYARD LIVING & STAYCATIONS

Lifestyle Oasis

WINDOWS INC. HOME PRODUCTS

OUTDOOR SOLUTIONS

By Neil Moore

No shortage of ways to enhance ‘backyard living’

No matter how much money we spend on landscaping our backyards, the Canadian climate significantly limits the time we spend enjoying them. And no, this isn’t an excuse to salute global warming!

Backyard living, and staycations

– where you create a resort-like environment to ‘holiday’ in your own yard – can easily be sabotaged by the weather: wind, blazing sun, and rain. Not to mention the shoulder seasons when temps are still too chilly to really enjoy the time outdoors.

Some of this can be alleviated with umbrellas, awnings and gazebos. But a more effective approach is the three-season sunroom.

“Even in the summer, it gets to be too hot – you’re sweltering out there,” said George Hughes, owner of Lifestyle Oasis, a window, door, and enclosure specialist in Aurora. “Or you get up in the morning and it’s a beautiful day, so you grab a cup of coffee and go to sit down at the patio – and everything’s covered in dew.”

Solutions can be as simple as installing a rigid, acrylic roof (or cover) to block the sun, dew and rain.

“The material is extruded in Germany and has a 30-year warranty,” he continued. “It just covers the deck, lets in the light, and gives you UV protection. You can sit out in the rain or mid-day sun. And in the morning, not have to worry about moisture on the cushions.”

This can be upgraded easily with zip-on screens, which provide some wind protection, while allowing breezes to filter through.

“Screen rooms are popular,” added George. “Screens at the top and bottom keep out the insects, dirt and leaves.”

These systems can also be ordered with tempered glass at the bottom, not to mention four-track window systems for complete flexibility. He demonstrated the vertical arrangement of stacked ‘panes’ that glide past one another to provide as much, or as little, protection as needed.

“This stops the wind and rain, giving you that three-season quality,”

George explained. “And this is not glass, it’s a ‘window vinyl’ so it’s very light – lasts about 25 years.”

He poked the flexible, yet clear material, and it immediately returned to shape.

“It has memory,” he noted. “But it’s not thermal – you can sit outside in the fall or spring, and use a small heater to take off the chill. This is a three-season kind of solution.”

These systems can be installed over existing decks or concrete slabs, or large patio stones – but not interlock. George explained they need a proper foundation, which can be supplied if needed. Installers can also work with multi-level decks, as each is a custom build.

Lifestyle has designed projects that range in size from small porch enclosures to 65 x 20-foot sunrooms.

Indeed, going big isn’t a problem, and for those seeking to

appropriately scale their doorways, Lifestyle offers a retractable ‘door screen’ that will cover openings up to 20 feet wide and 11 feet high. George also demonstrated a three-panel sliding door.

With so many people cancelling travel plans and staying home due to the pandemic, increasing the number of seasons you can enjoy your deck or patio – in comfort – makes even more sense.

“Backyard living is really catching on, and we are trying to offer custom solutions that meet our customers’ needs,” said George. “Drop by our showroom – bring your imagination – and let’s see what we can do for you.”

Lifestyle Oasis is located at 240 Industrial Pkwy S, Unit 1, Aurora. Call 905-726-4349, or visit www.lifestyleoasis.ca.



ROBERTS & COMPANY

Chartered Professional Accountant

PARTNERS IN YOUR SUCCESS

By Neil Moore



Whether you’re a business owner or employee, it’s no understatement to say we all wear many hats. Which means there’s often a tendency to ‘do it yourself’ to save some dollars. “It” may be unclogging a drain, or painting your reception area. It can also mean tax preparation and accounting.

The latter isn’t always a good option for DIY’ers, as the money saved by not hiring a pro, can be more than offset in errors and missed opportunities.

After all, how many of us are fully up-to-speed on the latest tax and finance legislation? The simple answer is ‘an accountant.’

Brian Roberts, CPA, CGA, LPA, notes that tax time can get complicated, especially when kids start attending university and there are tax credits to be transferred from child to parent and vice versa. Or when you retire, and have to figure out income splitting...

“You may miss certain things that can cost you money,” he continues. “When you hire a professional, you get what you pay for. It’s the same reason I don’t service my own car.”

For business owners and the self employed, Brian notes that the CRA’s extended tax deadlines have also spread out the tax season “quite a bit.”

“And with the wage subsidy and other government programs, the complexity of accounting has increased. It has caused some additional work.”

The firm underwent a name change in July 1st of this year – from Van Nostrand & Partner to Roberts & Company Professional

Corporation. Brian started as an employee in 1998, became a partner in 2006, and then sole owner in 2018.

“We’ve always looked at ourselves as a ‘one-stop-shop’ for bookkeeping, tax, and for the full cycle of financial accounting,” he said. “You can bring in your set of books and have the bookkeeping done, we can prepare your year-end financial statements, and then do your corporate (or personal or estate) taxes. We do U.S. taxes as well.”

It’s not all on Brian’s shoulders, as he is backed by an experienced six-person team – each of whom can handle their full suite of services.

“We are a boutique style firm,” Brian continued. “You come in and instantly feel comfortable, and at home – which is important because when you’re handing over all your financial records, you need a high degree of trust in the people you’re working with.”

“We also speak to you in your language,” he added, “so that you understand more about your financial information.”

Brian’s team also speaks the language of the CRA, which for the average taxpayer, can be

office rather than theirs – in particular if it’s a home office. That can feel kind of invasive.”

Roberts and Company looks after clients who range from lawyers and doctors, to chiropractors, dentists, architects, engineers, construction workers, and even retail workers. Although it’s common to wait until year-end to connect with your accountant, Brian recommends a more frequent schedule.

“Touching base during multiple points in the year is the best way to tax plan,” he noted. “You can’t retroactively do it in many cases, so you need to stay ahead of the game. And all our clients know they can call me any time they have a question, like ‘Should I lease or buy this car? Should I do it in my company name, or do it personally?’”

A sign of the times is reflected in some of the other questions he hears, like ‘I’m getting this package from my company – should I take it as a lump sum, defer it to January, or have it paid out over a few years?’”



challenging, if not intimidating.

“The CRA knows what they are looking for, and sometimes they have difficulty expressing it to the client,” said Brian. “I’ll speak with them directly, rather than the client, who may be a bit panicked. And if there is an audit, I’ll have them come to our

The company’s tagline is “value beyond numbers,” and for those who see their accountant as a partner in success, it couldn’t ring more true.



Roberts & Company can be reached at 905-727-8046, or visit www.robertscpa.ca



Ron David
owner of Aurora's
Topfire Fireplace and BBQ

By Sam Odrowski

As COVID-19 forced Canadians to stay in their homes and avoid travel, many have been working on renovations or improving their backyard.

Ron David, owner of Aurora's Topfire Fireplace and BBQ, says he's seen an uptick in sales of BBQs, fireplaces, and outdoor products

Upgrade your backyard this autumn with



since the late spring but, earlier in the year, business was down because the public was afraid to shop.

Fortunately, offering free curbside pickup and delivery helped out while Topfire's storefront was closed.

"As people got used to shopping in that manner it just got busier... through April it was pretty good," David said.

"On May 19 we were allowed to reopen and from then on it got extremely busy... everybody's working on their backyards because you can't take a trip, nobody's flying."

More Canadians are going to their cottage instead. Those without a cottage are investing in their backyards and homes, says David.

"I think there was a lot of pent up demand as well, once you've been in quarantine for so long you just want to get busy," he says.

In addition to Topfire's location at 15483 Yonge St, in Aurora David's son runs a second location out of 487 Westney Rd S. in Ajax.

A key part of the business's success can be attributed to its high-end quality products and customer service, says David.

"We're very personable, we always greet people when they come in the door, even if I'm with a customer, I'll call over and

say hi...people like to know that they're acknowledged," he says.

"I think from a customer experience, we do focus on service, we do focus on trying to get the customer a lot of information so they can make an informed decision... and feel like they get some value when they came to visit the store," he continues.

"When it comes to BBQ or fireplace installation, especially if they come to see us before they act, we can get them some really good information so they can start the project properly."

David says many customers who shop around end up making their final purchase at Topfire because it's often the only store where customers are met with the expert knowledge and personal attention they need. They can discuss their projects in detail to get all the information that's required.

So far, customers have been very cooperative with the COVID-19 regulations and all the public health directives aimed at reducing the spread.

"I've had no issues, people are very good. I'm always surprised when I hear the numbers, because my experience whenever somebody comes in the store is very good when it comes to social distancing, wearing a mask and putting on hand sanitizer,"

15483 Yonge Street Aurora 905-503-2503 TOPFIRE.CA



THE SILVER LINING

AURORA HOME HARDWARE

LOCALLY SOURCED CANADIAN PRODUCTS

By Brock Weir

Home Hardware offers the complete package

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced people to stay home more now than ever before. The silver lining? Seeing the same old walls day in and day out has resulted in no shortage of home improvement ideas.

Enter Aurora Home Hardware, which has seen a surge in do-it-yourselfers coming through their Wellington Street East doors in recent months.

"DIY is huge again and the market has really taken off," says Home Hardware's Bob Clubine.

"We have seen a real trend come back because people are at home, they're working from home, and, as a result, they're fixing up their places at home. They can come in here and we will always have someone able to help them."

As much as people are focused on do-it-yourself projects, a significant detail that has worked in Home Hardware's favour is their focus on bringing to market locally-sourced

products as much as possible.

This extends throughout the store, from the everyday staples, to their range of Napoleon barbecues to their expertly-trained in-house kitchen designers who have experienced a great success rate with their customers.

"We are always ahead of the trends," says Mr. Clubine. "We're always changing designs and, as a result, we're ahead of the curve in the kitchens and bath supplies."

In the day-to-day, Mr. Clubine is primarily focused on vanities, which has recently expanded to include full suites for showers and baths from such lines as Stonewood and ClassicBrand Cabinetry.

"We offer the complete package," he says, noting their large selection of vanities, faucets, toilets and other fixtures. "We walk you through the various displays and find what fits your budget. That works well here because we offer three different lines at different price points to suit your needs."

Helping to keep those costs down is sourcing Canadian products.

"We source it all to get what you want," he says. "Home Hardware has always been Canadian-owned and we're trying to stick with Canadian. Everyone wants to have Canadian products these days and that is what we are doing. We're having trouble keeping Napoleon barbecues in stock this year because everyone is staying home and cooking rather than going to restaurants."

"We're a family-run business that has served Aurora and surrounding area for 50 years. Our motto is to serve the customer with the best service possible."



289 Wellington St E, Aurora, ON L4G 6H6
(905) 727-4751
www.aurorahomehardware.ca



GOING NATIONAL

KEY ADVANTAGE TEAM

DELIVERING MORE TO THE COMMUNITY

By Brock Weir

No matter the coast,
the Key Advantage Team is here to serve.

As they stepped onto the stage at the Royal Venetian Mansion to accept the Community Involvement Award from the Aurora Chamber of Commerce last fall, it meant much more to Royal LePage's Key Advantage Team than sales stats or corporate awards.

For the team, which is led by Susie Strom and Caroline Baile, it represented a key pillar of their business philosophy: delivering more to the community they call home.

"As a team, we all live, work and volunteer directly to the community and to receive that recognition was so nice because we all feel so strongly about it," says realtor Lindsay Strom.

All the more impressive is the fact they were recognized in their first year as a team.

Over more than three decades, Susie Strom and Caroline Baile became proven players in York Region real estate and in giving back. Regular contributors to local food banks, top contributors to the Royal LePage Shelter Foundation, and even, in the case of Caroline, trekking across the Sahara to raise funds for Yellow Brick House, coming together just over a year ago has only helped

grow and strengthen their community roots.

In fact, teamwork has helped them expand operations to British Columbia, where Caroline is steering the ship through a flourishing market.

No matter the coast, the Key Advantage Team is here to serve.

"We are so fortunate to be experiencing such a buoyant real estate market right now," says Susie. "As a team, I think our mandate was to try and get the Key Advantage brand recognized and I think we have been able to do that."

COVID-19, of course, has had an impact on businesses. For many realtors, spring brings the strongest real estate market, but due to health restrictions, the first few weeks of the season were relatively quiet. But every cloud has a silver lining and the Key Advantage team used the time to cultivate relationships not only with existing customers but within the team itself.

Now that we're settling into a "new normal" so too is real estate, and things are booming.

"While things like open houses have changed, I

think overall the nice thing that has come out of this for us is our communication and relationships, given what everyone is experiencing, is so much stronger," says Lindsay.

Adds Susie: "It has given us the opportunity to up our level of service and bring comfort to clients. We were present for all showings just to make sure people wore masks and gloves. It was new because when we first started listing homes in the spring there was a huge level of discomfort, so we were doing whatever we could to make our clients feel safe."

As the real estate market grows, the Key Advantage team is seeing a shift in people transitioning from high density areas to lower density areas, and a contributing factor in that trend is businesses moving towards more flexible work environments, including at-home scenarios.

"This is allowing people to move beyond the parameters of where they necessarily needed to stay for community purposes and we're seeing more lifestyle movements," says Lindsay.

Looking to the future, this trend shows every sign of continuing and the Key Advantage Team is working hard to be there for the clients, whatever transition or lifestyle change they are contemplating making.



Susie Strom & Caroline Baile

"We're pretty high maintenance women who expect a lot when you hire someone, and we always try to deliver that to our clients," says Lindsay with a smile. "Whether it is buying or selling, our clients always feel like their relationship is valued over the transaction and it is very important they know they are getting the utmost from us."

"That's our motto," says Susie.

17360 Yonge Street (12.05 mi)
Newmarket, ON, Canada L3Y 7R6
(905) 836-1212
www.KeyAdvantage.ca



people inside the community have contributed to helping out," says Valerie Bennett, Director of Community Relations for Kingsway Place. "Nobody could come in and, for the longest time, physiotherapy couldn't come in, so we were going to residents' doors and walking people – you just had to keep them moving."

Adds Pat Wiwchar, Marketing and

have been particularly enjoying an expansive patio area, and a balcony overlooking it. This has allowed Kingsway to continue its live entertainment programs outdoors for residents when other retirement residences have not been as lucky.

"Our building is running like it should and we're using our rooms the way they are designed," says Mr. Barlow.

But one issue stemming from the closure that has been a particular challenge to overcome is finding creative ways for residents to stay in touch with their families. To that end, they have rolled out a digital platform to keep families up-to-

Administrative Director: "We had staff doing the residents' hair and giving them manicures, too."

For Mr. Barlow, this is what Kingsway

STATE-OF-THE-ART SENIOR RESIDENCE

A Village Within a Town



By Brock Weir

Kingsway Place has always wanted to be a part of the community.

Over the past three years, Fieldgate Retirement Living has been hard at work transforming the Murray Drive-based retirement residence into a state-of-the-art community that seniors can call home as well as a community hub where residents can enjoy entertainment, fashion shows, and even classic car showcases.

It has proven to be a winning formula, but when COVID-19 descended and forced Kingsway Place to shut its doors to outside visitors, the sense of community was only amplified within its walls.

"We are a village within a town and that is why Kingsway is a very special place," says Ray Barlow, Director of Operations for Fieldgate Retirement Living.

Unable to bring in outside support staff and volunteers, including physiotherapists at the beginning of the pandemic, staff and residents alike sprung into action. Long-time staff members pooled their skills to help keep programs running while residents did the same. While some employees took it upon themselves to keep residents moving through exercise programs, residents did their bit by helping their neighbours get to and from their activities quickly and efficiently.

"The community has come together and the

Place is all about. It was a matter of understanding people's backgrounds and skillsets and "amplifying it for the betterment of the community."

"Our residents stood up and helped out just wanting to be part of the solution," he says. "It gives them a sense of belonging and, for us, that was huge and it made us feel even more accountable to them. That is why this is a great place. This sense was fostered with staff before, but since COVID it has really been amplified within the community."

Helping ease residents into this "new normal" are new amenities that have been part of the Kingsway Place experience since they formally re-opened their doors last year after an extensive rebuild. Each resident has their own room, which has proved to be practical and kept Kingsway very safe during the pandemic. As well, members of the Kingsway community

date on Kingsway Place activities and to see the smiles on their loved ones' faces.

"The biggest issue was when anxiety levels were getting higher and a lot of things were happening, sharing these pictures with our families helped ease the pressure and the anxiety went down," says Mr. Barlow. "We're a visual world and if you can't come in and see your mom, the mind goes in crazy places. For them, being able to see the smiles took a lot of the pressure off."

In the coming weeks and months, Mr. Barlow says Kingsway Place wants to build on the energy within its walls and keep that momentum going for whatever lies ahead.

"Our biggest thing is keeping our people safe," he says.



CALL 905-841-2777
or visit us KINGSWAYAURORA.COM



As a lifetime resident of York Region and a veteran Realtor with over 32 years experience, Monica Stohr has endured every type of real estate market ... twice!

“Opening Doors To Your Dreams”

Monica Stohr

Sales representative

“My philosophy is simple: Preparation is key”

Having worked through the highs and lows of vastly different real estate markets, Monica was able to comfortably guide her clients throughout the minor corrections necessary to achieve a more balanced and sustainable marketplace for families living in the GTA. Remarkably, the quiet market of the past 2.5 years has not affected Monica’s pace! Where others see challenges, Monica sees opportunity to showcase her skills.

Monica has maintained her unique approach to each sale as one of the cornerstones to her success.

Her unparalleled attention to detail is the foundation for her vast database of happy repeat and referred clientele.

“My philosophy is simple: Preparation is key,” she says.

Her outstanding ability to strategically

prepare a home while elevating both the desirability and value has delivered beyond her clients’ expectations!

Through her keen eye and knowledge of interior design, her clientele are rewarded both financially and with a stress free, quick sale due to her high level of expertise in this area.

Last year her listings averaged 22 days on the market which is roughly half of the market average according to TREB statistics.*

The average buyer has difficulty envisioning a home’s full potential.

“When I look at a property, I immediately know what I want to do to ensure it draws the attention of buyers who appreciate the finer details and are happy to pay more. This often equates to competing offers even in a buyers’ market!”

Working with a team of professionals

available to act on her vision, Monica is happy to dedicate the extra time and effort required to showcase every home.

“I am confident in the outcome and understand that the added value I provide to my clients equates to added value to the buyer as well.”

As evidenced in one of her recent sales, her Seller was rewarded with an additional \$250,000.00 more than the highest offer they had received prior to Monica taking over and making over the property!

In the declining market of 2018, her dedication earned her the ranking of #1 individual in Aurora, #3 individual in Ontario as well as #7 individual Canada-wide for Royal LePage.

On the purchasing side, she is able to spot the “sleeper” properties that are often overlooked by buyers and is able to put her talents and negotiating skill

to use in helping her clients’ realize their dream home.

Although her passion for real estate is evident, Monica is most proud of her family.

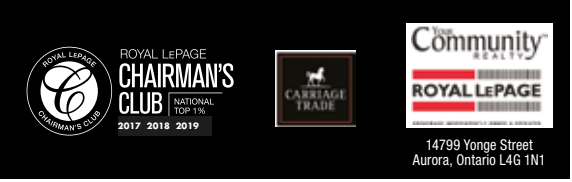
“As a mom, I realize how precious life is.”

That is why she chooses to pay it forward as a supporter for SickKids Hospital, donating and raising over \$140,000 to date with the help of her friends and family.

“I am grateful to be in a position to give back to the community and support families in another meaningful way.”

You can contact Monica Stohr at Royal LePage Your Community Realty 905 727-3154 or 416 618-1714

*according to 2019 TREB statistics for Aurora.



AURORA-NEWMARKET

CDA DANCE ACADEMY RECEIVES TOP CHOICE AWARD

By Kinjal Dagli-Shah

CDA Dance Academy has won the Top Choice award for the best dance studio in the Aurora-Newmarket area for six years in a row, and for good reason. Chantal Almeida, Owner and Artistic Director, puts her heart and soul into running it.

“CDA believes that dance teaches so much more than how to dance – we teach positivity, believing in yourself, working with and supporting others, establishing goals, and reaching your full potential,” said Ms. Chantal, who has been named a finalist for the Young Professional of the Year in 2018, and Small Business of the year Finalist 2020 by the Newmarket Chamber of Commerce.

Ms Chantal’s goal is to create a space in which all dancers can be happy, comfortable, and inspired. Chantal herself has had a humble beginning – she started teaching her sister and friends how to dance in her parents’ basement. In 1999, straight out of high school, she signed a lease for a 3000 square feet premises with a parent waiting area and two studio spaces to fulfil her dream of setting up a dance school.

The dream became a reality as Ms Chantal and her team worked hard over the years to offer quality programs in both competitive and recreational dance. Summer camps, birthday parties, PA Day camps, and workshops with guest teachers are also part of the offerings at CDA.

It’s not just another dance studio. Ms Chantal understands that dance is a highly physical activity, requiring a lot of jumping, which can put stress on bones and joints. “Most dance footwear does not provide any cushioning or support, so the shock of dance movement can place a lot of pressure on the knees and back of a dancer. The best way to prevent against potential injury is by choosing a studio with a professional ‘floating floor’, like we have at CDA Dance Academy,” explained Ms Chantal, adding,

“A floating floor is a dance floor that rests on a system of high-density padding to absorb the shock of jumping. In addition, CDA’s studios are equipped with mirrors, ballet bars and high ceilings to assist in the teaching of proper technique in all our classes. For parents there is a large waiting area, viewing windows, and closed circuit T.V. to observe classes in session.”

When the COVID-19 closures were announced in March, CDA took appropriate steps to ensure a Zoom option for all the classes, and made the business decision at the end of May to move to a new location and provide a stronger future. The new location is at 125 Don Hillock Drive, Aurora. With the gradual reopening, Ms Chantal is back on her feet with online registrations, limited class sizes and safety protocols in place. “This year, CDA is proud to introduce daytime learning pods for kindergarten, elementary school, and dance pod groups should there be a second wave.”

Even in the midst of a pandemic, Almeida had her heart in the right place. She posted a message for the community, “We feel for families in the community and want to reach out. If you know someone in need, or know of someone in a fortunate position who could sponsor a child in need of dance right now; email me. We’re in this together, and keeping a strong community spirit has always been something I have strongly supported.”

Almeida said CDA understands there are families devastated by financial hardship at this time. Keeping that in mind, CDA is welcoming anyone in need of a virtual dance class to help boost their child’s spirit at this time to email them directly at cdadance@rogers.com. After all, it’s a dance studio with heart and soul.



125 Don Hillock Drive, Aurora, ON L4G 0G9
Phone: (905) 836-8040
cdadanceacademy@gmail.com

MORE than a home... A COMMUNITY

THE MEADOWS

of Aurora

OFFERING SERENITY AND SENSE OF COMMUNITY FOR SENIORS

By Sam Odrowski



Seniors wanting to downsize but still enjoy a sense of community can look no further than the Meadows of Aurora. The seniors’ lifestyle community currently has 154 independent living suites for those 65 and older, while an additional 110 independent living and 60 assisted living suites will be available next spring at Woodland Towers.

The new development will also feature 20 memory care studio apartments.

The campus is 25 acres in total and half is protected forest which will be preserved for the community, featuring walking paths connected to the local trail system.

“With the woodlands come wildlife, so on a regular basis it’s not just birds we see, but deer, foxes, coyotes and turkeys,” says Ruth Street, Vice-Chairman of the Board of the Meadows of Aurora. “It’s especially nice for people who have come from larger acreage or farms... it feels like home very quickly.”

Ducks Unlimited manages 70 acres of protected wetlands just west of the seniors lifestyle community, while an additional 80 acres of protected forest lands are located half a kilometre to the north.

For older adults, studies show that physical activity in green spaces is linked to lower rates of depression, reduced stress, improved cognitive function and a better mood overall.

As of the end of September, Woodland Towers still has 10 suites for sale and will feature a restaurant with a seating capacity of 240 as well as a bistro for light snacks. Other amenities include a convenience store, hair salon and large fitness rooms, all with the purpose of building up the community.

A Health and Wellness Centre is also included in Woodland Tower which will offer residents services such as physiotherapy, physical care, foot care and dentistry.

Street says one of the key selling points that led her to move into Meadows of Aurora was the community and companionship.

“It’s people of a similar age group with whom you have much in common with,” she explains.

The seniors’ lifestyle community features book clubs, coffee hours, exercise groups and a number of resident-led activities, such as game nights, euchre and bridge.

Neighbours can get together to enjoy going out for dinner and are given the freedom to choose their level of activity.

“You get to be as involved with people as you want to be,” says Street. “That’s what I think is nice about the truly

independent living, you are independent in the sense that your level of involvement is up to you.”

For many seniors, social activities help to keep them sharp and mentally engaged. Studies show social interaction is important for preventing the onset of dementia and Alzheimer’s disease as well as maintaining good emotional health.

Street says it’s better to consider downsizing and moving into a seniors’ lifestyle community like the Meadows of Aurora while you’re still in good health instead of waiting for a medical condition that forces you to move.

“Downsizing is a big job, whether you hire people to do it or not, so I would say do it while you can and then enjoy moving in when you have the independence to meet people and to get involved with different activities,” says Street. “Do it while your health allows you to.”

Meanwhile, COVID-19 created a very special and unique environment at the Meadows of Aurora.

The seniors’ community followed all public health protocols related to the novel coronavirus and found creative ways to maintain a strong sense of community.

“We had concerts and residents listened from out on their balconies, where someone played their saxophone at the front or the back of the building,” Street says. “Some of the people did exercise classes, so everybody got out on the balconies and did that.”

Lots of community members dropped off cookies or baking to one another and found ways to keep connected while staying physically apart.

“It was just interesting to see these spontaneous acts of love that came from all of our neighbours to say how do we help one another while still being isolated,” says Street.

“It’s personally rewarding to see how people cared for one another and I think the caring spirit and aspect of support for one another while maintaining privacy makes it a very special place.”

Later this fall, there will be an announcement for the launch of Phase 3 at Meadows of Aurora which adds 125 more independent living suites with an expected completion in 2023.

The property has space for a future Phase 4 development but Street says formal planning isn’t yet underway, although the project could bring about a long-term care facility.

Periodically, suites in the Garden Tower come up for resale, so be sure to contact the Meadows of Aurora Sales Presentation Centre at 905-503-5560 to see what’s available.



By Sam Odrowski



Your smile makes a huge impression when you enter a room, and if you look after your teeth, they will look after you for a lifetime.

St. John's Family Dentistry in Aurora provides full dental care in a warm and friendly environment while using state-of-the-art dental technology to keep your smile looking its best.

Serving Aurora and the surrounding area since 2016, St. John's Family Dentistry is conveniently located near the downtown core with ample parking and is fully equipped in a bright and cheery environment.

The COVID-19 pandemic has prevented many Canadians from getting a dental check up over the spring and early in the summer when offices were forced to close, but they've been back in operation for the last few months.

St. John's Dentistry has taken every precaution necessary to ensure patients stay safe, through the use of masks, physical distancing, strict sanitation practices and the

installation of air filters.

"We are back to doing everything now but with a bit more caution and gaps between the patients," says Dr. Vahid Khansari, co-owner of St. John's Dentistry.

Dr. Khansari and his wife Dr. Elham Zadeh are the team that have the knowledge for all dental procedures in the office. With 25 years experience in dentistry, they lead a staff of fully qualified professionals from dental assistants and hygienists to administrative staff that keep the office running smoothly.

As a family dental office, they welcome patients from as young as two-years-old to seniors. Children are welcome and the friendly staff know how to make the younger patient feel at ease during their first visits to the dentist.

Fully qualified dental hygienists perform all cleaning and preventative maintenance procedures for optimum oral health.

Beginning with basic dental examinations, the Doctors will guide you through any needed procedures that are required to keep your teeth healthy. That includes primary maintenance, replacing missing teeth with implants and more advanced procedures like root canals to save teeth that need extra work.

Basic dental surgery is available if needed along with extractions and other required procedures.

Wisdom teeth are quite often a problem for many people and

Providing FULL SERVICE CARE to the Entire Family



An incredible smile makeover after just 7 months of braces! Transform your smile and boost your confidence in less than one year!

the Doctors can assist you with removal if necessary. In-office whitening is also available and will eliminate yellowed or discoloured teeth.

For straightening misaligned or crooked teeth, braces can be applied to correct the positioning of teeth that didn't naturally fall into line.

If you look in the mirror and don't like what you see, and are considering a cosmetic enhancement to improve your appearance, the office provides free consultations where you can learn more about what is available and how different procedures work to provide you with the results you are looking for.

Serving Aurora, Newmarket, and the surrounding area, St. John's Family Dentistry is located at 7 William Graham Dr., Unit A1, in Aurora.



For an appointment or more information, you can call them by telephone at 905-727-1717 or office cellphone at 905-960-9293, by e-mail at: info@stjohnsdental.ca, or visit on line at their website at: www.stjohnsfamilydentistry.ca



Melody Cara Carol Cologna

TMG THE MORTGAGE GROUP

"WE HAVE A UNIQUE PRODUCT"

By Kinjal Dagli-Shah

When two professionals like Melody Cara and Carol Cologna come together with their financial and banking expertise, the results can only be stellar. With a deep-rooted passion for helping clients, especially seniors looking for a better cash flow, this team has on hand a valuable, **tax-free tool for 55+ homeowners.**

"We have a unique product, designed like a Home Equity Line of Credit (HELOC) that we call '**The Home Equity Life Saver**' with a non-payment option," says Melody. This could be the perfect solution for **55 + homeowners** who have worked their entire lives to pay off their home and are now faced with an inflated cost of living. Melody and Carol, have served the Aurora-Newmarket area for over a decade. "Whether you are looking for debt consolidation to improve cash flow and quality of life, or want to pass on an early inheritance to your children/grandchildren, this product is the best way for **55+ homeowners** to use the equity in their home while continuing to live there."

With better healthcare, Canadians are living longer but surveys indicate that 50% of *retirees* have less than \$100,000 saved. As mortgage professionals with access to a variety of options for homeowners, Melody and Carol highly recommend the "**The Home Equity Life Saver**" to anyone in the **55+ age group**, because the key qualifying factors are age and property value. "With the new rules in place for lending, **a majority of 65+** applicants would never qualify. *Their wealth has accumulated in their home* but you don't have access to it. You are left having to make a very tough decision to either live on a limited budget while continuing to *keep your home*, or the other less desirable options of *selling your home and/or rent in order to enjoy the quality of life you deserve.*

Melody and Carol recognise this dilemma and have made it their mission to educate the 55+ plus age group that there is a better option. "This product allows you to access money in your home at your discretion without being committed to a payment, and **it is tax-free**. It doesn't affect your pensions." Besides, we want to ensure that *Canadians* are aware of the three important benefits if you opt for the

Home Equity Life Saver:

- You always maintain title ownership and control of your home, and you have the freedom to decide when and if you'd like to move or sell.
- 80% of clients exit this product with more than 50% of their equity. And often, they have more equity in their home than when they started.
- Many financial professionals recommend a home line of credit because it's a great way to provide financial flexibility. Since it is tax-free money, it allows retirement savings to last longer and continue to build wealth

Having helped many clients to enjoy living the retirement dream that they have envisioned all their life, Melody and Carol truly understand this product and solutions that it can provide for you. "Your home is likely your highest valued asset. In the Aurora-Newmarket area, where the average resale home value is \$700,000, **the Home Equity Life Saver** is the best way to access cash and go on that dream vacation. or undertake that renovation you always desired. A lot of people don't realize that this option is easily available," explained Carol.

Besides, as Melody points out, "You **can qualify up to 55% of the property value.** They've already built it into the tables that even if you live to be a 100 years old **and never make any payments, you are able to stay in the home, on your terms until you decide to move or sell.** Why pay exorbitant interest on your credit cards and run up a debt when you can use the equity you already possess?"

As the product is designed like a HELOC, it also means that you are not required to take all the funds available. "Only take the funds you need today and leave access to the remainder of the funds for a rainy day! We have seen the benefit of this in these uncertain times!" said the duo.

With a combined experience of over 40 years navigating the financial industry, Melody and Carol are eager to answer any questions or doubts that the 55+ Canadians may have with regards to the **Home Equity Life Saver.**

Please call now to discuss your future!



Melody Cara 416-884-7348 | Melody@caramortgages.ca
Carol Cologna 905-953-6902 | carol.cologna@mortgagegroup.com



TERRY SHERIN

MY 28TH YEAR

Experienced and Trusted Real Estate Sales Professional

By Brian Lockhart

It has been said that when you can remain calm while others around you are falling apart, you will most likely gain the upper hand.

Maintaining a degree of decorum and common sense combined with experience and knowledge will help you get through any real estate transaction – especially when you have entered the hot real estate market that is currently being experienced in the region.

Having a knowledgeable realtor to guide you through the entire process will make the time you spend looking for a new home a much less stressful experience.

Terry Sherin, sales representative with Royal LePage in Aurora, is an experienced negotiator who has that ability to work with buyers and sellers to reach a favourable result for his clients.

Terry began his career in the working world as a trader on the floor of the Toronto Stock Exchange where keeping a cool head among the chaos and frenetic world of high finance gave him the experience to make smart and informed decisions.

Making the transition to the world of real estate, he brought those skills with him and serves to help his clients through the process of making what is most likely the biggest investment of their life.

Now in his 28th year as a realtor, he has a wealth of experience in the industry and has an intimate knowledge of the market in York Region and the surrounding area.

“Right now it’s a sellers market,” Terry explained of the current real estate situation in the region. “Many properties have multiple offers when they go up for sale. You really have to look at the market and determine an average price in a neighborhood. Then you have to look at the upgrades. Some houses have received a total renovation and that makes a big difference.”

Terry can advise his clients on how best to prepare and showcase their home when they are considering selling.

Even small details can make a difference when a house is put on the market.

“Things like staging, decluttering, and curb appeal can make a big difference to potential buyers,” Terry said.

When you are considering buying a home, Terry advises his clients on how to proceed before even making an offer.

“Get your financing in order,” he said, of one of the most important steps before seriously starting to looking for a new house. “You should know how much you can afford and know what your comfort zone is.”

That ‘comfort zone,’ Terry explained, is an important part of buying a new home. You should spend what you feel comfortable with when you factor in the cost of financing, property taxes, and utilities.

Having a knowledgeable realtor on your side when purchasing a home will give you the confidence to proceed and make a proper offer based on a home’s current market value.

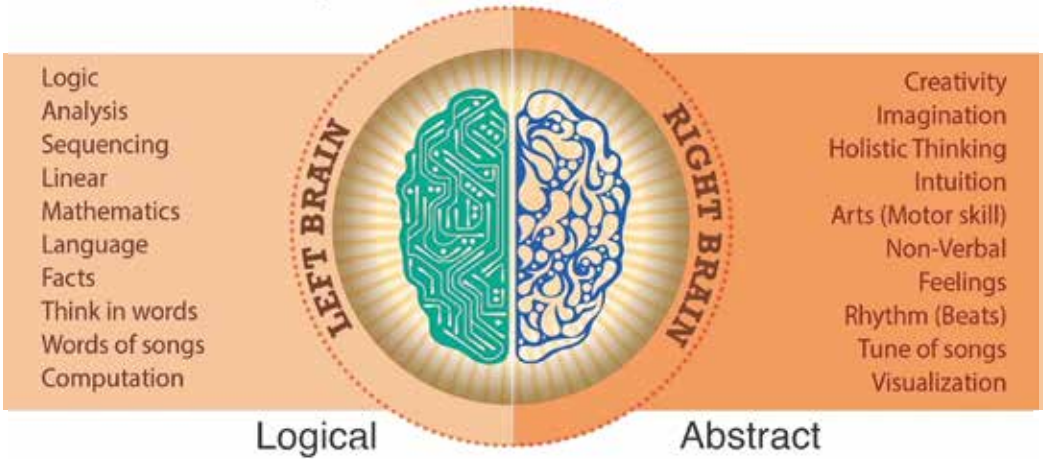
Your realtor will have inside knowledge of the neighborhoods, amenities, recreational facilities, transportation, schools, sporting venues, and everything you will want to know about the area when you are considering moving there. A realtor is part of a business network that helps with home projects and renovations and can help guide you to trusted professionals if you are planning to renovate or add on to the home you are purchasing.

Terry Sherin is an experienced and knowledgeable real estate sales representative who has spent years gaining a solid reputation as a **trusted professional who can guide you through the entire process of selling your current house or buying your next home.**

Terry is located at the Royal LePage office at 14799 Young Street, in Aurora. He can be reached via telephone at the office at 905-727-3154, or via cell phone at 416-315-7368

Stimulating Whole Brain Development with UCMAS

EDUCATION WITH A DIFFERENCE



Mental Math Program Helping Youth to Unlock their Potential

By Sam Odrowski

Children can sometimes look towards mathematics very hesitantly. However, a local Abacus-based mental math program is shifting that perception, while building lifelong skills at the same time. UCMAS Aurora teaches children ages 5-14 how to do mental math using an Abacus, which further develops their cognitive skills like concentration, memory power, multi-tasking, and problem-solving.

With its unique Abacus training method, the UCMAS program stimulates both sides of the brain – the left side which focuses on logic and reasoning as well as the right side which focuses on creativity. This ensures the whole-brain development of children.

“We’re always using only 10% of our brain at any given time. The UCMAS program pushes children towards using the untapped brain capabilities,” says Baljit Bardai, UCMAS Director of Education Services. “Children are like sponges and they can intake more than we can ever think of. They have so much potential that can be

unlocked.” The program helps build a child’s ability in handling numbers, which allows them to see mathematics from a new perspective, with a more positive attitude. They also learn how to multi-task, think critically, boost their memory, become more observant, and enhance their focus.

“I always say to the parents, math is a by-product, the real essence that you’re giving your children is a gift of lifelong skills and confidence with UCMAS,” says Bardai. “I truly believe there’s a lack of math skills for our kids at this day and age... and I don’t think we are preparing them for the future.”

UCMAS is aiming to close that gap by replacing calculators with Abacus in children’s hands, developing cognitive skills, and sharpening their minds.

As students move through the eight levels at UCMAS, they learn 42 different formulas to add, subtract, multiply, divide, and find



the square root of numbers in their heads. The classes are comprised of speed writing and jumbled dictation which help to increase problem-solving skills and efficiency when writing.

The new skills UCMAS students develop through the curriculum help them immensely in the speed at which they can complete their work. “In the beginning when they start, it might take 12 minutes to get through a work page, but at the end of the level they’re doing the entire page in just two minutes,” says Bardai.

COVID-19 had disrupted UCMAS’ in-class learning, but that option is now available to parents who want their kids to have classroom experience. Currently,

UCMAS is teaching many of its students from home but everyone has adapted quite well, says Bardai. She notes that parents have nothing to lose and a lot to gain from testing out UCMAS, which is offered at a lower price than other math programs in the area.

“Register, do a trial class and see how it feels for your child,” Bardai says. “Right now, we have an ongoing promotional offer, and children can avail two weeks of free Abacus training on enrollment.”

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INDEPENDENT SCHOOL

TMS

PROVIDING HIGHLY SOUGHT AFTER EDUCATION TO STUDENTS IN THE GTA

By Sam Odrowski

One of the only schools in North America that combines the Montessori and International Baccalaureate programs is just a 20-minute drive south of Aurora.

One of the only schools in North America that combines the Montessori and International Baccalaureate programs is just a 20-minute drive south of Aurora.

TMS is an independent school and has a child-centred approach with smaller class sizes of 20 students or fewer, where educators build upon the interests of students.

The school has close to 800 pupils and operates from two campuses in Richmond Hill, one for children 18 months to Grade 6 and the other for Grade 7 to Grade 12.

“For a big school, TMS has a small school feel, so it doesn’t feel like an overwhelming place, whether you’re bringing your toddler or Grade 10 student,” says Kirsten Eastwood, TMS Executive Director, Community Development.

“In our Montessori program, we have three grades in one class, so a child will have the same teacher for three years,” she continues. “That teacher knows that child really well and can best guide them into things that they like to do, things they would be good at doing and it really encourages that risk-taking in a safe environment”.

“When our students go from Grade 6 to Grade 7 at the Upper School, they know two or three grades ahead of them because they were in class with them,” Eastwood says.



Student photos taken during the 2019-2020 academic year

“Our Grade 12s will sit and talk with the Grade 7s, they will mentor and guide them and I don’t think that happens in a lot of other high schools.”

Students are also encouraged to be curious and ask questions.

“We hear from our alumni who come back and say that’s one of the things that has really helped them to adapt to university, that they’re in a lecture hall of 500 students and they have no problem putting up their hand and asking questions,” Eastwood says.

“I think that takes a lot of confidence, that it’s something they were encouraged and nurtured to do while at TMS.”

TMS aspires for their students to develop three mindsets:

Positivity or the ability to look at things through a lens of hope and optimism

Resilience or the ability to take risks and be able to withstand challenges

Entrepreneurial Thinking or problem solving through the lens of innovation

TMS believes these mindsets will prepare students for an ever-changing world so they will be successful at university and for the jobs of the future.

COVID-19 shifted TMS programs online last March to June, but in-person classes have resumed for all grades, with modifications to keep students and staff safe.

LOWER SCHOOL
8569 Bayview Ave, Richmond Hill
905-889-6882 | tmschool.ca

TMS

UPPER SCHOOL
500 Elgin Mills Rd. East, Richmond Hill, Ontario
905-780-1002 | tmschool.ca



TRULY LOCAL BUSINESS

AUROPOL CREATIVE WINDOW DÉCOR
PERFECT DRAPERIES

By Kinjal Dagli Shah

The Pawlaczek do what they love and provide their customers with excellent service.

Auropol Creative Window Décor is a truly local business with its heart in the community. Window coverings are often a focal point in a room, and the company takes its job of creating the perfect draperies seriously.

Owners Dorota and Roman Pawlaczek were born in Poland and moved to Aurora in 1998. “This town is where we raised two beautiful children. It seemed like the perfect town for a growing family and it ended up being the best decision we have ever made,” said Dorota.

Her passion for sewing started at a young age, when she watched her mother create custom

clothing. “This led to my interest in design. Pretty soon, my love for fashion turned into a passion for creating beautiful window treatments. I started my business in 1999, and a few years later my husband joined me to take care of the logistical side of the company,” said Dorota, whose children Chris and Joanna are also fully involved in the business. “They are currently university students but have been helping us for many years.”

Auropol believes in listening to their clients and offering a truly custom approach to every customer. “We like to ask a lot of questions because it allows us to tailor the perfect window

treatment that fits all of the customer’s needs, whether they’re for sun control, privacy, or simply decorative,” explained Dorota. “After determining the client’s needs, we suggest an individual and personalized window treatment. We pay attention to detail and the finishing touches, making each drapery panel special and unique. We offer full service, from design, sewing, and installation.”

The company boasts of the largest fabric library north of Toronto. “To complete the perfect look, we offer huge selection of beautiful drapery hardware. We also make custom bench cushions, bedding and decorative pillows. We are mostly known for our custom draperies, but we also offer an extensive selection of

blinds and shades. We work closely with local, Canadian manufacturers to ensure that our clients get the best quality products that will last for years to come. All our window coverings could be automated and integrated with the smart homes systems,” said Dorota.

Dorota and Roman work closely with the designers, providing them with their own expertise in sewing and installation. “Our showroom is also a resource centre for designers, who come to our store in search of fabrics and hardware.”

When the Covid-19 closures were announced, small businesses like Auropol were deeply impacted. But because of the goodwill it has garnered over the years, Dorota and Roman were able to reopen in due time. “It was very



difficult to close our doors due to the pandemic and having to put all our projects on hold. Fortunately, our clients were very understanding, and we were able to reopen in a reasonable timeframe. Our clients were very happy

to see us reopening and together we are adapting to the new norm.”

As for the future, the Pawlaczek hope to continue to grow their business, do what they love and provide their customers with excellent service.

ALL THE RIGHT STUFF

AURORA TIRE AND WHEEL

EXPERTS IN CUSTOMER SERVICE

By Brian Lockhart

This is not your typical tire store.
Aurora Tire and Wheel are specialists in the industry
with experienced and knowledgeable technicians and
state of the art equipment designed for one thing – tires.

One of the largest tire stores in York Region, Aurora Tire and Wheel are Authorized dealers for such major tire brands as Michelin, Bridgestone, Blizzak, Firestone, Goodyear, Continental, BF Goodrich, Kumho and Nokian.

With over 8000 tires in stock, they can equip your vehicle with the rubber you need for safety, performance, style, and durability at VERY competitive prices!!

They are equipped to service all types of automobiles from small compact runabouts right up to luxury cars and rare high performance sports cars.

The staff at Aurora Tire and Wheel exceed the expectations of their customers when it comes to quality of service and quick and efficient tire installation.

When the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a time of adversity and challenges, company founder Jason Hyatt knew that people would have to continue driving.

While many companies closed their doors or reduced their service, Jason and his team decided to adapt to a challenging situation so their customers could still drive with confidence and know the store was there for them when needed.

By creating a plan to continue operating in time of adversity, Aurora Tire and Wheel



has improved their service to an even higher level of efficiency and customer satisfaction.

They developed a new plan which included appointment based service and drive-in convenience.

“The customer drives their car into the service bay, then out again,” Jason explained. “With this method we have no reason to have an employee getting into a customer’s car so the customer doesn’t have to worry about sanitizing the interior of the vehicle when they leave.”

The shop initially switched to appointment based service to address issues with restrictions regarding the opening of businesses to the public.

However, they found that by offering appointments to customers, they improved the efficiency of the shop and the system was very well received by customers who appreciated showing up on time and having their vehicle tended to as soon as they arrived.

“We offer a 30 minute turn-around time on appointments,” Jason said. “We’re ready to go when you arrive. New customers can’t believe how fast our service is.”

Even with the quick turn-around time, quality of work and service is never

sacrificed.

The store has invested heavily in state-of-the-art top notch equipment that is designed specifically for the tire industry.

In the shop there are top-of-the-line balancers, tire changers, nitrogen fill stations and torque wrenches.

They use a laser balancer that allows weights to be placed behind spokes or in specific locations to hide them when required.

As the seasons change, it is important that you have the right tires on your car or truck based on road conditions and temperature.

Aurora Tire and Wheel has the full compliment of seasonal tires and also offers tire storage for when it’s time to change your rubber to meet the needs of changing weather.

If you want to add some personality to your vehicle and customize your ride, they have a full range of custom wheels that will make your vehicle one-of-a-kind in its class.

Aurora Tire and Wheel provides one-stop convenience and the largest inventory and variety of tire brands and models in the region and they complete the job with outstanding customer service.



Conveniently located at 180 Wellington St. E, in Aurora, the shop serves Aurora and the surrounding area. You can visit on-line at www.auroratire.ca, or reach them by telephone at 905-727-8473.



FASHIONABLE • FUNCTIONAL

MR MENSWEAR

HELPING GENTLEMEN BUILD
THEIR WARDROBE

By Neil Moore

Helping you make the right clothing choices

Mike Rathke, owner of MR Menswear, has been helping gentlemen build fashionable and functional wardrobes for over 35 years

The store has all your necessities from clothing for formal events to business casual, weekend apparel, outerwear, and accessories.

In 1993, while living in Brampton, Mike was thinking of opening up an espresso bar in an old gas station. He and a real estate agent drove up from Brampton and looked at the old Petro Canada station on the corner of Yonge Street and Church Street.

Twenty years later, he moved into the exact location, which is now home

to a beautiful new building with ample parking – and a popular espresso machine available to MR Menswear’s flourishing clientele. Full circle.

“Aurora is a great little community,” said Mike, who has lived here with his wife and two daughters since 1996.

Indeed, Aurora may be known for its small-town friendliness, but the pace of doing business in this part of York Region is no less demanding than in other municipalities.

“In today’s business world, it is hard enough to find time for lunch, let alone setting aside the time to update, replace or even add to your wardrobe,” he

continued. So in 2002, Mike recognized the challenge many of his customers faced, and began offering wardrobe consultations.

Fast forward to 2020, and despite the pandemic, the service continues to thrive.

Not only are some clients too busy to hunt through racks of clothing, they are uncomfortable going out to shop. For their convenience and peace of mind, Mike continues to make house calls.

With masks and social distancing – of course.

For those who would rather browse his carefully curated selection of apparel and accessories, they can drop by the spacious showroom and try on a few pieces – under the guidance of one whose keen eye for men’s fashion will keep you looking sharp in the boardroom, or at your next Zoom meeting.

Mike’s goal, when he turned 25, was to open a men’s clothing boutique. He had been diagnosed with a cancerous brain tumour six years earlier, but after almost eight years of recovery, as well as 10 years back in the menswear business, he decided to go for the dream. MR Menswear has been in business since 2007.

As a businessman, he works hard to do his part in ensuring success stories for others. In addition to helping gentlemen look their best,

MR Menswear and Mike focus on the community in which he lives, and make donations to Southlake Regional Health Centre, the Stronach Regional Cancer Centre, the MS Society of Canada, and many other local charities.

In 2017, weeks after celebrating thirty-plus years, and bragging about how fortunate he was in beating “IT” at his annual fashion/ fundraiser event, he was diagnosed with cancer once again. When the community found out, they quickly spread the word to save “Mike’s treasure”. He and his family still can’t thank everyone enough.

Mike has become a valued member of the Aurora business community, and his message to “shop local” couldn’t ring more true than during this pandemic. He points out that it’s not only beneficial for small independents like MR Menswear, but keeping our dollars local helps ensure that we’ll have a more robust economy when we finally emerge from COVID-19.

In the meantime, drop by for a free espresso, and have a chat with one of Aurora’s best-dressed retailers.

15117 Yonge St. Aurora
Business Line - 905.713.1501
Direct Line - 905.392.6867
www.mrmenswear.ca





EARLY LEARNING ACADEMY FROM 0 - 6

By Kinjal Dagli Shah

Childventures offers an enriched curriculum that can be experienced at no other childcare centre.



In the midst of a pandemic, when children are facing disruptions in their learning, Childventures has come to the rescue of little ones. With established centres across the GTA, the Aurora centre is their latest one equipped with COVID-19 enhancements for complete safety. "Childventures has been in York region for 10 years now and we have had many parents commute from Aurora to our Richmond Hill or even Vaughan campus so that they could experience our programming. After hearing about the strength of the Aurora community and the type of care that was missing, it was clear that it was time for an expansion," said Krista, enrolment coordinator at Childventures.

With a focus on Montessori philosophies, Childventures Aurora has a unique curriculum for ages 0-6 years, divided into infant, toddler, preschool and kindergarten programs. "Childventures offers an enriched curriculum that can be experienced at no other childcare centre. Enhanced by Montessori, the curriculum fosters left and right brain learning to develop the whole child. Childventures also has world-class facilities which include an art studio, drama room, music room, computer lab and gym," explained Krista.

Especially at a time when social distancing is pertinent, the Childventures space is designed to allow for small group learning and yet, provide an opportunity for children to experience different creative spaces throughout the day. With an onsite chef that can accommodate any dietary restrictions, qualified educators and a loving environment, children are set up for success. "Every Childventures location truly feels like a family. Team members and parents are in continuous communication throughout the day and we all work together to ensure the best possible experience for each child that walks through our doors. The Aurora community has been warm and welcoming. The sense of community in Aurora is truly heartwarming

and we are confident that Childventures will fit right in."

In a challenging year, Childventures has implemented healthy and safety protocols that not only meet but go beyond the guidelines. "We have spared no expense to protect the health and safety of our team and students. Upon arrival, children and parents will go through a screening process, including a temperature check.

Parents will then drop their child off with one of our designated runners that will bring them down to their classroom to change their shoes and wash their hands once entering the classroom," pointed out Krista, adding that all team members are required to wear a mask and face shield or goggles throughout the day, while their screeners are in full PPE while screening families. Materials are spread throughout each room to promote physical distancing.

An added benefit of following a Montessori

curriculum meant that Childventures already had an emphasis on individual learning, making it easier to practice social distancing. "Many of our materials were already in place to facilitate independent and small group learning. This has meant that we have not had to compromise on children's development. There are also state-of-the-art air filtrations units in every room to remove bacteria in the air. Other technology enhancements are utilized to monitor contact tracing, communications, and virtual tours," said Krista.

The centre has also hired environment facilitators to maintain cleanliness and sanitization levels. "These enhancements have been working seamlessly in all 8 of our campuses to ensure minimal impact to our program and children's experience," Krista explained.

The Aurora centre being the newest addition, is hoping to build long lasting relationships with local families. While their creatively structured environment introduces children to numbers, science, French, music, computers, fine motor development, self-care skills and more, teachers take on the role of the facilitator and encourage children to take the lead in their own learning. After all, a true partnership begins with love and trust.

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www.childventures.ca

LEXIE BADALI

HOW 2020 HAS CHANGED THE REAL ESTATE MARKET FOREVER



When we rang in January 1st 2020 no one could have predicted we would essentially be sequestered in our homes and have no plans to travel for much of the year. Local realtor Lexie Badali states that the response to the global pandemic in Canada has changed the housing market forever. She says the obvious changes are the new protocols when selling and buying - risks of open houses, contact tracing, masks, hand sanitizer, health declarations and electronic signatures to name a few. What is most interesting is the change in what buyers are looking for.

When buyers come to Lexie now they are looking for different attributes in a home. Location is still important however often the word "commute" is not entering into the conversation anymore. We have seen many companies move permanently to a "work from home" environment. This means that homes need a dedicated office space. Lexie says this doesn't necessarily mean a traditional separate office on the main floor that you may only see in a very large home. It can be creatively using spare bedrooms, a formal living, dining room or basement areas. What was once an awkward nook in a home is now seen as the perfect location for a desk. Lexie's approach to address "where is my office going to go?" is to add a desk in an appropriate location when staging a home for sale.

Lexie has found that buyers are also looking for a larger yard with inviting outdoor spaces, cozy patios, decks and she is seeing a renewed interest in homes with pools. Outdoor entertaining is the new reality and living in Canada we need to stretch that outdoor season as long as possible. Indoors, kitchens have always been a very important selling feature now they are even more front and center with the renewed trend in home cooking - especially baking! Buyers are now looking for the larger suburban home again. If we are going to be safest at home for the foreseeable future then buyers want the space and layout to be comfortable in.

Lexie agrees with the Toronto Real Estate Board's view that consumer confidence will continue to improve as people gradually go back to work and a growing number of people will look to take advantage of current very low borrowing costs to buy a home. If you have been thinking of making a move, She also states that this is an excellent time to sell your current home as inventory is relatively low and demand is high, "I have many clients who have sold their homes and moved to be closer to family. COVID has pushed many homeowners to re-evaluate their priorities and earlier retirement or a lifestyle change are recurring themes for the motivation to relocate"



Your home work space doesn't have to be a traditional office that you may see on the main floor of a very large home. You can carve out a little nook anywhere; consider an unused area of a master bedroom, a spare bedroom, formal living / dining room, or basement area.

If you are looking to speak with a qualified experienced realtor with an award winning track record , reach out to Lexie, she has a wealth of knowledge in all areas of residential real estate.

B
LEXIE BADALI

Lexie can be reached at lexieb@royallepage.ca
289-221-1183.

TWENTY-EIGHT YEARS

BACKYARD POOL & SPA

MORE THAN JUST A POOL BUSINESS

By Brock Weir

"Staycations are our biggest thing right now," says Mr. Smith.

"In fact, it has gone through the roof and we're very fortunate."

Backyard Pool & Spa prides itself on being open for business twelve months of the year – but, in the midst of a global pandemic, you have to be flexible.

Thanks to some quick thinking, recalibration and going the extra mile for loyal customers of nearly 30 years, the store, located at Edward Street and Vata Court, has successfully carried on hardly missing a beat.

For 28 years, customers have come into Backyard Pool & Spa for all their outdoor needs, but they had to stay outside, at least for a little while, as the business pivoted towards curbside pickup, a model which ultimately proved to be a great success.

"On March 17, our store voluntarily closed," explains Backyard's Don Smith. "We didn't have to close right away, but we were one of the leaders in our industry that went right to curbside and free delivery. We provided free delivery basically in York Region no matter the amount you were getting from us and we didn't have to lay anyone off. This was a big key to our success over this very trying time."

Backyard's Richard West says at any one time the metal shelves they installed outside their business to handle curbside were regularly packed with 30 orders at a time, each of which were alphabetized to help customers find their purchases. In fact, they had to add an extra phone line just to handle the volume of calls they were receiving.

During this process, Mr. Smith says customers were both patient and appreciative of their new services, something for which they express gratitude, all of which was executed without a business playbook in these unprecedented times.

With safety measures in place, Backyard Pool & Spa re-opened their doors on June 11. The cancelling of the local Home Shows could have cost new customers, but what they found, however, was the slack being picked up by new clients planning staycations.

"Staycations are our biggest thing right now," says Mr. Smith. "In fact, it has gone through the roof and we're very fortunate."

Backyard Pool & Spa offers everything the "staycationer" needs, from a full line of Weber and Big Green Egg barbecues, to Yeti's high-end line of coolers, to new portable and inflatable kayaks and paddleboards, to the mainstays of hot tubs and swim spas, sales for which have been astronomical.

"We're not just a pool business; we bring in and offer things that aren't just pool and spa-related," says Mr. Smith. "Our foundation is not just to sell quality products but service and back that quality



product. I think over the last 28 years we have been in Aurora that is what we have grown our business around.

"We have a very experienced staff that have been here a long time, so it is not just the product, it's the service. It is a small-town hometown atmosphere. Aurora is known for that and we want to continue on with that tradition.

"Thanks again to all our customers and stay safe."

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905-713-2317 F: 905-713-2319
info@backyardpoolandspa.ca www.backyardpoolandspa.ca



NEW NORMAL

PICKERING COLLEGE

A LEGACY OF EXCELLENCE
IN EDUCATION

By Brian Lockhart

Adapting to Change

As a school known for inspiring its students to take on and overcome the challenges of life in academics, athletics, and on a personal level, Pickering College in Newmarket is now rising to the challenge of continuing a legacy of excellence in education during a time of global adversity.

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in many changes in the way our society conducts itself, and that altered way of interacting with others will be part of the “new normal” at educational institutions across the country.

The staff at Pickering College have been working diligently to create a learning environment that encourages students to challenge themselves and do their best work, as they would any other school year, while adhering to strict safety protocols to ensure the health and well-being of students and faculty at its Bayview Avenue campus.

This includes a new approach to learning in an environment designed to adhere to physical distancing measures while at the same time offering encouragement, social interaction, and fulfillment of learning objectives. PC has always had a strong focus on learning outdoors and the school has added two new outdoor learning spaces on campus this year.

Pickering College’s reopening plan is based on guidance issued by the Ontario Ministry of Health, Health Canada, Public Services Health and Safety Association, the World Health Organization, Toronto’s Hospital for Sick Children, the Ontario Ministry of Education, and York Region Public Health.

“To start the school year, we had groups of students come in for an orientation session prior to the start of classes,” explained Janet Downer, Assistant Head of School, Academics, at Pickering College. “It provided an opportunity for teachers to review new protocols and for students to feel comfortable before the start of the school year.”

While physical distancing for students begins as soon as they enter the school, there are additional precautions in place to ensure a bubble is created while in the facility, including staggered arrival times and entering through assigned doors. In the classrooms, desks are spaced far enough apart to ensure physical distancing during lessons.

“It is part of our continuous learning plan to create a system of class cohorts,” Ms. Downer explained. “We’re not mixing students at the Junior and Middle School level. Even at recess they will be with their own group. They will also have lunch with their own cohort so we can minimize contact with other students.”

In the Senior School, students are following a different format than in previous years.

“For our Senior School we are doing something completely different,” explained Ms. Downer. “We are offering quad-mesters, which is four terms, where they have two classes per day. The students have those two classes each day for three hours – one in the morning and one in the afternoon. After 41 days they will complete their final assessment, then move on to the next two classes.”

Pickering College is dedicated to providing continuous learning while facing the challenges of conducting school activities during a global pandemic. Staff has

spent several months planning for the return to school and have kept students and parents informed of changes and new strategies to keep current with emerging studies and public health information.

“Over the summer we worked on a plan called Continuous Learning at Pickering College,” Ms. Downer said. “In that plan we outlined what the return to school would look like in response to the COVID-19 pandemic at each level, in Junior, Middle, and Senior School. The plan explains what a student can expect, what the typical schedule might be, and if the school has to move to learning online, what that looks like. First and foremost, many parents wanted to know about the safety protocols in place.”

Due to the inherent risk of spreading infection through contact in certain academic courses, some programs will take a novel approach to teaching and learning this year.

Music classes, for example, have a high risk of virus transmission due to singing or blowing into an instrument. Students will be able to continue with lessons but will receive instruction and feedback on their singing and playing technique through live online observations and digitally submitted musical pieces. In addition, community-building activities such as Morning Meeting will continue but have moved online so that students can participate while remaining in their cohort.

For international students, and those who attend Pickering College a considerable distance from home, Peter Sturup, Head of School, said boarding facilities are open and operating. He reassured students and parents of the comprehensive safety plan in place which can be altered or adjusted as the need arises.

In a message to parents this summer, he said, “I want to assure you that it is our intention for school to begin in person in September for all students. This also means that it is our intention to open boarding to all students who can attend, and that boarding will remain open for all long weekends and school holidays, including Christmas Break and March Break.”

Pickering College has a large contingent of international students representing countries around the world and accounting for about 25 per cent of the total student body.

Returning boarding students were required to self-isolate for a period of 14 days, mandated by the Emergency Order under the Quarantine Act. During this time in isolation, they were supervised by Pickering College staff and participated in a virtual boarding orientation and virtual team-building activities.

Pickering College was founded in 1842 as a Quaker school and established in Newmarket in 1909. The mission of the school is to instill in each individual the ability and responsibility to make the world greater, better, and more beautiful than they discovered it.

To this day, the school adheres to its original Quaker values and celebrates diversity in all aspects of the school, which is reflected in its Global Leadership Program and its commitment to a co-educational environment.

As Pickering College looks forward to the new school year, the school’s dedicated staff will ensure students’ education will not be interrupted while maintaining a focus on academic excellence, character, leadership development, and safety.



PICKERING COLLEGE

Learning For Life. Creating The Future.

