

Businesses and party-goers gearing up for Sunday's Aurora Street Festival

By Brock Weir

Local businesses are loading up and getting ready to take over Yonge Street this Sunday for the Annual Aurora Chamber Street Festival and tens of thousands of people are expected to descend on the main street for a day of good shopping, great food, and fun entertainment.

All of this gets underway at 11 a.m. until 5 p.m., with over 500 vendors stretching down Yonge from Wellington Street in the north to Murray Drive in the south, featuring everything from antiques, to clothes, to books, and to household gadgets you never knew you couldn't live without.

It's less than a week away, and we're busy planning, getting all of the vendors their information and lots of last minute vendors who are now checking the weather, seeing that it is looking great, and wanting to get into the festival, says Sandra Watson of the Aurora Chamber of Commerce. As you can imagine, for an event of this proportion, it does require lots of hands and feet on deck and I have probably got about 36 volunteers lined up. We have got lots of our regular volunteers who continue to come out and help us mark the street and at this time of year we always have lots of students who are trying to get some hours in. We have lots of students who are helping as well.

Among the many notable vendors this year will be Van Bakel Nursery, which will be stationed across from the Aurora Public Library, featuring myriad plants and vegetables available and ready for the garden.

The Aurora Public Library itself will be on hand with hundreds of books at great prices.

NewMakeIt, STEM Minds and MaxTech, the robotics team from St. Maximilian Kolbe Catholic High School, will fill a stretch of Yonge Street showcasing all the new and innovative tools, products and programs available for tech-savvy individuals young and old.

Sports groups including Aurora FC, Aurora Family Martial Arts, Ducks Swimming, the Central York Girls Hockey club, Evolution Gymnastics, Total Tennis and the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame, will make Yonge and Mosley an intersection of athletics while, further south, Fearless MMA will be providing demonstrations throughout the day in front of Graystones Restaurant.

We're thrilled to bring back two live stages, adds Ms. Watson. One will be at the north end of Church Street, and that will feature Patty McLaughlin and friends. At the south end, at Brookland, is the Coyotes. They are always a fan favourite band and both bands are going to be performing throughout most of the day. They will be taking some short breaks, but they will be on stage for most of the day, with some nice easy-listening music. We also have a number of buskers that will be throughout the festival. One of our all-time favourites is the Fire Guy. He is doing four shows and he does his performance at the south end stage at Brookland. He is a fan favourite for young and old. He really gets the crowd going with his fire tricks and arm scooters, wheeling around juggling fire. He's just awesome.

We have lots of our Aurora Chamber members who love to come out to the Festival and promote their businesses, businesses that are along that Yonge Street corridor [have] the perfect opportunity to be visible in front of their store or business, even if they are not normally open on a Sunday. There are lots of unique businesses that come from as far away as Kitchener and Ottawa that have for the last number of years. In addition to those vendors, there are lots of representatives from local service clubs and sports teams that will definitely be out there promoting their business and activity.

The Aurora Street Festival rolls on rain or shine and there is no cost for admission and parking is free. Many vendors have prizes in store, as well as free giveaways and, Ms. Watson adds, no matter your taste buds, you can purchase just about everything from deep fried squid, to French crepes, to corn on the cob and Caribbean cuisine.

I love watching the families with young children who have their faces painted, they have balloons in their hands, they have a mittful of cotton candy and you can tell they have really enjoyed the day, says Ms. Watson of her favourite scenes year after year.

The Aurora Chamber Street Festival is made possible by presenting sponsor Villanova College, community sponsor Meridian Credit Union, friends of the festival Magna International and the Town of Aurora, and entertainment sponsor Goodlife Fitness.