

Creepy Tours will continue to chill through the winter months

For more than a decade, the spookier side of Aurora has been a specialty for local historian David Heard and hundreds have heard the tales on his Aurora Spirt Walk tour.

The annual series of tours, which brings participants' toes right up to the line of the spirit realm, is set to wrap this week in the lead-up to Halloween, but that won't be the end of the story.

In virtual and hybrid formats, the tours are set to continue into the winter in partnership with businesses in the Town's Historic Downtown Core.

?It has been years and years of collecting stories, seeing how they fit, making it like street theatre, and I wanted the tour to be very unique, [a combination] of history, mystery, haunts ? and people coming away feeling motivated that they experienced something and were looking at things differently.

?I am overwhelmed by the response. I could never have imagined that people were interested about Aurora's history and the unique stories that you can spin with a bit of creepy ghost stories. People have been coming a little bit of a distance to participate and the most wonderful thing is that some of the businesses in the downtown are reporting back to me that some of the guests who have been on the tours, especially the ones that were at the first of the month [have stuck around] and supported local businesses in the downtown, whether it be making a purchase or eating in one of the restaurants.?

This relationship will continue to thrive in the next few months as Heard looks to collaborate and partner with area businesses.

The fun will begin Saturday, February 11 at the Royal Rose Gallery, the art space in the former Caruso's building just south of Yonge and Wellington which celebrated its first anniversary this fall, with a virtual image presentation and short walk.

A month later, on Saturday, March 11, the spookiness will be a strictly indoor affair with ghost stories told against the backdrop of historic Aurora imagery from the last half of the 19th century and the early 20th century.

Both evenings will take place at 7.30 p.m.

?Because of the interest of merchants in the downtown, a couple of them have expressed interest on?actually opening up their business so I can come in and tell stories in their locations,? he says. ?On February 11, I will be doing an indoor presentation of the ghost tour with a brief walking tour in the downtown. It will be chilly, but that's the whole idea: a very creepy, chilly tour. The wonderful part of this is it will be accessible, the facility is accessible, people will be able to come in and sit down in an intimate setting where I will present a tour in front of a large screen and for the first time they will see many historic images in our downtown core on a big screen and some of them have never been seen before.

?The March 11 will be a virtual only, so there will not be a walk. The whole presentation will be indoor with no walking. It will be 100 per cent accessible to everyone to enjoy the great Aurora history, the wonderful ghost stories.?

Adding to the magic of the walking tours and the evenings ahead is all proceeds will be donated to the Aurora Food Pantry.

Each year's efforts raise an average of \$1,600 for the local food bank and this year's totals are set to handily surpass that.

?If I can get people to come and listen to me just tell some stories about our local history, and they are supporting our local citizens who need some help? the businesses are benefiting and the community is benefiting, we all win,? says Heard, who lost two close family members in the last 12 months.

?To all the people who have kept me busy designing this tour and showing their appreciation, they have been my therapy, they have been giving me something to look forward to. They have gotten me through probably the worst period of my life. I think Aurora is a cool place and people want to come back. When they are, they are supporting the downtown.?

For more information about this week's Spirit Walk and future events, visit creepytours.com.

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter