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THE AUROREDAN

Aurora's Community Newspaper

Vol. 25 No. 14 905-727-3300

TheAuroran.com

FREE

Week of January 11, 2024



SERVING UP A FRESH, NEW YEAR – Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese and Mayor Tom Mrakas spent Saturday morning cooking up a fresh start to 2024, helping host a pancake breakfast at the Aurora Family Leisure Complex as part of the annual Mayor & Council's New Year's Levee. Pictured here grabbing breakfast on January 6 was Ranato. For more on this year's celebration, see Page 14.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

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Council calls for action amid global "escalation" of terrorism and unrest

BY BROCK WEIR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Council has called for action amid a global "escalation" of terrorism and unrest around the world, which has spurred "inciteful" actions within our own borders.

Before the holiday, Aurora lawmakers unanimously approved a motion from Ward 2 Councillor Rachel Gilliland acknowledging "residents in the

community have expressed feelings of uncertainty and safety concerns" due to the situation while also condemning "all acts of terror and violence resulting in loss of life and injury."

The motion also calls on the Town to press all levels of government to make the same acknowledgement and "look to strengthening their available tools to deny inciteful speech that encourages violent extremists the ability to publicly manipulate, advocate, and incite

violence or physical harm to another human being, whether it be online or in person."

Further, the motion "encourages" members of the community, including "diverse local leaders...to promote peace, healing, and understanding during this difficult time."

"Inciteful speech is knowingly being utilized to create division, manipulation and spread misinformation, which

Continued on page 17



A CLASSIC TALE OF MURDER – Beginning this Thursday, January 11, Belgian detective Hercule Poirot is on the case as Theatre Aurora presents Murder on the Orient Express, a dramatic adaptation by Ken Ludwig of Agatha Christie's ever-popular whodunnit. For more, see Pages 15 and 18.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

Black History Month events will centre on "Forward Together & Forward for All"

BY BROCK WEIR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

No one can move forward alone, and this is the theme the Aurora Black Community (ABC) Association has picked to guide their Black History Month programs next month and throughout 2024.

Planning is well underway for a gala kick-off for Black History Month with volunteers set to come together at a

Continued on page 3

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Why M&M Food Market Is THE Franchise to Own in 2024



The new year is a time for reflection. We gather with friends and family, taking a moment to share in each other's success, recognize well-earned accomplishments, and celebrate the milestones achieved over the past year.

But the new year is also a time to look forward. It's a chance to set new goals, take on new challenges, and start down the path toward something different.

As we turn the calendar to 2024, M&M Food Market is also looking ahead. While other businesses turn inwards, M&M Food Market sees opportunities for growth and expansion to new communities and previously untapped markets across Canada.

Today, M&M Food Market is seeking passionate Franchise Partners who believe in the brand and want to grow along with it. For a limited time, M&M Food Market is offering incentives totaling up to 50 percent of the build cost of a new store in Aurora - Wellington.

Now is the time to make that long-awaited career change, add a new income for your family, and build a business of your very own. Now is the time to become an M&M Food Market Franchise Partner in Aurora - Wellington.

A Proven Business Built on Innovation

Since 1980, M&M has been a trusted and well-recognized Canadian brand. Through economic downturns, changing consumer tastes, and an increasingly competitive retail environment, M&M Food Market has constantly evolved to become Canada's largest frozen food retailer.

M&M Food Market is a brand built on innovation. Dedicated teams continuously develop new products, introduce contemporary flavours, and improve the quality of ingredients. The need to innovate means delivering on the Real Food for Real Life promise by providing more than 500 products absolutely free from artificial colours, flavours, or sweeteners.

It also means finding new ways to enhance the nutritional value of products and improve the sustainability of the ingredients, packaging, and retail locations. And it means offering a wide range of options that meet the dietary needs of all customers.

It's with this approach to growth and innovation that M&M Food Market is investing in the brand and building for the future. Through a proven business model, M&M Food Market Franchise Partners can own their own business while gaining the support, training, and experience of a beloved Canadian retailer.

Part of the Local Community

M&M Food Market is more than just a store. Locally owned and operated Franchise Partners are embedded in their communities. Franchise Partners are hands-on, working in the store on a day-to-day basis. They know their customers, take part in local events, support community causes, and bring people together over food and conversation.

New-build stores offer a modern design that makes it easy for customers to browse, discover new products, and get personalized recommendations from highly trained Meal Advisors. For those who prefer to shop online, M&M Food Market has developed a new website that enables flexible fulfillment such as in-store pickup, curbside pickup, and delivery.

As food prices continue to increase, M&M Food Market offers Canadian families a beautiful, restaurant-quality meal at an affordable price, right in the comfort of their own home.

Become an M&M Food Market Franchise Partner

M&M Food Market offers Franchise Partners a proven, flexible, and resilient business opportunity with less variability and risk than other industries with similar investment requirements.

It's an ideal franchise for professionals seeking a career change, families looking for a new income opportunity, and business owners who want the support and fine-tuned procedures of a proven brand.

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M&M Food Market is expanding to new markets across Canada, including including a new store opportunity in Aurora - Wellington. If you're ready to own your own business and invest in your future, now is the time to consider an M&M Food Market franchise.

For more information, please contact Sebastien Cardozo, Manager, Franchising, sebastienc@mnmfoodmarket.com or 416-529-3281.



Black History Month goes beyond February with “Forward Together & Forward for All” theme

From page 1

meeting this Friday to go over final details.

The theme of “Forward Together & Forward for All” builds upon last year’s mantra of Opening Doors, which was showcased at the ABC’s inaugural Black History Month gala last year.

The second-annual Gala will take place Saturday, February 3, at the Salvation Army’s Northridge Community Church, located on Leslie Street, just north of Wellington.

“The topic of ‘Forward Together & Forward for All’ is important because we can’t move forward alone,” says Phiona Durrant, President & Founder of ABC. “Even though it has been said so many times already, the bottom line is we’re celebrating Canadian history and part of our Canadian history is Black history and the contribution of the Black community to this country.”

No one who is considering purchasing a ticket for the gala should ask themselves, “Do I belong?” she notes, noting that everybody, regardless of background, has an active role to play.

“We don’t celebrate Black history because there is racism; we celebrate it because it is culture, representation and part of our history of who we are as Canadians,” says Durrant. “We celebrate that part of our diversity of what made Canada. Change comes when we’re moving together and the spirit of collaboration is what we need. We have to just move together and be interested in trying something and seeing what we can do. This event is going to be better because everyone is coming together; it’s a call for people to attend, engage and be a part of a community that values inclusivity and embraces strength that we can find in this already beautiful Town of Aurora that is growing and rich in its diversity.”

This type of engagement is key for the ABC going forward into 2024.

While last year’s Black History commemorations focused largely on events in February, this year they are focusing primarily on the gala for Black History Month itself while spreading their signature events over several months to achieve maximum reach.

Following the gala, winter programs will include Diversity on the Ice, an annual initiative to introduce even more families to skating in an inclusive environment.

Springtime programming from the Aurora Black Community Association will be a special film screening at the Aurora Cineplex Odeon in conjunction with the Aurora Film Circuit, a special Mother’s Day event in May, and a large-scale event in August to mark Emancipation Day, which will include not only a celebration of the freedom this day represents but a showcase of international sports, including cricket and netball.

“We’re spreading things out so people can get used to the engagement,” says



Crowds gathered at Town Hall last year to raise the Pan-African flag to mark the start of Black History Month 2023. This year, the Aurora Black Community Association and partners are planning an expansive program that will carry Black History well-beyond February. **File Photo**

Durrant. “We haven’t been able to do as much because it does take money, it does take time, and putting everything aside to invest in this. This is volunteer work, so now we’re working on how we can get more people on board.”

The ABC is also hoping to bring aboard more local businesses with making these Black History, diversity, and inclusion events possible.


“There has to be something in your heart,” says Durrant on businesses that might want to step forward as sponsors. “There are a lot of virtue signals, but the work that I align myself with, people have to be personally invested in wanting to see their community better.”

As an example, Durrant points to how one previous sponsorship of \$1,000 from a local dental office went towards sponsoring a local youth build his business.

“He is going to come and share his story at the gala this year as, because of that business, he made his first \$10,000 this summer because the business sponsor gave him that [sponsorship] to incorporate and he felt encouraged and supported. They are not just putting money behind something; these are real lives they are touching.

“People have to be convicted in their heart to want to see better, to want to just not do the status quo and do what is right by making their community a place where everybody can belong. A lot of times we see the same organizations sponsoring the same thing year after year.”

For more information on the upcoming gala, including ticket information, and the whole slate of 2024 events planned by the Aurora Black Community Association and its partners, visit www.aurorablackcommunity.com.



TOWN OF AURORA
PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING

On Tuesday, February 6, 2024, Aurora Town Council will hold a public meeting, pursuant to section 12 of the Development Charges Act, 1997, as amended, to present and obtain public input on the municipality’s proposed development charges (D.C.) by-law and underlying background study.

All interested parties are invited to attend the Public Meeting of Council and make representations relating to the proposed D.C. by-law and background study.

Tuesday, February 6, 2024
6:00 p.m.
Aurora Town Hall, Council Chambers
100 John West Way, Aurora, ON

The background study will be available online at aurora.ca as of January 23, 2024. Copies of the proposed D.C. by-law and the background study are also available by request to OurTownBudget@aurora.ca. Interested persons may express their comments at the public meeting or in writing, addressed to the municipal Clerk, at the above address prior to February 6.

aurora.ca/publicnotices

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Holiday Heroes program a huge success in 2023

York Regional Police would like to thank members of the community, donors, volunteers and corporate sponsors for their generosity and hard work which helped to make the 2023 Holiday Heroes campaign a big success.

Beginning in mid-November, generous donations of money, toys, food and clothing were collected to be distributed to those in need in the community through our partners at the Salvation Army and Victims Services of York Region.

Cash donations alone totalled more than \$100,000.

York Regional Police works closely with Victim Services of York Region and the York Region Centre for Community Safety to deliver the donations to pre-identified families who have been victimized by crime, including intimate partner violence.

“Partnerships with these organizations, along with corporate sponsors, donors and volunteers are essential to making this campaign grow year-over-year,” said York Regional Police Chief Jim MacSween.

The donations are collected and organized at York Regional Police headquarters by dozens of volunteers, who work hard for more than 1,000 hours collectively each year. Their efforts allow Holiday Heroes to help support around 3,000 families each year. York Regional Police is thankful to the more than 50 schools, 150 businesses and hundreds of private donors who contribute to the Holiday Heroes campaign each year.

The search for holiday heroes goes on long after the snow has melted. Consider donating in the future with your family, or at your workplace. Learn more about sponsorship opportunities at yrp.ca/HolidayHeroes or by sending an inquiry to holidayheroes@yrp.ca.

Constable Lisa Moskaluk
York Regional Police

Membership time for the Arboretum

January is membership month so it is time to renew your membership or sign up to become a new member of the Aurora Community Arboretum.

Our annual membership fee is only \$20 and these funds are used to purchase new trees and tools.

If you wish to become a new member, please visit our website www.auroraarboretum.ca and complete the “Become a Member” in the “Participate” section.

For our current members, you may renew your membership by paying by e-transfer at treasureraca79@gmail.com

If you have already renewed your 2024 membership, we thank you so much!

And please add April 20, at 2 p.m., to your calendar. This is our Open House and AGM for 2024. Further information will be sent closer to the date.

Nancee Webb
Aurora Community Arboretum

THE AURORAN

www.TheAuroran.com



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CORRECTION & ANNOUNCEMENT

Last week’s article, “Graduating artists will have more opportunities than ever to share vision at MCOYA” stated the wrong start date for the 2024 Mayor’s Celebration of Youth Art. The show opens at the Aurora Cultural Centre’s temporary Town Hall gallery space on February 10. Additionally, since last week’s article, the exhibition’s run has been extended to Saturday, April 20.

Machell’s Corners



Practical skills and practical regrets

I consider myself lucky to have spent my formative years in a time where what we consider to be “gender norms” were losing their foothold in our everyday lives.

Both of my parents worked outside the home, albeit in very different sectors. For a time, my father’s business partner was a woman who was a power in the industry. On the flipside of the coin, in my mother’s profession, in the dental realm, it wasn’t too far out of the ordinary to have roles that were, and perhaps still are, rightly or wrongly, viewed as female jobs – dental assistants, hygienists, etc. – filled by someone of another gender.

My brother, who is ten years my senior, went through elementary school and high school where jobs, occupations, and professions, were still sometimes gendered and it was still considered a bit unusual if a female student aspired to be, for the sake of argument, a lawyer or doctor, with more domestic goals somewhat secondary.

In short, a lot changed in the decade between us.

In my elementary and secondary school experience, this gender divide seemed almost non-existent, at least on the surface. Regardless of gender, people often had the same hopes and dreams when it came to their lives and careers. One of the few things that could get between them and their dreams was themselves.

Possibilities were practically endless, but early on in my high school experience I was quickly brought down to earth with the realization that reports of the divide’s demise had been greatly exaggerated.

I consider myself, in most cases, to be a practical and pragmatic person so, when looking at different courses and electives I could take at a time, family studies, previously known as home economics, seemed to dovetail perfectly.

Not necessarily living with a paternal instinct, carrying around a sack of flour at all hours as if it was a child, or one of those strange humanoid baby dolls that monitor how well (or not) you take care of it to get a taste of the realities of hands-on fatherhood was not necessarily on my radar. Rather, I thought some time learning the ins and outs on how to prepare meals, repair things around the home, and so forth, were both well worth my time and valuable transferable skills.

Unfortunately, my dad didn’t share my point of view and was just short of



BROCK’S BANTER

Brock Weir

aghast at my choice.

Why would I take a family studies course, he asked in just about as many words, when there were a bevy of more “practical” choices out there that would help me get ahead in business?

Despite this conversation, which happened more than once, I held my ground as the start of the school year approached.

And then it arrived.

When I confidently went into my first Family Studies class, I was greeted by a room of my female peers, punctuated by just one other male in the room.

Maybe the seeds of doubt planted at home finally germinated when I strode into that environment, maybe it was another factor, but I felt very out of place and ultimately came up with a few excuses to switch out of that class in favour of the oh-so-exciting world of Information Technology.

So, instead of practical skills I would likely use in my everyday life, I learned how to use a web-browser (it was a different time), a word processor, and touch-typing – all things that feel, in retrospect, skills we pick up by doing anyway, particularly in world where such skills are necessary, unavoidable, and picked up by people younger and younger with each passing year.

Somehow, I think the gentleman who was brave enough to stay in the Family Studies class came out ahead.

Take, for instance, a story published by the CBC on January 1 by Brandie Weikle called, “Loss of cooking skills has hurt our ability to adapt to rising food prices, experts say.”

Cooking skills, its argued, while not a magic bullet, would go a long way to make the cost-of-living crisis a bit less of a challenge – and every little bit helps.

“We are less able to cook than we were 30 or 40 years ago, and so it’s much more difficult for us to adapt our diet,” Mike von Massow, an associated professor at the University of Guelph,

told the reporter. “If I am not able to prepare beans or lentils, then it is difficult for me to make that adjustment.”

“During the pandemic, Canadians did more cooking at home, making meals themselves when they couldn’t dine out at restaurants or pick up food court meals at work,” the article continues. “But the question is, did they cook the variety of things they might have?” said von Massow. “All of us have sort of a core three or four go-to recipes. [But] are you able to adapt those recipes as the ingredients that you use become more expensive?”

“A report from Dalhousie University’s Faculty of Agriculture in February 2021 found that only 35 per cent of Canadians surveyed learned at least one new recipe between the start of the pandemic and January 2021. Von Massow said it’s not just how often we cook that matters. ‘It’s the ability to expand the range of things we can cook so that we can adjust to some of these high prices.’

“Some schools have excellent culinary programs, but they’re optional – and that’s had a big impact on cooking skills, [said Von Massow]. Marilyn Smith, a professional home economist and food writer based in Toronto echoes that sentiment. ‘I believe that when they made...home ec not mandatory anymore, that cooking literacy started to decline.’”

I’d wager it’s not just cooking literacy that started to decline, but also home improvement and tailoring skills that gave us the historical wherewithal to save a bit of money everywhere from making quick fixes around the house ourselves to getting an extra mile or two out of a pair of socks through the increasingly lost art of darning.

Much has been made of the Provincial Government’s efforts to emphasise more practical math skills in schools, such as budgeting, in addition to but not at the expense of more abstract mathematical concepts – and rightly so; but, in today’s world, literacy extends far beyond the written word and numbers on a page.

Household literacy, particularly during this challenging time for all of us, and even media literacy are just as important and should be emphasized the same way – regardless of how practical they might seem at the time, or any ridiculous stigma these fields might still weather today.

And if it doesn’t happen in the schools, who is willing to step up to help fill the gap – and pick up the slack?

THE AURORAN

Aurora’s Community Newspaper

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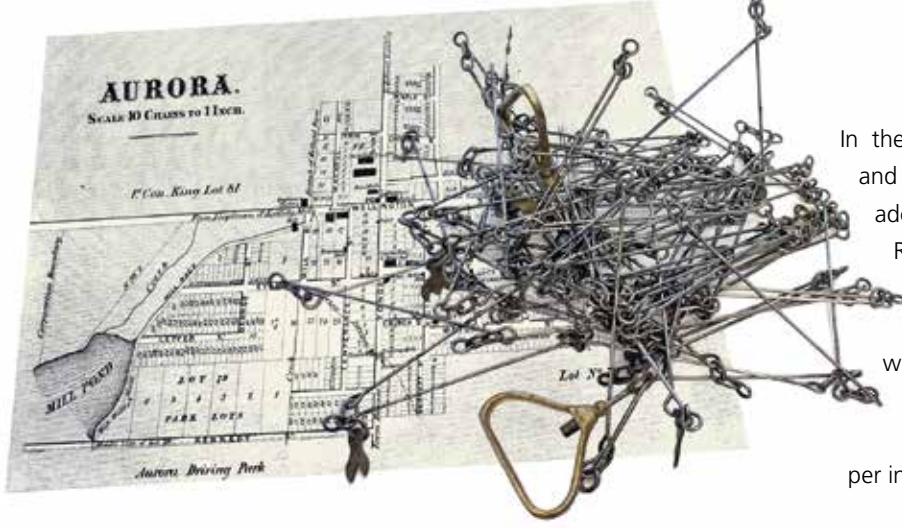
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The Aurora Museum & Archives is measuring ...Unfettered by the Metre



In the past, units of distance and weight varied between locales and populations until our modern standards achieved widespread adoption. Two old units that survived into 20th century use are the Rod and the Chain. This 19th century Chesterman's surveying Chain (988.38.17) is 66 feet long – 100 links of 201mm, making up four Rods of 25 links each (5.03m). These chains were especially useful in surveying farmland, with 10 to a furlong, 80 to a mile, and 10 square chains to one acre in area. The above map, published in 1878, is scaled at 10 chains (660 feet) per inch. A quantifiable link to the past!



Time Travellers Diary

By **Alessandra Falzone**
 Museum Intern,
 Aurora Museum & Archives

Ghosts of Winters Past

I walked through Town trying to find a puddle for my next adventure – the one drawback of puddle travel is that they tend to freeze in the winter. I put those thoughts aside and noticed a brand-new museum exhibition at the Royal Rose Art Gallery, so I stopped in to check out the displays.

I walked through the gallery and toured the octagonal museum display, when one photograph caught my eye: it was of a parade heading down Yonge Street in 1951. As I stepped near, I suddenly felt like I was being pulled in even closer to the photo. I leaned into the feeling and suddenly I was back in time, having somersaulted right onto the road in front of the lead float!

I jumped out of the way before the slow-moving but enormous float made me into one of T.C.'s Burgers. I clambered onto the curb and only then realized that I had been transported into the photograph.

Around me, the crowds were laughing and merry, shouting and waving enthusiastically as the cars and floats crawled past. Dusting myself off, I realized that I was right across the street from Mary's Fruit Store. Mary was Antonio Caruso's daughter who took over the family business after her father's retirement. The store eventually became Royal Rose Gallery, the very place from which I had time travelled!

The feeling of warmth and connection surrounded me, Aurorans now and then continuing to celebrate their present and history.

As quickly as I arrived, I was again whooshed through time. I was back at Royal Rose and hungry for further adventure. I continued around the display and saw a wonderful photo that seemed to be a "selfie" – teenage girls were huddled around a camera, all tucked into the frame and bundled up fashionably. I felt that familiar pulling feeling and...WHOOSH! I landed with a thud on my backside...that one hurt!

I was behind the girls as they huddled around the photographer, giggling as they tried to hold their poses, bundled up and ready for winter fun – not so different from today.

They each carried skates and must have been off to the indoor rink that stood between Yonge and Gurnett Streets. I saw other children sledding down snow drifts and marching back up the hill again, a Sisyphean cycle of work and fun. Looking around, I saw men shoveling the sidewalks into enormous snowbanks along the road. I noted how much more snow there was 100 years ago!

Lost in the scenery, I was again flung back to the present.

For my last adventure, I chose to look at the marvelous New Year's cards. One, lithographed with golden bells and bright red string, had all the trappings of a great early-20th century example.

I was pulled in immediately and landed in a humble room with a woman writing away at a dimly lit table. I hovered over her and knew this was Miss Ella Copson, daughter of two local farmers, writing back to her cousin in Chicago. These sweet connecting acts of tradition make the spirit of the season continue, even after we all become ghosts in the pages of time.

Year in Review 2023



INSIDE AURORA

Scott Johnston

Once again it's time to look back on the past year in Aurora.

January

Local wildlife can now use the new underpass to safely bypass a local road, but due to the Town's commitment to build 8,000 new homes, there's nowhere for it to go.

February

Efforts to name the proposed mens' shelter The NIMBY Shelter do not appease residents who don't want it located in their neighbourhoods.

To make it even harder for Aurorans to find parking downtown, someone proposes moving Town Hall to Yonge Street.

March

Yonge Street celebrates a rare three-day stretch in which no lanes are closed for construction within the Town's borders.

It's both good and bad news for Aurorans when after a long winter, both temperatures and inflation hit double digits.

April

While developers fell hundreds of trees across Town in the name of progress, local beavers fell a dozen or so, and are declared a nuisance.

May

It's unlikely the Town will see its much-needed \$80M+ new Rec Complex in the

south end of Town anytime soon, when it can't even afford a shower for the single gym being added to the SARC.

June

Demonstrating the lack of playing surfaces in Town, pickleball games break out spontaneously on Yonge Street during the Street Festival.

July

As people finally start getting outside post COVID, they are forced back indoors by record-breaking forest fire smog and reduced air quality.

August

While most folks could probably use a strong drink while at Town Hall listening to Town budget deliberations, staff instead recommend selling alcohol at Town Park during the Concerts in the Park.

People who rely on social media for their news remain unaware of Meta's restrictions of postings from Canadian news sources, because Meta has restricted the stories that would educate the public on this issue.

September

Putting a scare into all tax paying, locally employing small business in Town, Council, with no justification other than a vague perception that

"there are too many", seeks to limit the number of cannabis shops in Aurora.

After 160 years in the print business, red ink on their bottom line forces the closure of the Aurora Banner.

October

The Town confirms that while health issues do make residents eligible for the windrow program, being sick of shovelling all the snow that the Town dumps at the end of one's driveway does not qualify as a medical condition.

It's announced that the opening of Town Square in 2024 will be a 28-day celebration – one day for each year since this project was first proposed.

November

The Mayor's first action with his Strong Mayor powers is to take back his statements from a year earlier that these powers were unnecessary, unneeded and that he was thankful they wouldn't come to Aurora.

During his annual visit Under the Stars, Santa once again turns down the Town's request for a new skateboard park.

December

While Santa prepares to slide down local chimneys, our local hockey team continues to slide down the standings.

Feel free to e-mail Scott at:
machellscorners@gmail.com



WELCOME TO LIBRARY LAND

By **Reccia Mandelcorn**

As we welcome in the New Year, APL will continue to build upon this success by hosting our first New Year's levee and inviting the community to enjoy a Sunday Afternoon of Jazz featuring the James Brown Trio.

Lovers of the genre will be familiar with the musicians who form this critically acclaimed ensemble.

Guitarist and composer James Brown has been applying his soft-spoken and intelligent brand of jazz on the Canadian Music scene for many years. James has performed with leading artists and ensembles, including The Toronto Symphony Orchestra and CanStage, and his full stage composition premiered at Koerner Hall. James lives in Aurora, so we are especially excited to be showcasing this fine musician.

Bassist Clark Johnston will join James on stage, bringing depth to the cool vibe of the performance.

Clarke has worked with the likes of Peter Appleyard and acclaimed jazz guitarist Reg Schwager. He performs regularly with Grammy-nominated musician Drew Jurecka, as well as other great musicians.

And we are thrilled to be welcoming

award-winning violinist and composer Aline Homzy. Aline has performed in halls and venues such as Massey Hall, The Glenn Gould Studio, the TD International Toronto Jazz Festival, Festival international de jazz de Montréal, Stockholm International jazz festival and other chamber-music and jazz-related concert series.

Jazz for a Sunday Afternoon happens in the Library Living Room on Sunday, January 14 at 2 p.m. Funding generously provided by The Music Performance Trust Fund. Drop in and join us as we toast the New Year. Light refreshments will be served.

What I've Been Reading:

Instant Classic (That No One Will Read)

by Tucker Lieberman,
 Rachel A. Rosen (and others)

Daughter

by Claudia Dey

Everything There Is

by M. G. Vassanji

We Meant Well

by Erum Shazia Hasan

Reccia Mandelcorn is the Manager, Community Collaboration at Aurora Public Library. The opinions expressed in this column reflect her personal thoughts about the engagement of community with their public library.

THIS WEEK'S NEW POLL

Are you optimistic
about the
year ahead?

YES NO UNSURE

www.theauroran.com

RESULTS
TO DATE

JANUARY 9, 2024

YES
71%

NO
29%

UNSURE
0%

I suspect a substantial number of people were happy to see the end of 2023 – it was a year of many challenges.

World conflict that touched home for Canadians, affordability issues in the face of global inflation, housing concerns, and of course the devastating effects of climate change and Canada's record-breaking wildfire season.

We have seen some of these challenges before, although I do not believe we ever get used to them.

Housing has become a major issue, but I do believe we have embraced it and within a few years will start to see the benefits of a renewed energy to build more affordable homes, particularly purpose-built rentals

within high density areas close to transit.

The Housing Accelerator Fund is helping cut red tape and fast-tracks the construction of over 380,000 homes in towns, cities, and Indigenous communities across Canada over the next decade. The program asks for innovative action plans from local governments, and once approved, provides upfront funding to ensure the timely construction of new homes, as well as additional funds upon delivering results. Local governments are encouraged to think big and be bold in their approaches, which could include accelerating project timelines, allowing increased housing density, and encouraging affordable housing units.



MP'S REPORT

Tony Van Bynen, MP
Newmarket - Aurora

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2024

Expectations from economists are for lower inflation numbers and the beginning of a decrease in interest rates in 2024. We can only speculate when this will happen, but the second quarter of this year seems to be the consensus. This does provide a backdrop for some degree of optimism.

Environment

Canada's 2023 wildfire season is the most destructive ever recorded. Our country witnessed more than 6,132 fires that torched a staggering 16.5 million hectares of land. To put that in perspective, that's an area larger than Greece and more than double the 1989 record.

Normally, an average of 2.5 million hectares are consumed in Canada every year. And unlike previous years, the fires this year were widespread, from the West Coast to the Atlantic provinces, and the North. By mid-July, there were 29 mega-fires, each exceeding 100,000 hectares.

In British Columbia 28,328 square kilometres burned with almost \$750 million in insured losses according to the Insurance Bureau of Canada. Quebec was particularly hard hit with 51,799 square kilometres torched by wildfires. Nova Scotia not only experienced wildfires, with 18,000 people having to evacuate Halifax, but weather extremes also caused damaging flooding. Across Canada, 235,000 people were forced to evacuate, including almost everybody living in Yellowknife. Ontario experienced devastating wildfires as well, with 741 fires – 51 fires more than the 10-year average – and 441,474 hectares of forests burned. Canada was not alone as wildfires spread through Greece, Spain, Russia, and the United States. Record wildfires were the norm for many countries.

I am sure all of us remember the haze, the smoke, and the dangerous air quality, even though we were far removed from the actual fires. This even impacted millions of people in

the United States.

Why did we have such extreme and dangerous fires? It starts with global warming and the fact that this was the hottest summer on record – even if locally that did not seem to be the case. Fires started in early May and were still burning into October.

Certainly 2023 will be remembered for many reasons, but the recent wildfire season will top the list. While it is too early to predict what 2024 will be like, early indicators suggest there could be more of the same.

Statistically, most Canadians believe in climate change. A research poll conducted by Research Co. found that "60% of Canadians think climate change is a fact and is mostly caused by emissions from vehicles and industrial facilities". A poll by Angus Reid in October 2023 found "two-thirds (67%) say climate change is real and human caused. In a nation ravaged by wildfire and extreme weather events leading to catastrophic floods, it is notable that the proportion of those saying climate change is "unproven" has dropped from 16 per cent in 2014 to just seven per cent now. A majority also say that climate change is a "crisis" (63%) that necessitates immediate action." (Angus Reid October 2023)

Climate change and the devastating impact on our planet, is for me, the greatest challenge facing us – one that we must win. Wildfires and flooding are costing us billions of dollars annually. We may not truly realize the impact on our health and the economy, and I fully understand how this can seem a distant problem – not something that will affect me this year or that there are bigger issues today. But we can't deny that it's happening here and throughout the world. This is a crisis we need to address. And it can be done in a manner that builds a healthier more sustainable economy, while providing a better future for generations to come.

This is our Canada, and our vast resources can be the foundation of a future driven by a green economy. We are positioned to be leaders in this global movement towards a more sustainable future, so let us capitalize on this opportunity. Why would we "axe the tax" when we should be saving our environment – and our planet. And keep in mind that axing the tax also means axing the Climate Action Incentive Payment – leaving many families with less money in their pockets. Embracing nature and living a climate action plan is the positive action we need to take.

Something to think about.

If you are seeking information or require assistance with Federal programs and services, please reach out to my team by e-mail at Tony.VanBynen@parl.gc.ca or by calling 905-953-7515.

faurora foodpantry

Proud to be Aurora's Food Bank for over 30 Years

GIVE where you live

THIS WEEK This week the pantry is in need of peanut free snacks for kid's school lunches, dry soups, tuna and other canned meat.

GRATITUDE We are grateful for the continued support of our community partners including the annual family fundraiser, **I Believe in Christmas**. Their generosity for more than two decades is truly appreciated. We could not do what we do without your support at this time of year.

HELP NEEDED Are you interested in being a Food Pantry Volunteer? For more information and to be added to our waiting list, adults can fill out a volunteer form located on our website aurorafoodpantry.ca/volunteering/ For other volunteer opportunities, including high school community hours, information can also be found on our website.

THANK YOU Thank you to Routes Connecting Communities and their volunteers who help us deliver food to our clients.

CLIENT PICKUP HOURS

Tues: 9:00 am – 11:30 am
Thurs: 5:30 pm – 7:30 pm
Sat: 9:00 am – 11:30 am

Call or visit our website for appointments.

ADDRESS

350 Industrial Parkway South
Aurora, Ontario L4G 3V7

Please use the rear parking lot and the back entrance of the building. We are wheelchair accessible; please call us for details.

DONATION DROP OFF HOURS

Tues: 8:00 am – 3:00 pm
Wed: 10:00 am – 2:00 pm
Thurs: 1:00 pm – 8:00 pm
Sat: 8:00 am – 12:00 pm

Closed on Sunday, Monday and Friday
You can also drop off non-perishable donations anytime at local fire stations or grocery stores.

The Aurora Food Pantry provides food assistance to individuals and families in need, thanks to donations from local organizations, schools, businesses and individuals, and the dedicated volunteers who serve our clients. Together, we can ensure no one in Aurora and Oak Ridges goes hungry.

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At Pickering College, our innovative curriculum is thoughtfully designed to inspire students to excel academically while fostering critical thinking and creativity so they can thrive in a changing world. What students learn goes far beyond the academic curriculum – they learn how to lead a purposeful life and find their passion to make a difference. Join a community committed to success, where dedicated faculty take a personalized approach to ensure each child reaches their full potential.

Igniting their curiosity

In Middle School, students are immersed in the world of technology where they transform into designers and problem solvers. Our classrooms and co-curricular programming integrate cutting-edge technology, including VEX robotics, which provides valuable opportunities for collaboration and hands-on experience.

Unleashing creative potential

In our Makerspace, creativity knows no bounds and students can fuel their innovative spirit. Equipped with state-of-the-art tools, this space is a hub for fostering design and technology skills that set the stage for future success. Here, students explore design thinking, prototype ideas, and bring their innovations to life, preparing them for the challenges that lie ahead.

Connecting with nature

Outdoor education is integral to Pickering College's ethos, connecting Middle School students to the real world through land-based learning. Blue & Silver Farm, our dedicated outdoor education property, offers nature exploration and hands-on projects, instilling curiosity, fostering creative innovation, and nurturing environmental stewardship.

Shaping future leaders

Our Middle School students have unique opportunities to learn, lead, and connect with experts and the community through our trailblazing Global Leadership Program and our CRTC-licensed radio station, 102.7 CHOP FM. These initiatives build leadership skills and a strong sense of responsibility, creating a well-rounded educational experience.



Ready to begin?

Join us at our Open House on Saturday, January 13 to learn more about how our Middle School program nurtures our students' potential, creating a strong foundation for a bright future. New Grade 6 class added beginning in September 2024.

Saturday, January 13

1:00 p.m.

Register: www.pickeringcollege.on.ca/auroran



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BUSINESS & FINANCE



“Beer, it’s the best damn drink in the world.”

Cheers to Jack Nicholson



Innovative golf training facility invites residents to “take a swing” this weekend

Ace Track Golf Performance Center recently opened on Engelhard

BY BROCK WEIR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Whether you’re looking to keep your golf swing in check over the winter, or a beginner looking to build your skills, head over to Ace Track Golf Performance Center on Engelhard Drive this weekend to hit the virtual links.

Ace Track, which opened in Aurora in December, is a fully automated indoor golf and driving range powered by TrackMan that offers new and innovative technology, including virtual games that will give you a flavour of some of the best-known golf courses in the world, as well as in-person coaching.

Ace Track Golf was co-founded by Kristina Brown at 40 Engelhard Drive, Unit 9, when her and her partner’s shared passion for golf swung into the next level during COVID-19. Looking to improve their game, they were taken with software from Trackman which was not only top-of-the-line, but a rarity in York Region.

“We picked it up during the pandemic and fell in love with the game and it is something that became a part of our lives,”



Co-owner Kristina Brown is pictured at Ace Track Golf Performance Center on Engelhard Drive last week. The Center will host an open-house this weekend. **Auroran photo by Brock Weir**

she said, noting they were particularly attracted to golf and its focus on continuous improvement every day. “We noticed that Trackman, which is the highest quality tech around, wasn’t available in the area; we saw the opportunity and niche and decided to open our own. Trackman is

hands down the best you can get from statistics and analytics perspective.”

“The main genesis behind the Ace Track story stems from the fact that there really wasn’t a high-quality premium indoor golf facility in the area and golf is one of those sports in Canada in particular where you can play only half the year, if you’re lucky. There was a gap in the market where there wasn’t a top-quality indoor facility; we wanted to put one in. We also wanted to have it so it could be fully autonomous, managed digitally for the most part, by us... a place where you have the opportunity to learn and improve with the best technology in the market at a reasonable cost is an ideal value proposition for customers.”

Ace Track opened its doors for a soft-launch period on December 7, focusing on friends, family and word of mouth. This Sunday’s open house, which runs from 2 – 4 p.m., will take things to the next level.

“We’re really excited about our public open house,” says Brown, noting that while the open house is open to all, the facility does not offer club rentals, so having your own is important. “If you’re a golfer in and around the area and you’re serious about your game, this really should be the go-to spot. If you’re going to other places, you’re not going to get the same level of accuracy and confidence in your game.

“What’s great about the Trackman technology is you can play a course, do a

golfing range, target practice—and we have seen a lot of dads with their kids in here learning the game and playing. It’s another cool market for a younger generation that is interested in golf, too. Trackman [also offers] an app and every time you come back, it keeps your stats and you can see how you improve over time, how each club works, and it is almost addicting for people!”

Additionally, the platform allows participants to run virtual tournaments and leagues over multi-week and multi-month periods.

“Our facility is clean, spacious, and the tech is top of the line,” says Brown. “We’ve received feedback that our pricing is pretty competitive... and I think a lot of people view it as a place where they can learn and improve in an individual or group setting. Our coaches love it, too, which I think is a really big aspect.

“A year from now, we would love to put in a private bay and expand capacity in our Aurora location first – and going forward longer-term, I think this is a business model that has legs and can be extended to various parts of the GTA, and maybe beyond. This is our starting point, so there is a lot of learning and a lot of growth and our goal is to expand this in the future.”

For more information on this weekend’s open house, facility memberships and more, visit www.acetrackgolf.com.

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2nd Annual New Year’s Levee

with
Leah Taylor Roy, MP Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill

Date: Sunday January 14th, 2024
Time: Outdoor Walk with MP 3:00pm–4:00pm
Refreshments & Reception 4:00pm–5:30pm
Location: Oak Ridges Community Centre

Oak Ridges Community Centre 12895 Bayview Ave, Richmond Hill, ON L4E 3G2

Leah TAYLOR ROY
Member of Parliament for Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill

RSVP: www.leahtaylorroymp.ca/24

Aurora launches Diversity, Equity and Inclusion calendar for 2024

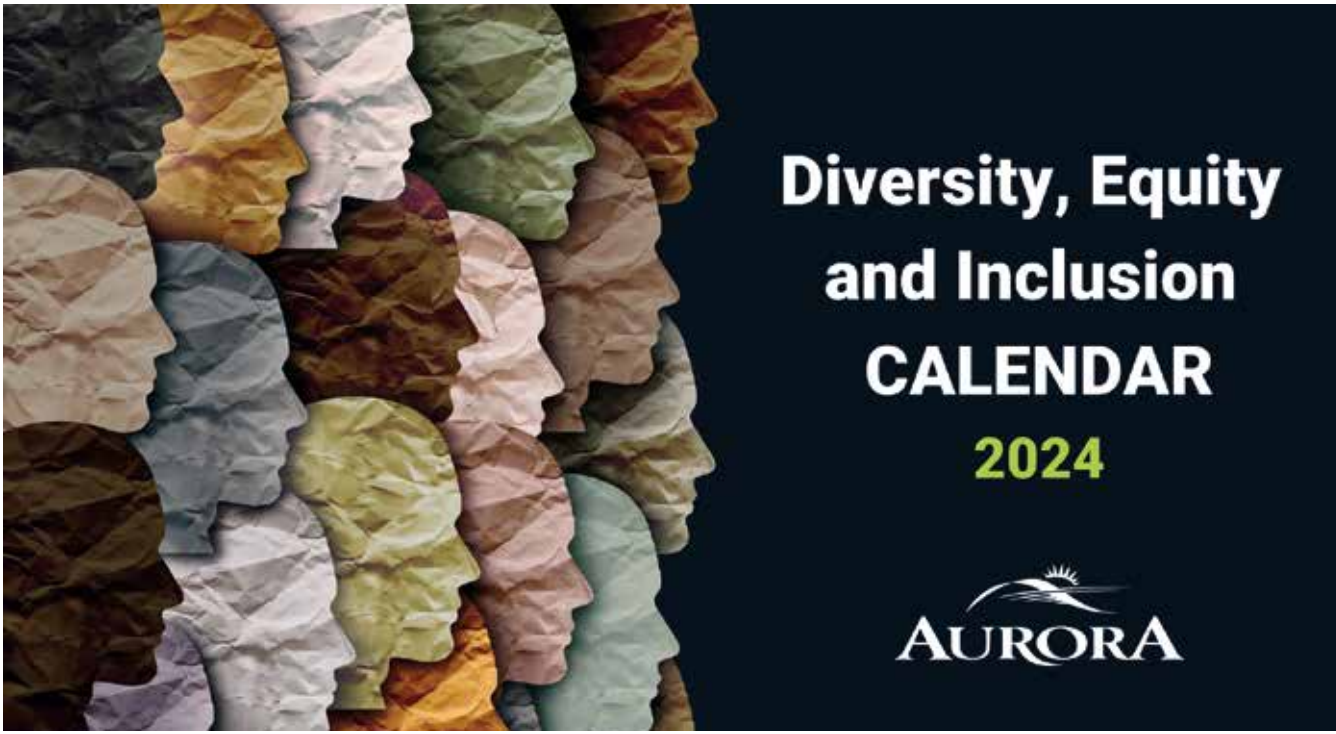


Image courtesy of the Town of Aurora

BY BROCK WEIR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

From Eastern Orthodox Christmas last week to Chanukah this December, there are several events and observances on the docket this year that reflect the diversity of our community – and now the Town of Aurora has published a new online calendar focused on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

Published to coincide with the dawn of a New Year, Aurora's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) calendar notes not only faith-based holidays and observances, but heritage milestones for Indigenous, Black and other racialized groups, initiatives centred on mental health, as well as events designed to increase accessibility for persons of all abilities.

"Aurora is committed to recognizing the diversity we have within our community. By creating a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Calendar we are hoping to foster inclusivity, cultural awareness, and positive relationships in our community and organization," said Town of Aurora CAO Doug Nadorozny. "The calendar allows us to further engage on a deeper level and recognize significant dates that are important to our residents, businesses, cultural partners, and our staff. It also gives us a chance to share this knowledge with our residents who want to learn more about diversity and cultural dates that are important to their peers."

The development of the DEI Calendar was spearheaded by the Town's Communications Department.

Carley Smith, Manager of Corporate Communications for the Town of Aurora, told The Auran that it was a "huge undertaking" by the department and one

which they approached from many angles.

"It had been on our radar for some time as something we'd wanted to create as an Aurora-specific staff resource, but also for the public to utilize as well," said Smith. "While we were regularly acknowledging different faith observances and other inclusion dates and events, it was important to us to take the time to create a detailed calendar that represented the unique demographics of our Town.

"The initial thought was to strictly focus on faith dates, but this blossomed to include accessibility and other inclusion event dates that are regularly celebrated by staff and stakeholders. We knew it would be impossible to celebrate and acknowledge every faith date and inclusion event, as calendar dates would also be acknowledged on our Town social media and through other communications avenues as well. As such, we had to devise a list of criteria for selecting which faith and awareness dates would be listed in the calendar. For faith dates, selection was based on the top five religious affiliations in our community, as identified in the 2021 Statistics Canada Survey. Awareness date selection depended on criteria such as: Dimensions of Diversity, alignment with the Town's Strategic Plan Strategic Plan, and traditional events historically recognized and programmed by the Town.

"The DEI calendar encompasses and represents the diversity of the Town of Aurora but is by no means an exhaustive list of observances. We did consult several calendars in the creation of our own, such as the York Region DEI calendar and YRDSB calendar. What we tried to do differently is focus on our Town and the faiths represented here and use this

calendar as a tool to educate our staff and community members on the observances of their neighbours, colleagues, and friends."

The DEI Calendar is intended to be a living document and the Communications Department is open to "any and all feedback" on the document, including any events or observances that were missed,

for potential further inclusion.

While the Calendar is available this year only as an online PDF document that may be printed out at home or at your place of business, Smith says print editions could be considered in future years, pending budget considerations at the Council table.

"The Town celebrates and supports many of the dates highlighted in the calendar with public events and commemorations," says Smith. "For instance, the Town has and continues to partner with local groups to celebrate Black History Month. The Town also has plans to continue putting on events and gatherings to commemorate Indigenous People's History Month, National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and Chanukkah. [In 2023], the Town began the promotion of the new Treat Accessibly Initiative that encourages residents to make small adjustments to their trick-or-treating station to allow children with disabilities a barrier-free opportunity to participate in Halloween. And of course, the Town celebrates its overall diversity in September through its Multicultural Festival."

To access the 2024 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Calendar, visit www.aurora.ca/en/town-services/resources/Aurora-Diversity-Equity-Inclusion-Calendar.pdf.

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Friday, January 19, 2024 7:30 pm

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AuroraCulturalCentre.ca



New Aurora school could be named after Margaret Atwood

BY BROCK WEIR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The name of Canadian literary giant Margaret Atwood could grace a new Aurora public school.

Margaret Atwood Public School, Whispering Pines Public School, and Pine Trail Public School are the final contenders for the York Region District School Board's (YRDSB) upcoming elementary school in the Town's 2C development, near Hartwell Way and William Graham Drive.

YRDSB families in the school's catchment area have until January 17 to select from the top three names and provide comments to the Board.

"Establishing school names provides a unique opportunity to enhance the identity of the local community, the Board and its schools," says the YRDSB. "School names must support the Board's mission, vision and values, Board priorities and meet the best interests of students and the community."

The name Whispering Pines Public School, says the Board,

reflects the Town's "extensive parks and trails system with many natural areas connecting residents to both nature and the community."

"Whispering Pines is a five-kilometre local trail in the neighbourhood surrounding the school," said the YRDSB.

The name Pine Trail Public School also reflects the Town's 62-kilometre trail system, which is "Designed to provide active, healthy lifestyle opportunities."

"The new school is situated in an area surrounded by green spaces and trails," said the Board. "The name Pine Trail speaks to the natural environment in the local area."

Naming the school after Margaret Atwood, they added, would touch upon many themes.

"[Atwood] has won numerous awards and honours, including the Man Booker Prize and the Governor General's Award. Her works encompass a variety of themes, including gender and identity, climate change and power politics."

To weigh in, visit tinyurl.com/yrdsb2C.

All-star band brings magic of The Last Waltz to Cultural Centre

BY BROCK WEIR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

San Francisco in 1976 when The Band invited iconic friends Bob Dylan, Van Morrison, Joni Mitchell and more for The Last Waltz, an epic concert painstakingly documented by Martin Scorsese released on film in 1978.

Nearly 50 years later, this legendary night lives on in memory and on film, and next Friday, January 19, the magic will be re-created in Aurora as the Aurora Cultural Centre hosts The Last Waltz: A Celebration of The Band Live at St. Andrew's College.

Assembled by Juno Award-winning producer Lance Anderson, the performance will celebrate the 48th anniversary of the historic concert with Chuck Jackson of The Downchild Blues Band, Matt Weidinger, Johnny Max and Verese Vassell-Bowen backed by a nine-piece band that includes Jerom Levon Avis on drums and vocals, Terry Blerish on guitar, Wayne DeAdder on bass, Rob Gusevs on organ, Steve McDade on trumpet, and Anderson on piano.

"The music really touched especially Canadian souls," says Anderson, who first produced the show 14 years ago. "Even though [The Band] was living in the States writing a lot of their music and they wrote about America a lot, they wrote from a Canadian perspective. I always think The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down could never have been written by an American. They wouldn't

have seen that perspective – it had to be written by someone who was outside the country looking in."

Looking back on the evolution of the show, Anderson says it was never his intention to pay tribute to The Band and, at the same time, stresses that it's not your traditional tribute show.

"We don't do this full time – this is an all-star band that just gets together to play this music because we love it," he says, adding they took their first bow together at the Kitchener Blues Festival in 2010. "It was supposed to be a one-off when they asked me to put together a special concert that would involve a lot of people, and I thought of The Last Waltz because they had 13 people on stage. We did it, the audience went crazy when we did it, and we enjoyed it so much because this music isn't easy to play. All those players were quite masterful in their own ways."

"The band members said, 'Why don't we do this again sometime?' 14 years later, here we are and...it sells better now than it did 14 years ago. We believe this is part of our shared Canadian musical heritage and to play it live and play it in that spirit – we don't promise that we're going to do it note for note because The Band never played it note for note, they never repeated themselves; we do it in that spirit, we play it in that style, we play those arrangements, but within that we just do our own thing, our favourite things that we want to play, and it keeps it really fresh."

Over the last 14 years, the show has played across Canada and gets a tremendous reception wherever they go, particularly in the hometowns of original members of The Band. In those venues, they get feedback not just from fans, but friends and family of the trailblazers. Along the way, they've also amassed musicians with strong ties to – and memories of playing with – the founders.

"They are the cream of the crop," says Anderson. "We're doing this out of the love for the music and I think that comes across. I think people realize we're so proud of these people and what they accomplished that we want to celebrate it. That's why we call it a musical celebration of The Band. It's not a tribute show in the sense that we're impersonating them; we're just celebrating their achievements and what they were able to do."

The Aurora Cultural Centre will present The Last Waltz: A Musical Celebration of The Band Live next Friday, January 19, at 7.30 p.m. at St. Andrew's College. Doors open at 6.45 p.m. For more information, including tickets, visit auroraculturalcentre.ca.

What's On, Aurora!

JANUARY & FEBRUARY 2024

Performing Arts



The Last Waltz
A musical celebration of The Band live
Friday, Jan 19, 2024 @ 7:30 pm
St. Andrew's College, Aurora

Elizabeth Shepherd
Supporting Artist: Charlotte McAfee-Brunner
Women jazz innovators
Saturday, Jan 27, 2024 @ 7:30 pm
NC Aurora Armoury, Aurora

Education

One-Day Workshops for Adults (16+)
An Introduction to Indigenous Beading Art
with Joy Rogers
Sunday, Jan 14, 2024 1:00 – 3:00 pm
@karahkwajewelry

Whimsical Bark Carving
with Marlene Ash
Sunday, Jan 21, 2024 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Check the website for multi-week classes for children, youth and adults!

Gallery

Perennial Darkness
A themed group exhibition Curated by Samantha Jones
Continuing in-person through Jan 27, 2024
2nd Floor Gallery, Aurora Town Hall
Continuing online through Feb 9, 2024

Call for Submissions: Mayor's Celebration of Youth Arts 2024
An Exhibition Opportunity
Exhibition dates: Feb 10 – Mar 23, 2024
Aurora Town Hall 2nd Floor
Submission Deadline: 11:59 pm, Jan 12, 2024

Call for Submissions: FUTURE GROUNDS
A Public Art Mentorship Opportunity with Oddside Arts
Aurora Town Square
Submission Deadline: 11:59 pm, Jan 14, 2024



For details, to register, purchase tickets, and for up-to-the-minute information, contact:

905 713-1818





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FREE

Week of January 11, 2024

Calvin McHugh captures prestigious Presidents' Award at Aurora Barbarians Rugby Club's Annual Banquet



By Jim Stewart

Khalil Ajram, Co-President, Treasurer, and U18 Head Coach of the Aurora Barbarians Rugby Club, reflected on his sports organization's very successful 2023 season and functioned as prognosticator as we discussed, respectively, the Barbarians' Awards Ceremony and the year ahead for the 22-year-old sports organization.

The Barbarians are rich in rugby tradition and 2023 was a bumper year in which the organization grew to 533 members including 40 coaches, 22 teams, 12 referees, and the Club produced 20 National Team players and 50 Regional/Provincial Team players.

Enviably achievements, indeed.

Many of those players and coaches were honored on January 2 at the Barbarians' Annual Awards Ceremony and Ajram observed that one of the highlights of the night was Calvin McHugh capturing the Bob Martin Presidents' Award.

The amiable administrator and coach delineated McHugh's significant contributions to the Barbarians both on and off the pitch.

"Calvin has gone beyond the call of duty for us. He's been with the Barbs since

he graduated from Kolbe in 2012. Not only has he been a great performer for us, but he really helped our Adult Touch Rugby program take off with his positive leadership."

Dozens of rugby players and organizational builders were honored at the annual banquet, including Taylor McKnight (Women 1st XV—MVP) and George Manoukas (Men 1st XV—MVP). The Kevin Jones Coaches of the Year Award went to Ivan Barron and Dave Weber.

Amid the celebrations was a poignant presentation in which Jady Sage was honored posthumously with the James Green Sportsmanship/Perseverance Award.

Sage was 16 when she passed away suddenly at the Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre in Barrie on October 2, 2023 and the #Play4Jay Teammate of the Year Award was introduced this year to honor her memory.

She was remembered as "an accomplished athlete and an incredible cook. Rugby was the center of her life."

The inaugural winner of the memorial award was Mikhaila Irving.

Other young Barbarians honored

at the event included Malayla Zheng who won the Paul Loader Rookie of the Year Award and Briar Barron who was named the Steve Hall Rookie of the Year. Outstanding Junior Awards went to Bronwen Earle and Charlie Chilcott.

Club Leadership Awards were earned by Dakota Smith and Zach Moore while Connor Libby won the John Reich Unsung Hero Award (M) and Jess Cormier won the Graham Brown Unsung Hero Award (W). The McLeod Family was recognized for their hard work for the organization with the Doug Heaton Contribution Award.

In addition to honoring so many notable achievements in 2023, Coach Ajram outlined a number of notable events on the Barbarians' 2024 calendar.

The Barbs' home opener is at Fletcher's Fields Rugby Stadium in Markham on June 1.

Prior to the regular season opener for all their teams, the Barbarians will be travelling to Kingston to compete in the Billy McLaughlin Cup.

In response to all the positive feedback their club received in 2023, the Barbarians

will host the Second Annual Youth Festival at St. Maximilian Kolbe and Sheppard's Bush during the first weekend of July where Ajram "hopes to double the number of participants to 500. Last year's inaugural event was a big success with all games running on time and teams were really happy with the fields, facilities, and amenities."

On June 28-29, the Barbarians will co-host an 80-team tournament at Fletcher's Fields.

Coach Ajram hopes the tournament will provide a "proper sendoff and recognition" for the venerable rugby facility which will be in its final year of operation in 2024.

He also expressed optimism for a number of his Barbarians squads for the upcoming season and noted that "over 100 Junior Barbarians are training weekly at the Dome."

Ajram predicted that his U18 Girls team will be very competitive as will the U18 Boys and the U16 Girls and that they expect strong opposition from regional rivals Barrie RC and the Oshawa Vikings over the course of the 2024 season.

Tigers tamed by Trenton and Toronto in lop-sided losses

By Jim Stewart

The Aurora Tigers' tumble down the OJHL Eastern Conference standings is sadly reminiscent of a line uttered by the villainous King Claudius in the classic tragedy Hamlet: "When troubles come, they come not as single spies, but in battalions."

The rookie-laden Tigers lineup experienced a similar invasion of battalions during a pair of punishing road losses meted out by the first-place Trenton Golden Hawks and the second-place Toronto Junior Canadiens.

Losing 13-1 in Trenton on Friday night

and 7-1 in Toronto on Sunday night brought scoreboard results not for the faint of heart.

Against the OJHL's second-ranked team on Friday, the Tigers found themselves behind early. The powerful Trenton squad—ranked seventh in Canada—came out firing as per their aircraft logo and racked up a 5-0 first period lead. The Golden Hawks bulged the twine at 1:04 and 1:37 of the second period to stretch their lead to 7-0.

Tigers' rookie forward Josh Frenette's unassisted goal got Aurora on the scoreboard, but that was all the offence the

Continued on page 19

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Paolina Allan wins Canadian 2KM Individual Pursuit Master Track Cycling Championship in Milton

By Jim Stewart

Aurora's Paolina Allan won the Women's Canadian 2 KM Individual Pursuit Master Track Cycling Championship at the Milton Velodrome on Saturday.

According to broadcaster Steve Fleck, "Paolina broke the existing Canadian record. This was her first legit race on the track. She placed on the podium in a couple of other races, but the focus was the Individual Pursuit."

Allan, an outstanding triathlete who

was inducted into the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame in 2018, was "inspired to begin track racing when I was in Scotland last year at the international road racing championships. Track racing is a small segment of the sport of cycling, but I'm 54 and wanted to try something new."

The inspirational triathlete was surprised by her first-place performance at the Velodrome which features state of the art facilities for competitive cycling and aspiring Olympians: "This one was a total shock and that's what makes this podium placement so sweet."

The Hall of Fame road racer—

who won the title on January 6—acknowledged that she was only "certified for track racing on December 11" and attended courses on track safety that came in handy on the daunting 45-degree race course.

"What also makes the sport so challenging is there are no brakes on the bike. You really have to learn to ride properly."

When asked about her racing plans for 2024, the fearless competitor noted that she is preparing for "time trials to qualify for races at the provincials. I'd like to shave two seconds off my best time. I'll be competing in Milton on March 1-3."



Aurora's Paolina Allan graces the podium at the Milton Velodrome after capturing the Women's Canadian 2KM Individual Pursuit Master Track Cycling Championship on Sunday.

Contributed photo



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Community Recognition Awards Youth volunteer Doran honoured for positive leadership

BY BROCK WEIR
 LOCAL JOURNALISM
 INITIATIVE REPORTER

People of all ages can – and do – have a positive impact on the community and in 2023 one such impactful youth was recognized by the Town of Aurora with the annual Youth Volunteer Award, part of the Community Recognition Awards program.

The Youth Volunteer Award is presented to a young Auroran each year for their volunteer efforts that "have made a significant contribution to the community by demonstrating



Doran was honoured at last year's Community Recognition Awards ceremony by Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

their commitment to being a positive leader."

These principles have been ably represented by 2023 recipient Leila Doran who shows no signs of slowing her efforts.

"Leila has a passion for helping others and is always thinking of ways to help those less fortunate," said Mayor Tom Mrakas, who hosted last spring's Community Recognition Awards ceremony. "At the age of nine, she started a non-profit business selling fidget toys as an initiative to help children's mental health impacted by the pandemic. The fidget toys help children with anxiety.

"Despite being a student, she is also a youth entrepreneur. Over the past year, she has collected milk bags from the community to make mats for the homeless. The milk bags are tied and stretched in such a way they connect to a wooden bed frame.

This allows homeless people to rest comfortably on a mattress. She is avid about ensuring everyone has the opportunity to have a comfortable place to sleep. Leila has become so known for this initiative that people continue to drop off milk bags at her house so she always has a full supply. She also helps her mom in purchasing food for the local food pantry and community fridges, in addition to wanting to ensure people have a comfortable place to sleep, she also wants to ensure they have food to enjoy.

"Leila embodies the true saying that one can do anything they put their mind to. She is well-spoken and is a wonderful example of how we should all participate in giving back to our community. To win this award affirms her actions are positive and we need to help other youth understand their impact is important and valued."

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Welcoming a Brand New Year



Aurora residents headed to the Aurora Family Leisure Complex on Saturday, January 6, to formally celebrate the start of 2024 at the annual Mayor & Council's New Year's Levee. Held from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., the morning included a meet and greet, pancake breakfast and public skate. (Top) Mayor Tom Mrakas is pictured with Kailyn, Robert and Roger; as well as (Second) Asiyah and Jeff. (Third and Fourth) Enjoying the pancake breakfast were Anastasia, Serge and Ksenia; and Majida, Farrah, and Arif. (Fifth) Also stopping by were Newmarket-Aurora MP Tony Van Bynen and his wife, Roxanne, who met up with Shaheen and Armin.

Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger

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Murder on the Orient Express brings classic whodunnit to Theatre Aurora



Helping to bring Murder on the Orient Express to life are actors Bill Baker, Jess Falcioni and Chris Cole.

with the mixture of the music we're going to have and some voiceovers and lighting that you could put a show on that actually involves a train in a realistic kind of way, and just to be able to listen," says Cole. "I think so often, everyone's attention span is about five seconds these days and to actually be able to listen. Christie is dialogue-heavy, but, somehow, she has remained, even in young people's eyes, as someone who can write a darn-good mystery. There is a great twist in Murder on the Orient Express, so as they're trying to figure out whodunnit, we're hoping they will be surprised when they do find out."

To see for yourself, head over to Theatre Aurora on select dates and times through January 20.

For ticket information, visit theatreaurora.com or call 905-727-3669.

Aurora photo by Glenn Rodger

BY BROCK WEIR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Orient Express is set to steam into Aurora this week with a murder on board.

There's no need to wait out in the cold at the GO Station to get in on the action; all you need to have in hand is a ticket for Theatre Aurora's latest production, Murder on the Orient Express, which is set to open this Thursday, January 11 at their Henderson Drive theatre.

Directed by Neill Kernohan, Murder on the Orient Express is Ken Ludwig's adaptation of the classic Agatha Christie mystery that has enthralled generations of readers as famed Belgian detective Hercule Poirot "races against time to solve a chilling murder before the killer strikes again."

"I think everyone has in their imagination, especially those who read the books, their own vision of Poirot and it is kind of fun to see another person's vision, the different mannerisms that are captured," says Bill Baker, who plays Bouc, a friend of Poirot's who is helping solve the case. "Everyone loves a good whodunit. The challenge here is how do you get a train in the theatre? I think a lot of people will say, 'How are they going to do this?'"

"How ARE we going to do it?" exclaims Chris Cole, who will be bringing the mustachioed detective to life.

Speaking jointly to The Auroran last week, Baker and Cole have a friendly rapport, which should serve their characters well – and this isn't surprising as the duo have been friends for nearly 20 years, first working together in dinner theatre in Whitby.

They have always been looking for something further they could do together and, when they found Theatre Aurora's call for auditions, they came out together on the same evening to see if there was a place for them.

"Neill had everybody who was coming out to audition [do so] for two roles," explains Cole. "The two roles Bill and I auditioned for were about the only ones at our age that we could

justifiably go for! When we had our call-backs, this is when Neill brought in everyone he was interested in looking at and matched them up together – and that's where Bill and I got to read together, which was great fun up on stage."

"It was like putting on a comfortable old sweater – a little frayed on the edges," Bill adds with a laugh, noting that, personality-wise, the roles they landed represent something of a role reversal as Cole often performs with a comedic edge.

Adds Cole: "The great fit for us too was we were playing friends in the show. Poirot and Bouc are very good friends – I don't think they have seen each other [in a while] but they slip right back into that again and they are such completely and utterly different people. We're actually pals in it and we tend to joke around a little bit during the rehearsals which I think has been an eye-opener to some of the younger cast-members!" But such are the relationships that develop within community theatre, a creative outlet that both men agree is invaluable in any town or city.

"It's vitally important," says Cole, citing Theatre Aurora's recent production of Anne of Green Gables: The Musical bringing together actors of multiple generations.

Adds Baker: "Community theatre is the roots of theatre art – art itself – within the community. It's a place where people can come together and try, experiment, take risks and encourage youth to come out and pursue their passions, whether it be musicals, dramatic arts, or comedies. It's important for people to have a place to go for their entertainment and escape for a few hours."

And that's just what the two actors hope the audiences will experience during Murder on the Orient Express' run as well.

"I would love to think it will end up showing them the magic of theatre and what can be done and, as Bill said before, maybe a suspension of your belief, but still somehow see that

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— Government bureaucracy is out of control – and Canadians are paying the price —

If you asked most Canadians if this country needs more bureaucrats, they'd probably say no.

Unfortunately, Canada's bureaucracy continues to mushroom in size, regulating and micro-managing more and more aspects related to how we live and work.

New figures published last week by the Public Service Commission of Canada show that the federal public service now stands at about 275,000 employees – an astounding 40 percent increase from a decade ago – and that doesn't include another 85,000 civil servants working in affiliated government agencies.

If you then add in all of the civil servants working for provincial, regional and municipal governments across Canada, the total number of government employees in this country is around four million.

Why is that a problem?

It's a problem for two reasons. The first is that more bureaucrats equals more government spending – and that in turn leads to bigger deficits and more taxes.

But the other problem, which is perhaps even worse, is that more bureaucrats also means more regulations, permits and licenses. All of this red tape is strangling economic growth and progress, particularly for small business, and is one of the major reasons why our living standards are falling.

When I was CEO of Magna International Inc., I could always tell if one of our factories was struggling financially by the number of white collar workers in the offices above the factory floor. If you've got way too much administration up top, it

doesn't matter how hard the employees on the factory floor work, your business simply won't be profitable. The same principle holds true for countries.

The fact is, we can't continue hiring more and more government workers year after year.

Government spending as a percentage of national GDP, or Gross Domestic Product, is closing in on 50 per cent. Back in the 1950s, when Canada's economy was booming, government spending as a percentage of GDP was just under 20 per cent. We had less government, and a higher standard of living.

The government approach to small business in Canada back in the 1950s and 60s was also much more conducive to creating jobs and growth. Government would do whatever it could to get businesses up and running. Today, however, it seems that governments put more of their time and energy into hampering and blocking business.

Canadians are forking over more and more of their paycheques to finance a sprawling government bureaucracy that increasingly does not enhance the quality of our lives. On the contrary, it makes our daily lives more complicated and costly, and it



THE PRINCIPLES OF AN ECONOMIC CHARTER OF RIGHTS

By Frank Stronach

makes operating a small business more difficult.

So, what's the answer?

We need to return to some bedrock economic principles that will get our country back on a solid economic footing – principles like not spending more than we take in, eliminating our debt, and unleashing small business, the engine of our economy.

The best way to do that is through the adoption of a national economic charter of rights and responsibilities.

Think about this: there are approximately one million small businesses in Canada. If we dramatically reduced the mountain of regulations and red tape holding them back, these businesses would be free to

expand and grow.

And if every small business in Canada hired just one single additional employee, we could create a million new jobs overnight. We would ignite economic growth on a scale this country hasn't seen in many decades.

Size of Federal Civil Service Source: www.canada.ca/en/public-service-commission/services/publications/annual-reports/annual-report-2022-2023.html

Size of Spending on Civil Servant Salaries: publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2023/dpb-pbo/YN5-266-2023-eng.pdf

Author Bio

Frank Stronach is the founder of Magna International Inc., one of Canada's largest global companies, and was inducted into the Automotive Hall of Fame.

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Council calls for action amid global "escalation" of terrorism and unrest

From page 1

could be defined as violent extremist propaganda and encouraging violent crimes," said Councillor Gilliland in the motion. "Any loss of innocent civilian life is unacceptable and tragic; and other local municipal Councils and residents in Aurora have expressed concerns of uncertainty and safety who are asking for peace, protection and security."

Speaking to her motion from her seat at the Council table, Councillor Gilliland said "unrest around the world has triggered some homeland rallies and advocacy that support a lot of inciteful actions."

"It has been causing a lot of uncertainty in our Town and safety concerns," she said. "I know I have been reached out [to] by residents personally expressing concerns of the unsafety and asking for peace and protection. I know there is a lot that is out of our hands as a municipality but what this motion does call on the governments to strengthen their available tools to deny some of this inciteful speech that has been encouraging some violent behaviour."

"Most importantly, I think, what we ultimately need to encourage the community and our local leaders of faith to bring the community together and promote peace and healing and understanding at this difficult time.

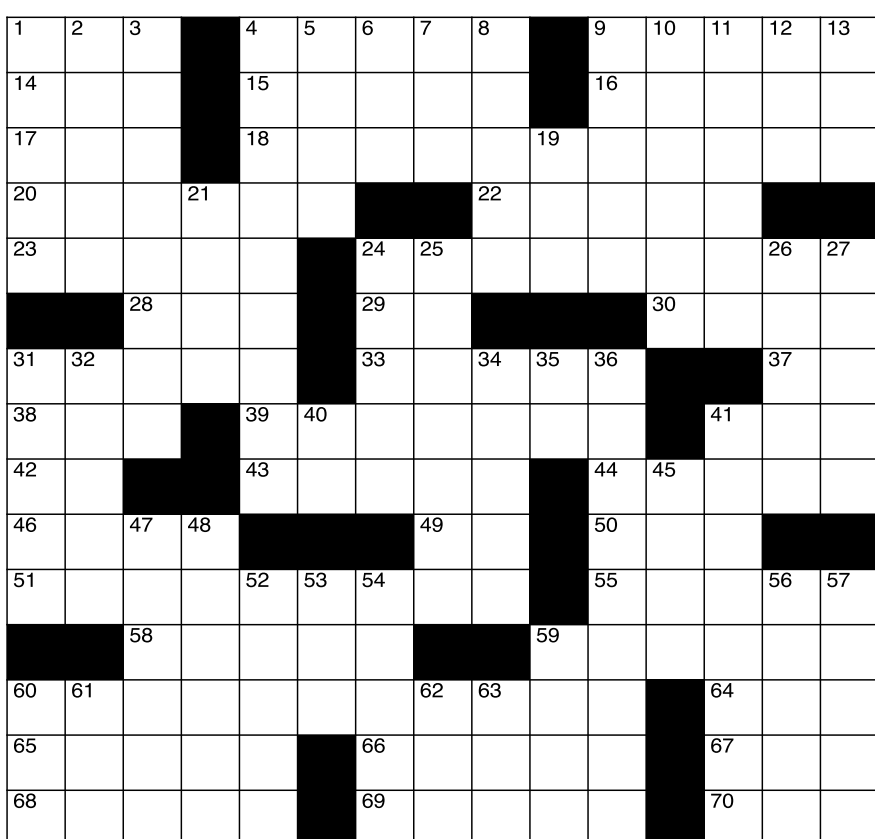
We're in the holiday season right now and there is nothing worse than feeling anxiety and stress and unsafe at this time. I think it is really important as leaders that we acknowledge and reach out to our residents that they are feeling this way and we are listening and we do hear what you're saying. We are calling for the community to come together and set examples of peace and promote that healing accordingly."

Before the unanimous vote in favour of calls to action, Ward 5 Councillor John Gallo asked for clarity on some of the action items, noting he will ultimately support. Among his questions was how Aurora, as a municipality, would call on local faith leaders to "promote peace, healing and understanding," particularly whether it would be considered a direction to staff for them to rally.

"It is a message for us within the community that this is what we agree... that we are sending a message to the community and when we do have conversations with our faith leaders that we are promoting peace and healing and understanding," responded Councillor Gilliland. "It is really just a confirmation of what we're trying to promote to the community and if we're consistent and we all agree, that is what I am asking us to do."

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CLUES ACROSS

1. Defensive nuclear weapon
4. Moved back and forth
9. One-time coach of the Cowboys
14. Last letter
15. Cause to become less intense
16. Genus of tree bugs
17. Body art
18. Romance novelist
20. Be filled with love for
22. City
23. Make vivid
24. Horses
28. Mauna __, Hawaiian volcano
29. Atomic #18
30. Shortly
31. A type of prejudice
33. Whirls
37. Six
38. Old world, new

39. __ Hess, oil company
41. Talk
42. Not off
43. Begets
44. Cars need them
46. Computing architecture (abbr.)
49. Of I
50. Journalist, activist Wells
51. Takes apart
55. Lists
58. Positively charged electrode
59. Hard, colorless compound
60. Inflammation of the peritoneum
64. Trent Reznor's band
65. Simply dry fruit
66. "Ivanhoe" author
67. Google certification
68. French commune
69. Medieval circuit courts
70. Soviet Socialist Republic

CLUES DOWN

1. Indigenous people of Mexico
2. Dietary supplement
3. Having a particular sheen or luster
4. Views
5. Academic Bill of Rights
6. Automobile
7. When you anticipate arriving
8. Beef or chicken intestine
9. Conspiracy
10. Blood disorder
11. Long-time NBAer Shawn
12. Time zone
13. US, Latin America, Canada belong to
19. Upton Sinclair novel
21. What a cow does
24. Cavalry-sword
25. Ancient Greek war galley
26. Stars
27. Rebukes
31. Billion year periods
32. Some are in a bottle
34. Tears down
35. Lethal dose
36. Humorists
40. Midwestern US state (abbr.)
41. Frameworks
45. Rocker Billy
47. More thin
48. Dog
52. Habitual repetitions
53. State of fuss
54. Uneasy
56. Chemical compounds
57. More cognizant of reality
59. A place to build
60. Exclamation that denotes disgust
61. Supplement with difficulty
62. Very slick
63. Hill or rocky peak



Theatre Aurora's "Murder on the Orient Express"

A Review by Scott Johnston

Theatre Aurora has just the ticket one needs to experience an evening of murder, mystery and deduction with its latest play "Murder on the Orient Express", based on what is arguably Agatha Christie's most famous and popular mystery.

As the story unfolds, it is the mid 1930s and a murder has taken place on the fabled train, which has been stopped in the mountains of Yugoslavia by snowdrifts on the tracks.

Fortunately, the brilliant Belgian detective Hercule Poirot is on board.

But the case is most challenging. The American murder victim was unpopular, but none of the numerous first-class compartment suspects with

varying backgrounds seem to have apparent motives, and all have airtight alibis.

With only his instincts and "little grey cells" can he (and the audience) correctly identify the killer in the short time before the train is freed, or the murderer strikes again?

This version of the story adapted by Ken Ludwig reduces the number of characters from the book, but there are still plenty of international suspects on stage, including English governess Mary Debenham (played by Caitlin Feldman), nervous American secretary Hector MacQueen (Kevin Shaver), French conductor Pierre Michel (Tim Gernstein), Russian Princess Natalia Dragomiroff (Deborah Lobban), Swedish missionary Greta Ohlsson

(Leanne Goldstein), Hungarian Countess Andrenyi (Jess Falcioni), American widow Helen Hubbard (Lise Boily), English Colonel John Arbuthnot (Joey Gareri, who also plays the ill-fated murder victim), and Poirot's good friend and fellow Belgian Monsieur Bouc (Bill Baker).

All of the cast manage their parts (and accents) well, and give each of their characters the appropriate personalities to make them interesting, different and mysterious.

Rounding out the cast as Hercule Poirot is Chris Cole, who somehow commands the stage in a very subtle and low-key way.

The story moves along briskly, and the Theatre Aurora crew under director Neill Kernohan has done an

admirable job through sets, lighting, video and sound of creating the illusion of much of the story taking place on a train.

Even if one is familiar with the story, it's highly entertaining watching it unfold on stage as the detective makes sense of the various and often unrelated clues he unearths and pieces them together to solve the case.

Tickets are selling fast for the crowd-pleasing production, so you should get yours quickly to avoid disappointment.

Evening performances of "Murder on the Orient Express" continue at Theatre Aurora, 150 Henderson Drive, January 11, 12, 13, 18, 19, 20 with matinees January 13, 14 & 21. Tickets are available through the box office at 905-727-3669.



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THINGS...you ought to know

THROUGH JANUARY 27

Continuing in the Aurora Cultural Centre Gallery – Perennial Darkness: A Themed Group Exhibition. Artists present their personal connection to the renewal of shorter days and longer nights. Through January 27 in person (February 9 online). Gallery visits and events are always free. Location: Aurora Town Hall, 100 John West Way, 2nd Floor. For information, visit AuroraCulturalCentre.ca.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 14

Introduction to Indigenous Beading Art One-Day Workshop (for adults 16+) with Joy Rogers. Dive into the world of vibrant colors, ancient patterns, and timeless traditions, and create a small pin using the flat stitch beading method. For full description, and fees on this, and winter programs, visit AuroraCulturalCentre.ca or call the Box Office at 905 713-1818.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 19

The Last Waltz: A Musical Celebration of The Band Live in concert. Lance Anderson's 13-piece band pays homage to the critically-acclaimed 1976 performance. One night only! \$50 (HST incl.); 7:30 p.m. Location – St. Andrew's College, Aurora. For info and to purchase, visit AuroraCulturalCentre.ca or call the Box Office at 905 713-1818.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 21

Whimsical Bark Carving with Marlene Ash (for adults 16+). Create an imaginative piece of your own devising. Perfect for beginners – no

experience required! For full description, and fees on this, and winter programs, visit AuroraCulturalCentre.ca or call the Box Office at 905 713-1818.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 27

"Nu-jazz" piano jazz keyboardist Elizabeth Shepherd brings her five-piece band, including Michael Occhipinti on guitar, for a unique night of jazz, R&B, pop and hip-hop. Special supporting guest artist Charlotte McAfee-Brunner opens the set. \$30 (HST incl.); 7:30 p.m. Location – NC Aurora Armoury. For info and to purchase, visit AuroraCulturalCentre.ca or call the Box Office at 905 713-1818

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 31

100 Women Central York Region will host its monthly meeting tonight at the Aurora Royal Canadian Legion, 105 Industrial Parkway North. The social visit is 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. and the meeting is from 7 – 8 p.m. For more, visit www.100womencyr.ca or email 100womenwhocarecentralyorkregion@gmail.com

FEBRUARY 17 – 19

There will be twice the fun this year as the Town of Aurora hosts two days of its popular Arctic Adventure on Saturday, February 17, and Monday, February 19 at Town Park. All activities run from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and will include professional ice carving, professional lumberjacks, outdoor winter games, live entertainment, mini-snow tubing and more.

Tigers tamed by Trenton and Toronto in lop-sided losses

From page 11

visitors could muster. The Golden Hawks—sporting a sparkling 30-7-0-1 record after their fourth consecutive win this year versus Aurora—led 11-1 heading into the final frame much to the delight of their 641 fans.

The Tigers headed west to Toronto in quest of a brighter result versus the Junior Canadiens against whom they have played well this season.

However, Sunday night provided no relief for the weary road warriors as Aurora's revamped young lineup was overmatched on The Scotiabank Pond. Against the OJHL's fourth-ranked team, the Tigers trailed 3-0 before the game was eight minutes old.

Tigers' rookie centre Jobey Pearson's power play goal at 13:57—assisted by Tyler Oletic and Carson Littlejohns—pulled Aurora to within two. However, Jordan Karafile scored two of his three goals to close the period to give the Canadiens a 5-1 lead.

Karafile completed his hat trick at 1:31 of the middle frame and finished his five-point night by assisting on Nathan Phillips' marker at 9:58 of the third period to provide Toronto—ranked 22nd in the 122-team CJHL—with its decisive margin of victory.

The Tigers continue their arduous road trip on Sunday, January 14 when they travel to Wellington to face the third-place Dukes.

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Hildegard BRAUNSTIGL



August 30, 1929 – January 6, 2024

Passed away peacefully at St. Joseph's Health Centre, Toronto on Saturday, January 6, 2024. Hilde, beloved wife for 67 years to the late Karl (2019). Dear aunt of John Eisenhut and his wife Rosemary of Brechin, and Steve Eisenhut and his wife Jacqui Hardtke of Mississauga. Great aunt to Amberlea Eisenhut, Amanda Boileau and her husband Alexander. Great, great aunt to Isabelle and Oliver.

A memorial service for Hildegard will be held Friday, March 8, 2024 at 11:00 AM at Thompson Funeral Home, 530 Industrial Parkway South, Aurora, ON L4G 6W8 with visitation an hour prior. A committal service will follow at Aurora Cemetery, 14253 Yonge Street, Aurora, ON L4G 0P2. All are welcome back to Thompson Funeral afterwards for a reception.

Donations in memory of Hilde may be made to the Canadian Cancer Society or Heart & Stroke Foundation.

Fond memories and expressions of sympathy may be shared at www.ThompsonFH-Aurora.com

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Experience luxury in this new custom-built executive home in Richmond Hill. Enjoy the open layout, 10' ceilings (main), a chef's kitchen, and a spa-like primary ensuite. Spacious secondary bedrooms boast walk-in closets. Bonus: 38' x 126ft easement on the west side for added space or a potential building lot. Craftsmanship and opulence define this masterpiece. Offered at \$3,080,000.



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