

Fire Fighters? ?Decades of Dedication? showcased at Centre

By Brock Weir

Even before Aurora was officially founded, it has been served by a committed team of firefighters ? volunteer and otherwise ? who have dedicated themselves to keeping the public safe.

Their equipment might have changed over the years, along with their vehicles and even the kinds of buildings they are being called to, but their dedication remains the same.

It is this dedication that is available for all to see with ?Decades of Dedication: Central York Fire Service,? a new heritage display at the Cultural Centre through their Community as Curator program.

Curated by retired firefighter Rod Bruton, it showcases the advancement of fire service in both Aurora and Newmarket through uniforms, photographs, news articles and other artefacts he has collected and curated over the years through his role as Historian for the Central York Fire Services (CYFS).

Mr. Bruton began his association with what is now the CYFS as a volunteer fire fighter for the Newmarket Fire Department in 1973, before going full time two years later.

Even from those early days, Mr. Bruton was saving odds and ends that would otherwise be bound for the trash, hiding his treasures in out-of-the-way corners of firehalls.

?A lot of people would have just throw it away, but now we have a great display in Aurora,? says Mr. Bruton, an active volunteer with Newmarket's Elman W. Campbell Museum, with a chuckle.

When the Aurora and Newmarket Fire Departments amalgamated in 2002, he was near the top of the heap when it came to seniority and upon his retirement in 2006 he was in the midst of setting up historical displays in the central Newmarket Station.

?I guess I was just thinking of the future,? he says of why he held onto so many artefacts.

The artefacts, however, have proved handy over the years, providing the means for many evocative displays held in conjunction with Central York Fire Services annual open houses, which focus on fire prevention.

Not only are these open houses intended to teach the community the ins and outs of fire safety in a fun and interactive way, but they are also opportunities to highlight its past, ranging from the artefacts so lovingly collected by Mr. Bruton to retired firefighters who have served the community with distinction.

Every so often, however, these worlds come together.

A uniform now on display at the Cultural Centre, for instance, was worn by Deputy Chief Donny Patrick. Patrick's father, Stu, also served in the Aurora Fire Department, joining back in 1924. In the 1980s, the third generation of the Patrick family came aboard and all three are represented through their uniforms, photos, and other objects.

?It was hard to get away as a volunteer,? says Mr. Bruton. ?I worked for Slessor Motors at the time and we would [be called away with two other guys and the boss] let us go [to fight a fire] and then we would come back and finish the job. Sometimes it was late, but he knew it was a way of helping our community.?

Decades of Dedication: Central York Fire Service will be on display at the Aurora Cultural Centre through November 9.

Central York Fire Services will hold their Annual Open House this Saturday, September 23, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Station 4-4 located at 1344 Wellington Street East. This year's theme is ?Every Second Counts, Plan 2 Ways Out.?

Activities will include a new Fire Safety and Emergency Preparedness Simulator, firefighter demonstrations, as well as a barbeque. Donations will be accepted for the Hawkins-Gignac Foundation.