

?Hop? into 2023 by ringing in New Year at Family First Night

The dawn of a New Year is always time for a fresh start, but the Town of Aurora is going back to some storied traditions this December 31 as Family First Night returns to the Aurora Family Leisure Complex.

From 6 ? 9 p.m., families are invited to visit the Leisure Complex (AFLC) on Industrial Parkway North for an evening of family fun ? complete with magic shows, animal demonstrations, and crafts and activities built around a Year of the Rabbit theme ? that's perfect for the young and the young at heart.

ZooTek, for instance, will offer three shows at 6, 7, and 8 p.m., with Pickpocket Magic on hand with shows at 6.45 and 8.30 p.m. Throughout the evening, there will be two public swims, two public skates, face painting, science demonstrations by Mad Science, inflatables and more.

?This year we're able to go back to our traditional format, which we had done prior to 2020 with all of the activities at the AFLC, which enables us to have a plan that is not vulnerable or having to adapt to whatever weather conditions we face that evening,? says Shelley Ware, Special Events Coordinator for the Town of Aurora.

?Last year, we did something entirely different by taking the event solely outside at Town Park with a circus busker show. With this event being indoors, the entertainment is more [interactive] and hands-on. There were two totally different feels, but what is comforting this year is not having to be vulnerable to the weather. People can literally just bundle up, pile into their vehicle, and come into the event where they can go from activity to activity ? just being able to experience it and be in the moment.?

Planning a more traditional Family First Night was also a welcome chance to bring back some activities that had gone virtual due to the global pandemic to live and in person, including the magic and animal shows. It's also an opportunity to resume hands-on crafts, all rabbit-themed, which youngsters can enjoy with their peers and families.

?We're going back to our grassroots after a solid two-year hiatus,? says Ms. Ware.

The last nearly-three years has been a time of adapting and retooling for the Town's Special Events Department. Their plans have had to remain flexible due to public health restrictions, but this year was a welcome return to normal in many aspects, including at the recent Aurora Christmas Market.

?These events are live things: they evolve, they adapt, and because they become such an important part of people's memories, whether it's their childhood memories, their adult memories, whether they met their significant other at an event, it's a living entity of energy,? says Ms. Ware. ?It's so good to see the community back on track, coming out to events, and coming out in full force, but also with the different programming skills we've learned over the last three years, being able to still transform.

?For those who have never experienced it, whatever your plans are that night with the hours of Family First Night, if it can fit into your schedule, come on by. Even though the event is from 6 ? 9 p.m., and you can only swing it from 7 ? 9 p.m., just come and check it out, see what your family gravitates to and what they want to experience. If you've been to this event for many years, we want to welcome you back. There will be some familiar favourites as well as some new experiences we're looking forward to seeing your reactions to!?

For more on Family First Night, visit www.aurora.ca/en/recreation-arts-and-culture/family-first-night.aspx.

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