

MARKET MUSINGS

By Jan Freedman

Now that the Aurora Farmers' Market and Artisan Fair has ended its 2017 Outdoor Season, we move indoors to the Aurora Armory at the edge of Town Park for a short Indoor Season.

The first Indoor Market for this year will occur this Saturday, November 11, from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m. As it is Remembrance Day, we will observe a minute's silence at 11 a.m. and Taps will be played to honour all the Veterans who unselfishly sacrificed so much for the freedoms which we enjoy today.

Let me now tell you about one of the Farmers' Market's most colourful vendors and, with complete transparency, one of my best friends.

John Abraham, an American born of Lebanese parents, grew up in Worcester, MA in a tightly knit family. They lived in a triple decker with both sets of grandparents. From the age of 12 until 18, he worked in his uncle's shoe shine/repair/ hat cleaning business while also handling illegal gambling bets.

John attributes much of his early education to those days!

He moved on to the US Air Force and, after four years as an orderly room clerk, decided to return to school. While engaged in some graduate work, John met Paula. She became his wife and soul mate.

In 1971, John was accepted to do a post secondary degree in Religious Studies at McGill University so they moved to Montreal. A few years later, their son Christopher was born followed by Paula Marie. Those days were amazing, wonderful and, at times, harrowing. Today, John has five fabulous, beautiful and bright grandchildren who all live close to Aurora.

After receiving a teaching degree from McGill, John began teaching religious studies at the High School level. He continued to do this for 40 years, both in Montreal and then in Markham/Aurora.

As a religious studies teacher, John developed a strong orientation to social justice issues, especially concerning poverty. This led to an involvement in Fair Trade - a network which provides producers in developing countries a fair price for their products. Workers can then become part of a sustainable and equitable relationship which gives them stability and empowers people at the grassroots level. People move from dependency to independence, raising their dignity. The slogan 'Trade not Aid' captures this principle.

The Fair Trade network eliminates the middle man while trading directly with workers and small farmer cooperatives, providing funding for community development. While adhering to international labour organization standards, it promotes the production of products through sustainable environmental practices.

This was what John wanted to bring to the Aurora Farmers' Market and joined when we were in the parking lot on Temperance Street.

His product line expanded after we moved to Town Park and he added German Strudel and Montreal style bagels, becoming known as 'the Strudel Man'. When you visit his booth/table, he will sing you his famous 'Strudel Dee Strudel Dum' song on demand or not, or perhaps the 'Cheer Cheer for Ole Notre Dame' ditty, sports being another of John's passions. Be sure to stop by to say 'hi' at all three of the Indoor Markets.

The following are the vendors who are expected to be at the first Indoor Market this Saturday:

John Abraham, Jan's Country Pantry, Eva Nagy with her fabric creations, Mark Kolb with Brainy Games, Green Garden Perennial Farm with cut flowers and plants, Green Leaf Designs with jewellery, Bill Hack with BBQ Tools, Nancy Wood's Heartsease with fabric, knit and crocheted items, Lucy Quintero with Limitless Jewels, Kim Boland's Kibo Natural Body Care, Minda Davis and Katie Argyle with art and Pottery, Marnie Parkin of Bear's Den with knit socks and gloves, Cathy of Catharina's Kitchen's with baking and coffee, Ginger's Cupcakes and Desserts, Andy and 19th Avenue Farm, David Heard of Creepy Tours and Andre or Jim with Pioneer Honey. By Saturday, there may be some changes to the vendors, but we'll be there waiting to greet you.

See you at the Indoor Market!