

## Young Aurorans to take a hands-on approach in look and feel of Youth Space



**By Brock Weir**

Doors were opened last week for youth to become involved in the issues that matter to them.

Last week was National Youth Week and, coinciding with that commemoration, Aurora is now accepting applications from local youth between the ages of 12 and 17 to become members of Aurora's Youth Engagement Committee.

The move comes after a delegation to Council earlier this year of a group of high school students looking to form a committee to represent the interests of young Aurorans within Town Hall.

"We have since met with those youth and we are working together right now," says Franco DeMarco, Acting Youth and Community Development Coordinator for the Town of Aurora, noting the vision of the committee going forward is slightly different from what was originally proposed. "If youth are interested in making a difference in the community and getting involved in taking on a leadership role, those are opportunities we will have open to them."

All of this is in anticipation of opening up Aurora's Community Space for Youth, or Youth Centre, at the newly revamped Aurora Family Leisure Complex, currently under reconstruction on Industrial Parkway North.

These youth will be able to help guide the development of the Centre, and also leave their mark in other ways around the new building.

Mr. DeMarco has also launched a new program called Urban Art Aurora. Youth, again between the ages of 12 and 17 are invited to apply and brainstorm this spring on ideas for graffiti-based art which will become an installation within the Centre.

"With our new Youth Centre opening up in the fall, we were brainstorming new initiatives to get youth engaged in the community," he says. "We do a lot in the community already with Art in the Park, an initiative which is underway again this year. We're currently doing a youth art show, but we didn't have an urban art category and we recognized that as another opportunity."

"Urban art is very trendy and popular and we wanted to see if our youth wanted to get involved in it. It has just opened up for registration and we have gotten great feedback so far."

Urban art is something which can be opened up to wide interpretation. For the purposes of Urban Art Aurora, organizers have chosen to focus on graffiti, primarily with spray paint to get the creative juices flowing.

They have taken the idea to schools, contacts in high school, as well as to some Grade 8 teachers within the community to get the ball rolling.

?As this is our first year, we are only taking 10 participants total and we have received five registrations in just a couple of days,? says Mr. DeMarco. ?Registration will go until the end of May, so with a whole month left, feedback has been great.?

Once all the participants have been selected, planning will get underway at a brainstorming session tentatively scheduled for the afternoon of Tuesday, June 10. There, organizers and teens will share their visions and put their heads together on going forward.

?We want to see what they want. That night, we will be getting their ideas and coming up with a possible theme. We don't really know what that will look like because it really will depend on the youth that come to the table and we will be letting them lead those conversations.

?We will give them boundaries in which to work, but really it is going to be on them to come up with the concept. From there, once we have established that, they will go their own separate ways, maybe we'll work on some sketches of what we have in mind, we'll bring it back for our check in point to look over what has been happening so far and keep everyone on track. We'll work towards a sketching night.?

Students will then be able to transfer their ideas and sketch them onto two huge pieces of canvas which will then come to life as the young artists wield their spray paint cans outside for all to see as part of Aurora's Canada Day Celebrations.

?We're doing two 30 foot canvasses and the idea is depending on the registration to have five youth per canvas,? says Mr. DeMarco. ?That night we will transfer those sketches to canvasses and then on Canada Day they will actually paint them in an en plein air approach.?

For more information on the initiative, visit [www.aurora.ca/aurora/youth](http://www.aurora.ca/aurora/youth).