

Aurora puts healthy new spin on Arctic Adventure favourites

By Brock Weir

This Monday is Family Day and, once again, Town Park will be transformed into a winter wonderland for a whole day of family fun. This year, however, there will be some added attractions to get people on their feet and have fun.

Running from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., this year's Arctic Adventure will feature returning favourites such as professional ice carving, a variety of outdoor winter games, Arctic golf, bouncy castles and, weather permitting, outdoor skating, tubing, and snow shoeing.

With this weekend's expected cold snap, however, there are some new activities and features to get warm and keep your blood pumping.

The Optimist Club of Aurora will be stationed in the adjacent Aurora Armoury hosting Soup for Smiles, a new initiative featuring a variety of soups to be tasted.

If the soup warms the blood, prepare to be pumped up with the official launch of the Healthy Kids Community Challenge. An initiative of several local organizations, including Windfall Ecology Centre and Sport Aurora, this is one of the first steps on the road to achieving Aurora's goal of becoming the most active community in Canada.

Throughout the day, there will be a number of booths featuring activities for kids and families, as well as information about local programs, including an obstacle course, pogo jumpers, a game of catch, selfie-opportunities at a specially created campsite, complete with faux fire, social media contests and, if Mother Nature cooperates, snow fort and snowmen building.

The Aurora Tigers will also be on hand from 11.15 a.m. to 12.45 p.m., skating with the public on the outdoor rink (weather permitting), before joining MPP Chris Ballard and Mayor Geoff Dawe at the band shell at 1.20 p.m. where the official kick-off will be followed by the home team, and team owner Jim Thomson leading the crowd in a fun workout session.

‘This is going to be our big debut!’ says Jen Atkinson, Director of Operations for Windfall Ecology Centre, noting the support of Mayor Dawe, Sport Aurora, Neighbourhood Network, the York Region Food Network, York Region Public Health, and local businesses. ‘Their support has been invaluable putting on the launch like this. Arctic Adventure is really well attended, so we will have the perfect audience and we just want to have a lot of fun.’

Gemma Goldstein, who has been spearheading these initiatives on behalf of Windfall, says the objective has been to make things fun for everyone, regardless of age. Most importantly, it is about highlighting the fact that staying active and keeping healthy doesn't mean just sticking with a sport – and the importance of healthy eating will be underscored with free fruit kebabs available to all attendees at the Armoury.

Capping the event will be a nature play put on by the Paddling Puppeteers, which begins at 2.45 p.m.

Plus, there will be something available to make sure you keep active well beyond Arctic Adventure.

‘We are working with the Parks and Recreation Department and we're going to give kids passes so they can go and participate in activities, or go and swim for free several times with our Healthy Kids Pass from mid-February to July 15,’ says Ms. Goldstein. ‘It is really exciting and we're hoping to provide over 2,000 of these passes to kids in Aurora so 25 per cent of the kids in Aurora will be physically active.’

For a full roster of Arctic Adventure activities, visit www.aurora.ca.