

Aurora Winter Blues Fest aims for summer lovin'?



By Brock Weir

Plenty of people sing the winter blues, but the minds behind the Aurora Winter Blues Festival are looking to bust out of their seasonal boundaries to be part of Aurora's Concerts in the Park series.

Council is set to consider extending the Town's traditional Summer Concerts in the Park Program, which brings hundreds of people to Town Park each Wednesday evening in July and August, to include a new component courtesy of the Blues Festival (AWBF).

Festival co-founder Jamie Macdonald made his pitch to Councillors last week, noting if the proposal is ultimately approved by local lawmakers, a Juno Award-winning band will be hitting the park's band shell on Wednesday, September 2.

"This is a wonderful opportunity for the AWBF and the Town to co-program a music event this summer," said Mr. Macdonald.

Plans for the September 2 date, the Wednesday before the Labour Day long weekend, includes not only a concert, but a full program dubbed "Blues and Cruise", a collaboration between the AWBF and the Aurora Car Club.

"The event would focus on featuring a prominent Juno Award-winning band, plus showcasing two local youth bands," he said. "The event would include a cruise night which would provide a backdrop of classic cars that would draw on a larger demographic of the community through the Aurora Car Club. This event has worked very successfully in other towns.

"Local restaurant establishments would also be involved in providing food services. In addition, working with the Optimist Club of Aurora, the evening would provide a means to create awareness and fundraising for local youth and music programs. This opportunity would highlight the coming together of the Town and a community organization to further promote the arts and culture in our vibrant and wonderful town. We're really looking forward to bringing a Juno Award-winning band to the Town of Aurora."

The collaboration between the AWBF and the Aurora Car Club and, potentially, the Town of Aurora, are the latest in a long line of partnerships spearheaded by festival organizers. The lead-up to this year's Festival, for instance, included collaborations with the Aurora Cultural Centre on a two-pronged program to salute local charities benefiting from the proceeds of the Festival alongside an exhibition highlighting the history of the blues genre, as well as efforts with the Aurora Public Library to bring pop-up concerts at a local venue otherwise prized for its peace and quiet.

The proposal won the support of Council at this early stage, with members noting they were looking forward to seeing a staff report later this month on moving forward together.

?The Aurora Blues Festival has a proven track record of success, so I think it is an outstanding idea to add onto that,? said Councillor Sandra Humfryes. ?They have done an exceptional job and this concert will be an incredible addition to our Concerts in the Park series.?

By the time the report is before Council, questions expected to arise ? as they did last week ? include logistics of hosting the event in the Park, including whether fencing would be required if beer was to be served. Although it has not yet been determined whether beer will be flowing, Mr. Macdonald said provincial rules regarding fencing and beer gardens have been relaxed.