

Awaken Aurora: The Dawn Within will bring mindfulness and connection to community



Next month will bring the dawn of a new year and the new year will bring the dawn of a new movement to the Aurora community.

Awaken Aurora: The Dawn Within is a new program set to launch at Aurora Town Square on January 18 to ?give women in the community a dedicated space to pause, and feel supported and connected as they tend to their own health and wellbeing.?

The program is the brainchild of local residents Lauren Hanna, a health policymaker, digital marketer and mental health advocate Skai Spooner, and realtor Krista Hall.

Its kick-off, the first of what they hope will be several events throughout the year, will include a candlelit morning of mindfulness, movement, storytelling, and meaningful community connection, and will feature an ?uplifting talk to nurture mind and spirit, a music and movement session to awaken energy, light bites from local vendors, thoughtful giveaways from community partners, [and] a warm, welcoming atmosphere that encourages meaningful connection.?

Aurora is named after the Goddess of Dawn and ?Awaken Aurora: The Dawn Within? embraces this facet of the community's identity while building another facet for the future.

?One thing we noticed and talked about together was there wasn't a ton that was focused on women's health, supporting mental health, and the time to focus on that in particular,? says Hanna. ?From our own interest in seeing something like this in the Town, we just thought, ?Okay, let's create it,' and from there the ball just got rolling brainstorming and putting ideas out there.

?Krista has run Rise and Shine, an International Women's Day event for the past couple of years and this is building on that a little bit because it includes inspirational talks, reflection and some movement.?

Spooner, she adds, took the lead on booking guests.

The first is Holly DePass, who has a focus on breath work, while Michelle Hillier is a speaker with a focus on wellness.

?Holly, through her own personal journey, in particular with significant grief and some significant loss in her life, has really moved into the space of doing breathwork as a form of self-care and healing,? Hanna explains. ?She will be doing a talk at the event, some guided breathwork and that's one element of the session. The other will be led by Michelle who does a lot of corporate wellness sessions and she does something unique ? she has headsets that each participant will wear and then uses those to guide you through

reflection, movement and breathing.?

Organizers have also partnered with local food providers such as My Indie Coffee, Bread by Lee, a new venture from the former chef of the Armoury, and Heal, which will provide smoothies.

"This is kind of a chance to set a little bit of time aside on Saturday morning," says Hanna.

Not only that, it's also a terrific way to support community as proceeds from the event will benefit the Canadian Mental Health Association of York Region and South Simcoe. (CMHA-YRSS)

"We're deeply grateful to Awaken Aurora for creating an event that brings our community together and strengthens vital mental health care," says Rebecca Shields, CEO of the CMHA-YRSS. "Your generosity helps people access free, effective services when they need them and moves us closer to opening the York Region Community Care Centre - a future lifeline for individuals and families facing mental health or addiction crises. This space will offer immediate, compassionate care and clear pathways to support. Together, we're building hope and strengthening care for everyone who needs it."

That, at the end of the day, is what it's all about for the organizers behind Awaken Aurora.

"We have a great, supportive community. In Aurora Village and across the Town, we've been raising young kids in recent years, so we've developed a really nice network of young parents and they tend to be really supportive when we come up with new ideas," says Hanna when asked how they will gauge the success of this first-time event. "I think the response from Kris' events in the past have been really positive and everyone seems to walk away just feeling uplifted and inspired and like they've connected with other people. If we can do something similar, that would be incredible."

"It's designed to be just a very beginner, approachable event. Everyone is welcome and there's no expectations around the extent of someone's participation or previous experience with meditation or particular types of movement. It's really designed to meet people where they are. Ultimately, everyone needs to take care of their own health and mental health in particular. It's an individual journey; however people want to show up and move through it and participate, they're welcome to create their own adventure through it."

Tickets for the first session in the Awaken Aurora series are on sale now at aurora.ca/whatson. For further information and to keep track of upcoming events, follow them on Instagram @AwakenAurora.ca.

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