

## Carruthers? mural adds colourful splash to Downtown Promenade



Aurora artist Vicki Carruthers has long found inspiration in the wilds of Georgian Bay.

It's a theme she returns to time and again within her work and, in the unveiling of the first of a series of Yonge Street murals, she's sharing that inspiration and joy with all passers-by.

The striking mural was formally unveiled by Mayor Tom Mrakas and members of Council last Tuesday, May 31, outside of Chartwell Park Place on the southeast corner of Yonge and Reuben Streets.

It's the first in a mural program which is planned to 'transform what are otherwise plain retaining walls into colourful showcases for public art,' said Mayor Mrakas.

'The murals are also intended to create a sense of pride, reduce graffiti and tagging, and allow neighbourhoods to shape their community through beautification,' he said. 'The first mural we are celebrating today was created by Aurora-based artist Vicki Carruthers who generously provided her artwork at no cost in the hope that it will inspire the community. As Vicki says 'she wants to share her passion, make a difference and put a smile on your face with her colourful paintings.

'Vicki's mural fits perfectly with our vision for downtown. It expresses light, sun, enjoyment, and makes you happy as you walk by. We want our residents to have those kinds of feelings when they see this mural and visit our downtown.'

Funding for the mural was put forward by Enbridge through their Fuelling Futures Fund and representatives from the company were also on hand for the unveiling.

'It was unbelievable,' said Ms. Carruthers of last week's unveiling. 'The reaction that I got from hundreds of people ' I have always created work to make people happy and I think it has created something for people to be excited about, happy about. To have artwork accessible for anyone to come and see at any time, it is going to be there as long as it can be ' it kind of blew my mind. I don't know how to describe how humbled and excited I am by this. It has always been a dream and that it actually happened is kind of remarkable for me.'

This past winter, she told The Auroran: 'The painting's title is 'Stay Strong' so you believe in yourself and never give up on your dreams. That is kind of my life-long inspiration. I have worked hard, I have struggled, and now things are coming to me with just never giving up.'

The Town shared Ms. Carruthers' excitement in seeing this come to life and is equally eager to see more artistic works like these not

only beautify the Aurora Promenade area but bring more people into Aurora's historic centre.

“We hope Vicki's mural is the first of many to adorn these retaining walls,” said Mayor Mrakas. “Collectively, by supporting artists we can shape our community identity, foster a sense of belonging, and enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors.

**By Brock Weir** Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter