

## Chamber's annual Street Festival celebrates 20th Anniversary on Sunday



**By Brock Weir**

Marking your 20th anniversary is usually a cause to pull off something spectacular, but when this anniversary pertains to Canada's longest street festival on Canada's longest street, an event that attracts tens of thousands each year, pulling out any extra stops might seem like gilding the lily.

It's full steam ahead, however, for the Aurora Chamber of Commerce as they put the finishing touches on this Sunday's annual Aurora Street Festival, which takes over Yonge Street from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. from Wellington Street in the north to Murray Drive in the south.

To mark their milestone anniversary, the Street Festival has attracted nearly 700 booths, a new record for the now-venerable Aurora institution, and booked returning and fresh acts to keep the hordes of people entertained.

"We have constantly changed and constantly invited more people to come in with different things to sell," says Judy Marshall, CEO of the Aurora Chamber of Commerce. "Sometimes the Aurora retailers wish we just had local people, but it wouldn't be the same Festival then. People come from all over Ontario and I think that is really the distinctive feature - people come from everywhere and they come just to see Aurora."

"It is the biggest street Festival in Ontario and they just want to participate because they know the reputation of the festival. It is always the first Sunday in June, they count on that, and they put it in their schedules every year, but it is always different, people are welcomed, they like coming to Aurora, and they like getting to know everyone better."

Staff and volunteers from the Chamber will have an early start on Sunday, hitting the streets at 8 a.m. marking off spaces and making sure everything is ready for the influx of incoming vendors. They particularly enjoy interacting with the vendors and making sure their Festival experience runs as smooth as possible and, over the past two decades, many of them seem like old friends, says Ms. Marshall.

Over the past five years in particular, she says she has seen the Festival "expand and become more attractive" and while this year they have not had to turn any potential vendors away, they are booked solid, leading the Chamber to ponder whether an expansion might be necessary before it hits the quarter-century mark in 2020.

"We haven't sent anyone away this year, but we're full - it's wonderful and we're lucky," says Ms. Marshall. "I hope people leave

with a good feeling about Aurora. Many people stop before they leave Aurora and go to dinner, or experience the hospitality of Aurora. There is a lot of economic benefit to the community.?