

Deck the Halls tour promises to be colourful holiday extravaganza

If you're a Christmas decoration enthusiast, you've probably never needed a reason to embrace your inner Clark Griswold, but if you do need an excuse, the Deck the Halls Tour is ready to see what you've got.

The second annual Deck the Halls Tour, a family-friendly and self-guided driving tour of some of the community's best festive displays, is gearing up for December and if you think you have what it takes, you have until Friday, November 19, to put your home on the list.

While registration to be a part of the tour is fast approaching, the tour itself will run from Friday, December 10 to Sunday, December 19 from 5 ? 9 p.m.

The home selected as Best Decorated will win a grand prize in the form of gift cards supporting local businesses.

The Deck the Halls tour was revived by the Town last year as a safe and festive activity for families during COVID-19. Although many restrictions have since eased, the most recent event was so successful the Town decided they would like to keep the tradition going into the new normal.

?We received wonderful feedback from the community last year who enjoyed getting out of the house at that stage of the pandemic to tour the houses and businesses, and the homeowners and business owners gave us feedback that they enjoyed decorating and seeing higher-than-normal traffic in their areas with appreciation,? says Shelley Ware, Special Events Coordinator for the Town of Aurora. ?It was a total win-win for families and shop owners putting in the effort to redecorate, for families going on leisurely drives and checking out all the lights and décor. It is just a wonderful time of year and putting together this tour just helps Aurorans navigate throughout the Town.?

The Deck the Halls Tour is just one example of a Town event being re-tailored for the pandemic that has been shown to have legs well beyond the pandemic being behind us. For Ms. Ware, it is always a matter of looking outside the box and finding ways to innovate.

?We had a community lights competition in the mid-90s and it was successful for a few years and then waned,? she says. ?With the pandemic, you're always looking for that next big idea, but sometimes revisiting simple ones and making them unique and making them your own is a formula that is usually trustworthy. Although Deck the Halls was created as a stop-gap to try and bring something extra to the community during that time of year, the love of lights was rediscovered.

?When you think of Christmas, there is a common symbol that comes into play, but a common denominator, even amongst different faiths and practices over the holidays, is light. Given the time the sun sets and how many early evenings we have, the magic of lights I don't think is ever going to dim. Had it not been for COVID, we likely would not have thought of revisiting Deck the Halls because between the parade and the Christmas market that keeps us busy, but we were glad to have the ability to do this and hopefully it will grow this year.?

Additionally, as Aurora moves towards a ward system of government next year, Ms. Ware envisions the years ahead might include different tours and challenges within each ward on best in show in the light department!

Ms. Ware encourages anybody who is in the midst of decorating their homes for the holidays to register and be a part of the community festivities.

?I think there is a personal reward in being able to see the appreciation for what you put together, but I also think there is an overall feel-good sense for the magic and the light that you're participating and putting into this community. Whether you're into Christmas and the holidays, or maybe not at all, I have yet to meet someone that doesn't look at a light display and it doesn't do something to

their heart. By participating, you get to be one of those difference-makers. When you look at someone who is maybe a first responder, or has worked their third shift that day, and are coming home tired and weary to responsibilities and all the burdens that can come with that, imagine by participating in the tour, the person drives by and sees what you put together and it completely changes their night, their level of energy, and just gives them that extra ounce they need to get through the evening and face whatever hurdles they are facing. The benefits I don't think we will ever be truly able to measure.?

To register your home or business in the tour, visit aurora.ca/deckthehallstour.

By Brock Weir Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter