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Reverends Andy Comar and Lorraine Newton Comar are pictured Thursday afternoon inside the future worship space of the new Aurora United Church. After 16 years of leading the church, a time where fire destroyed its long-time spiritual home at Yonge and Tyler Streets and where a global pandemic forced the church to reinvent itself, the Comars formally retired after services this past Sunday. **Auroran photo by Brock Weir**

Trauma, Grief, and Renewal:

“Our job description was ultimately written by circumstance”

BY BROCK WEIR

EDITOR

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

“And the world will be a better place.”

They are the timeless words brought to life by Jackie DeShannon in her 1969 song Put A Little Love In Your Heart,” refreshed by Annie Lennox in more recent years – and they took on new resonance once again on Sunday as members of the

Aurora United Church raised their voices as one to say farewell to long-time church leaders Reverend Andy Comar and Reverend Lorraine Newton Comar.

For parishioners, they made their faith community a better place as they used their strong leadership to keep the congregation from scattering following a 2014 fire which destroyed their spiritual home of more than 150 years. Then, just six years later,

they were on the forefront of reinventing the church to a virtual realm in the face of global turmoil.

“Our ministry will be remembered as a time of trauma and grief and then renewal,” said Lorraine on Thursday, reflecting on she and Andy’s 16 years at the head of Aurora United Church. (AUC)

But their ministry was about so much

Continued on page 15

Optimist Club celebrates its 40th anniversary of service to Aurora's youth with Legion celebration

BY JIM STEWART

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Charter member and founding Vice President Alex Ansell delivered the keynote address at the Optimist Club’s 40th Anniversary Dinner on Thursday night at the Royal Canadian Legion in Aurora.

Emcee and former Optimist President Carol Bartlett introduced the amiable

Continued on page 8



BACK-TO-SCHOOL SPORTS – Liberty and Summer are pictured at the SARC on Saturday with books as the Aurora Black Community Association, the Town of Aurora, the York Regional Police, and a host of community partners held a community-building Back-to-School Sports Day. For more, see Page 22.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

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The 99's help close out Aurora's Concerts in the Park series



That's a wrap on Aurora's popular Concerts in the Park series as The 99's closed out the series last Wednesday night on a high note. (Clockwise from Top Right) The band served up a high energy performance from the band shell. Those gathered at Town Park for the show included Jeanette and Josie; Barbara and Rayann; and Angelina, Liliana, Kimberly, and Weston.

Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger

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Terry Fox Run organizers keep hope alive at Aurora Arboretum



Helping to organize this month's Terry Fox Run at the Aurora Community Arboretum are Seana O'Birek, Karen Fulbrook, and Lauren Hanna. This year's Run, set from September 14, will begin at the Arboretum entrance at the Aurora Community Centre. **Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger**

September 14 event marks 45th anniversary of Marathon of Hope

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Seana O'Bireck didn't hesitate when she was asked to help organize this year's Terry Fox Run in Aurora. Her father, John, was a driving force for local healthcare as one of the founders of Mardi Gras for Southlake, an annual event which raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for Southlake Regional Health Centre for more than a decade. Had John, who lost his battle with pancreatic cancer in 2023, still have

been with us, his daughter says he would have been among the first to answer the call to lend a hand to the Terry Fox Foundation. So, when Seana got the call, she knew she had to answer. "Terry Fox is a great Canadian figure and I think everybody everywhere is touched by cancer somehow," she says. "It was one of those situations that if it was my dad who had been asked, he would step, up, so you've got to do that kind of stuff and fill those roles because volunteers are always needed and necessary – and fundraising, of course, is important as well." Seana was asked to join in organizing this year's Terry Fox event by long-time local organizer Karen Fulbrook. Fulbrook and O'Bireck are both active volunteers with the Aurora Community

Arboretum. This year's run will once again take place at the popular Aurora green space on September 14. Registration begins at 8 a.m. behind at the Run's start point, the Arboretum entrance behind the Aurora Seniors' Centre on John West Way. Different routes for those looking for runs and walks with varying lengths have been plotted out to offer two different Arboretum experiences to participants. Organizers behind this year's Run hope to raise \$12,500 on the day of the run, a figure which will come together with funds raised at similar events held in more than 600 communities across Canada the same day, with all proceeds bringing millions of dollars to the Terry Fox Foundation. The Terry Fox Run takes place each year across Canada in memory of Terry Fox and his Marathon of Hope, which began St. John's, NL, in April of 1980, before he was forced to call off the Run in Thunder Bay on September 1 the same year when his cancer returned. This year marks the 45th anniversary of the Marathon of Hope and on Monday, September 1, the anniversary of the Marathon's end – and the anniversary of Canadians from coast-to-coast helping to carry on from where Fox's herculean efforts had to leave off – Fox's sister and brother, Judith and Fred, led supporters on a hike through Sleeping Giant Provincial Park near Thunder Bay to pay "tribute to Terry's determination and his relentless optimism." Locally, O'Bireck says they are always encouraging new registrations and notes the need for event day volunteers to help with set-up and registration. In addition to the Run itself, O'Bireck says the start will include coffee and

refreshments, live music, a Zumba-style warm up, and routes of 2 km and 5 km throughout the arboretum space. "It's a gorgeous walk through the Arboretum, which is a hidden gem for Aurora that a lot of people, even now, still don't know that it exists," she says, noting the new children's book, "T Is For Terry", has introduced a whole new generation to Fox and his enduring impact on Canada. "Come on out, join us, and register online – registering online is helpful because it then helps bring ease to the morning and everyone can get started on time!" For more on this year's Terry Fox Run in Aurora, including how to register and raise funds, visit run.terryfox.ca/92771.

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Region recognizes Labour Day

On behalf of York Regional Council and The Regional Municipality of York, I would like to wish all of those who live or work in York Region an enjoyable and safe Labour Day.

Each year, Labour Day is a meaningful reminder to recognize the workers who contribute to the strength of our community and economy. It is also a time to reflect on the progress made in advancing workers' rights across York Region, Ontario and Canada.

As we celebrate every worker today, I also acknowledge York Region's dedicated employees whose passion and expertise help make our Region a thriving, safe and respected place so many are proud to call home. Every contribution matters and every individual working for York Region should feel proud of the difference they make.

As we mark this Labour Day, Regional Council remains focused on making life better for both people and employers. With 1.29 million residents, 57,000 businesses and 624,000 employees who work across our nine cities and towns, York Region is home to a strong, resilient and thriving economy. We remain grateful to the businesses that continue to invest here and drive economic vitality, especially in uncertain times. Together, we are building fair and equitable workplaces for everyone who calls York Region home.

Today, we celebrate the dedicated workers whose efforts drive progress and uphold safety and well-being in workplaces across our communities.

On behalf of Regional Council, I wish everyone a safe and happy Labour Day.

Eric Jolliffe
York Region Chairman and CEO



GETTING THINGS DONE

Mayor
Tom Mrakas

A couple of weeks ago I wrapped up four full days in Ottawa at the 2025 AMO Conference — an incredible week of learning, collaboration, and advocacy on behalf of Aurora.

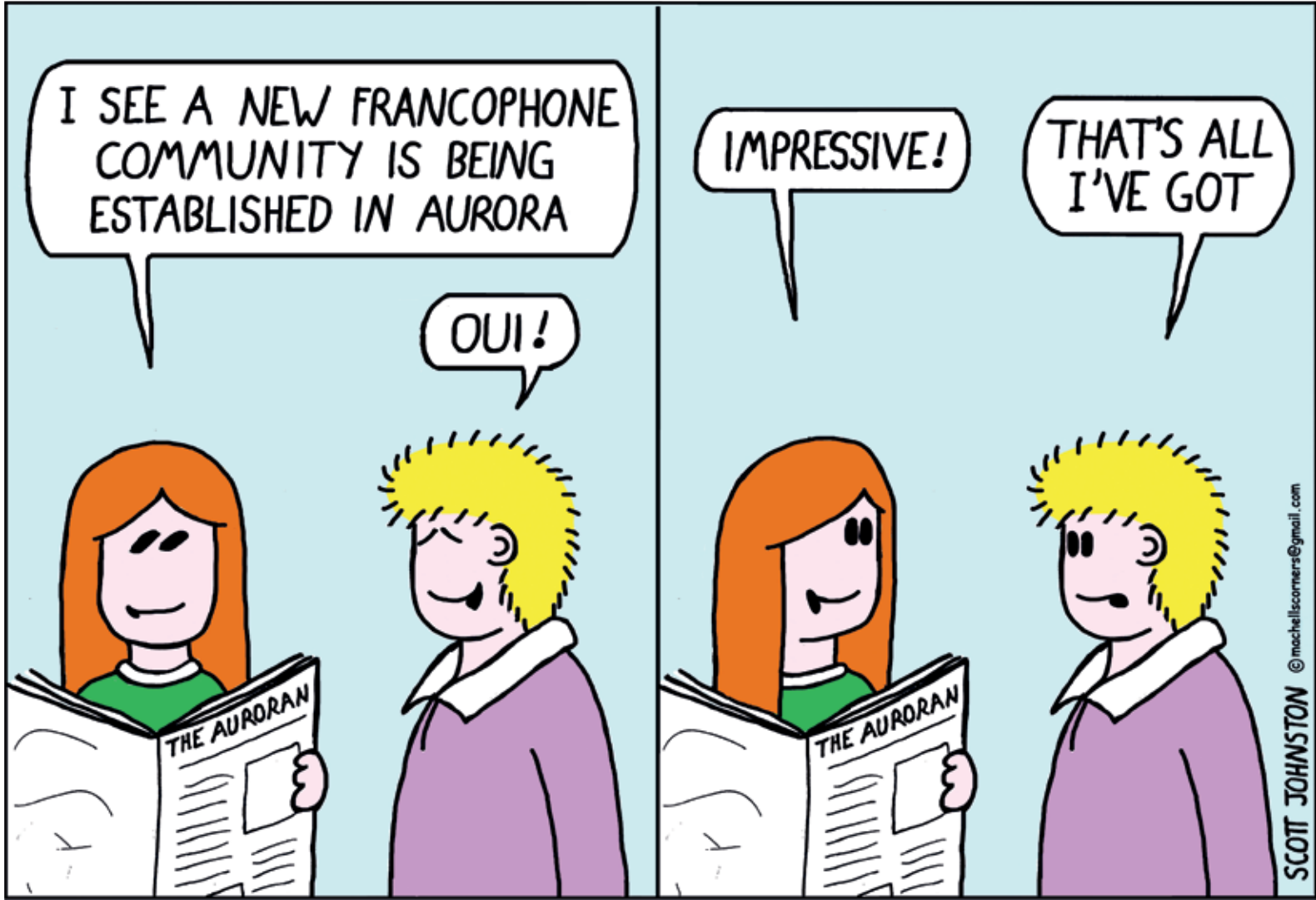
The AMO Conference brings together municipal leaders from across Ontario to share ideas, tackle challenges, and meet directly with Ministers and provincial officials. Over the past few days, I had the chance to sit down with colleagues and government partners to talk about the issues that matter most to our community — from building more housing, to securing predictable and sustainable infrastructure funding, to ensuring municipalities have the tools we need to deliver for our residents.

Along with those meetings, I attended a number of sessions and workshops that highlighted innovative approaches to housing, climate resilience, municipal finance, and community engagement. These sessions offered valuable insights and practical ideas that I look forward to bringing back to Aurora.

It was also a great opportunity to hear success stories from other communities and strengthen connections with municipal colleagues from across Ontario.

I'm proud to represent our Town and to make sure Aurora's voice is part of these important provincial conversations.

Machell's Corners



Meeting the community face to face

Students this week are starting the year with a fresh slate.

That's not to say the accomplishments of the last year have been for naught; rather you're at a brand-new starting block ready for the year ahead, a time that will hopefully give you the tools to keep up with our rapidly changing world and to take advantage of opportunities that often come fast and furious, and could profoundly impact the course of your future.

Co-op programs, for instance, can open one's eyes to career possibilities that otherwise wouldn't be a blip on their radar. Maybe a class trip to the nation's capital might kindle some embers that could result in a newfound interest in governance, political science, or simply serving the public. Elsewhere, although granted this is more of a summer thing, a trip to a summer camp up north, could sow the seeds for a future environmentalist, climate change specialist, park ranger, or even a vet.

It's always fun to see how local students fared at the end of the year.

If a newspaper editor is lucky, top scoring students in the closest school board, might just live in an area you cover and you get to share their story beyond school walls. If you're even luckier, they might just share a few tips of success that not only benefit the community but you can take to heart as well.

The same goes for students who end their years on a particularly high note, having some grants or scholarships to show for it, whether they're recognized for their academic prowess or their community contributions. Those who are recognized for their community work are, in my experience, particularly fascinating and lessons can always be drawn on what fuels their passions, propels them forward, and the impact they want to have on the world around them.

Those are the questions that are particularly fun to ask, and sometimes those of us in this position get to be on the flipside as well.

Students are also beginning the year either at the cusp of reaching further goalposts or are nearing the finishing line in June excited for all the possibilities ahead. Some of those who are considering careers in journalism, communications, or information-sharing at its broadest, often reach out for the inside scoop of what this career offers, armed with a litany of questions that are pointed in the best possible way.

Many of these questions are opportunities to accentuate the positive, of which there are many, I hasten to add; in other instances, it is clear they've done their homework as to some of the less positive elements; but, as they could be the journalists of tomorrow, you want to keep



BROCK'S BANTER

Brock Weir

things real with them, even if your answers can sometimes be a reality check for some more romanticized ideas.

The important thing, however, is they have the questions and are seeking out answers.

Sometimes that can be a rare commodity these days. Well, in more recent days.

Prior to the global pandemic, one generally assumed such questions were being asked in good faith. Questions would often range from a simple, "Why did you get into journalism?" and my answer touching upon a simple love of telling someone's story would often resonate with the person asking the question as it was more or less what brought them to the interest in the first place.

Another fun question to field is whether or not something I've written has made anyone mad.

While the answer to that is often in the eye of the beholder, when I tell them the most hate mail I've received so far was related to a story I wrote about a labour dispute as a high school student for another local paper, they're either relieved or disappointed.

There is occasionally, however, a different tone to the questions in the post-pandemic world.

This past spring, I had two requests from people who wanted to talk about what it means to be a journalist in today's day and age.

Both seemed to be on the up-and-up, reaching out due to a genuine interest, but one took a different track altogether.

In addition to asking perfectly standard questions, those that I've come to expect, this particular inquisitor took the time to answer the questions on my behalf as well, the tone becoming increasingly strange as the email progressed. In the process of their filling in the blanks, I learned that apparently the reason why I write is to satisfy the whims of some vague international organization, who they were certain signed my paycheques, and how

I was both simultaneously "woke" and "asleep" at the same time.

It was an enlightening read for me, but I still feel it would have been an even more enlightening read for them had I been given the opportunity to answer. That not being the case, however, I felt my efforts to do so would have been wasted and simply continued on with my day.

That being said, I do wonder what the motivation for such "questions" are.

Obviously, it's because in some way they think they're scoring some kind of point, political or otherwise, but are we now at point in this era of echo chambers where questions are coming with an expectation of the "desired" answers to preserve preconceived notions? Or maybe over the course of the pandemic we've become more averse to real human exchanges, a lingering mindset that those face-to-face interactions are best avoided wherever possible, or otherwise kept to a minimum?

Prior to the pandemic, I once had the honour of being invited by the local library to participate in a one-off "Human Library" event.

Hosted in conjunction with Culture Days, a Province-wide initiative that gets communities working together to showcase their cultural resources in fun and engaging ways, I was amongst the "Human Books" that community patrons could "check out" for a half-hour or so where they could have all their burning questions answered by their captive audience.

Among my fellow "books" were a famed gardener, a jewellery designer-to-the-stars, a duo of Grammy Award-winning music producers, an author-turned-social justice advocate — esteemed company for someone who only had two years of being editor under his belt, but it was a richly rewarding experience.

While it was a chance to answer questions, the process got each of us to think about what brought us there in the first place through someone else's lens, and hopefully differences were made both ways, however small they might seem.

Libraries today are about far more than books.

They are community hubs where we can learn, grow, and stay connected. Heck, they are even places now where you can check out a fishing rod if an impromptu camping opportunity comes your way. The possibilities are endless — and something like the Human Library, in whatever format it might be, should be explored again.

Everyone has questions they want answered, but finding the right way — or even the wherewithal to do it — can sometimes be a challenge.

If we're simply out of practice, let's all do some warm-up exercises together.

THE AURORAN

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The Aurora Museum & Archives is...

Lined up for another year!

Recognize these steps, Aurora? If you guessed 22 Church Street, then you'd be right, we're going back to school! Originally built in 1886 as an elementary school, the building temporarily housed a high school on the second floor; the students tripping up the short-riser staircase meant for children! This photo (2019.11.1) is of the pupils of Room 5 from their 1921-22 school year. Del Babcock, the boy with glasses, would go on to be Principal of this very school years later! See what happens when you hit the books? Good luck on another school year ahead Aurora!



Time Travellers Diary

By Claire Smith, Museum Professional

“A Visit to the Dentist”

“I haven’t seen you this excited about an assignment in years, Ruth,” Sloane said as he jotted down some notes in his logbook.

“I can’t believe you are not more excited, Sloane. This is such a great assignment!” I exclaimed.

It was November 1, 1893, and Sloane and I were on the last of a five-part assignment researching the history of female medical practitioners in Canada.

Today, we were posing as reporters from Hamilton and had arranged an interview with Dr. Josephine Wells. Dr. Wells was a local Aurora resident who had recently received her license to practice dentistry in Ontario, after her husband, Dr. John Wells, had become too ill to work.

During the Winter of 1893, Dr. Wells had placed ads in local papers informing residents that she would be available for weekly appointments held in the Aurora Banner’s offices. Just six years later, in 1899, Dr. Josephine Wells would become the first woman in Canada to ever graduate from a dental studies program, when she graduated from Trinity College in Toronto.

“Dr. Josephine Wells is a legend, Sloane. She helped pave the way for female dentists in Canada,” I said, “and she doesn’t get enough credit for it.”

After a short walk from our hotel, Sloane and I were now making our way into the building that housed the Aurora Banner’s offices. Upon entering the offices, we were greeted by a petite young woman holding an appointment book.

“Good afternoon, miss. My name is Sloane Gates and this is my colleague, Ruth Wilder. We have an interview scheduled with Dr. Wells for today at 1 o’clock,” Sloane told the woman.

“Of course, of course. The reporters. Yes, Dr. Wells told me that you would be stopping by today. If you would just follow me, I will take you to the doctor’s office,” the woman said as she tucked the book under her arm. “Have you travelled a long way to get here today?” she asked as we made our way down a long corridor.

“If you only knew,” I thought to myself as I stifled a laugh. All of a sudden the door to my left swung open and out walked the doctor herself.

“Good afternoon, my name is Dr. Josephine Wells. It’s nice to meet you both,” Dr. Wells said as she shook Sloane’s hand and then mine. “Please come in. I apologize for the mess. It has been a hectic morning. I had four young children come in for appointments this morning and as you can see, they were not happy to see me.”

The young woman who had first greeted us handed the book to Dr. Wells and then closed the door behind her. Sloane and I took a seat in front of the large wooden desk, as Dr. Wells reviewed the book in her hands.

“Right,” Dr. Wells said as she made a note in the book and then snapped it shut. “Where would you like to begin?”

To submit a letter to the editor, please send your email to brock@lpcmedia.ca Deadline for submissions is Sunday at 1 p.m.



COSTAS’ CORNER

MP Costas Menegakis
Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill

supplies has also jumped 17% since last year. That’s on top of higher grocery bills, housing costs and other essentials.

Our Conservative Team, led by Pierre Poilievre is working hard in Parliament to hold Mark Carney accountable and deliver real results for Canadians.

This month, Pierre Poilievre unveiled the Canadian Sovereignty Act, a plan to counter illegal foreign tariffs, legalize resource development and get Canada back to work. Our Conservative plan calls on the Government to legalize rapid resource development by repealing Liberal laws that keep Canada weak and reliant on the Americans:

- Bill C-69, which made it nearly impossible to build pipelines and mines;
- Bill C-48, which banned oil tankers on Canada’s west coast;
- The industrial carbon tax, which raises costs on everything for all Canadians;
- The oil and gas cap that eliminates jobs;

- The EV sales mandate that will increase the price of a gas-powered car by \$20,000;
- The Plastics Ban that blocks growth;
- The Liberal censorship law targeting energy companies, which gags producers from defending their work and promoting Canadian energy.

Conservatives are also calling on the Government to:

- Introduce the Canada First Reinvestment Tax Cut to eliminate capital gains tax on reinvestments in Canada;
- Pay Free Trade Bonuses to provincial governments that open markets to fellow Canadians;
- Protect Canadian innovation by requiring the Minister of Industry to present plans to Parliament to keep Canada’s inventions, discoveries and innovations from being sold off to other countries. We must have economic sovereignty in the modern economy, which is increasingly based on intangibles, like intellectual property.

Conservatives will introduce a motion in the fall sitting of Parliament to get these changes implemented. We are calling on Prime Minister Carney to work with us to restore Canada’s sovereignty in the face of American threats.

As I meet with families, I see their pain, but I have also seen their hope. They deserve a real plan to unleash their economic potential, create jobs and deliver a better future for the next generation. Conservatives will be hard at work in Ottawa this fall, standing up for Canadian jobs.



Senior Scape

By Christina Doyle

stomachs.

Are you one of those people who likes the change of seasons – although I wish it was spring every day with the winters shorter? But each season brings a different set of circumstances and new beginnings-whatever season it is. Wait, don’t put away those tank tops, sleeveless dresses but keep your comfy sweater nearby just in case. September is still summer. The autumnal equinox doesn’t happen until more than halfway through the month, and it usually stays hot all the way through the month.

Remember, fall is two months long. It’s October and November. Nobody is more unhappy about this than me. So, before the crying begins, how about a few ways to hang on to Summer a bit longer.

Number 1, of course, is spending some time outside. Despite the heat, get outside for a few minutes or longer each day. Sit on your porch, patio, balcony and grab a refreshment like an iced tea or book or just enjoy a quiet moment.

Number 2 is, if you are itching to get all those fall bins from the attic like the

As the summer season is winding down, families in Aurora are preparing for the back-to-school season. This is a time of excitement as our students prepare to return to the classroom, re-connect with friends and continue their academic studies. Teachers have prepared their curriculums and are ready to welcome this year’s youth with much anticipation. As we know, there is no substitute for a good education. It is the foundation young people need, to provide them with the skills, and knowledge to succeed in life.

I have spent the better part of the past few months meeting with residents, listening to their concerns and assisting people in every way I can. I confess that helping people is the most rewarding part of my job. I was elected to serve, and it is something I take both personally and seriously. In a couple of weeks, I will be returning to Ottawa. With the opening of the Parliamentary session, I intend to focus on the issues that have been shared with me. Key among those is a common worry of many families. A growing concern about unaffordability and a weakening economy. Workers are concerned about the rising unemployment rate and what it will mean for their families if they lose their job.

41,000 Canadians lost their jobs in July alone and the youth unemployment rate increased to 14.6%. In fact, since Mark Carney became Prime Minister, an astonishing \$63 billion of investment has fled the country, with \$8.3 billion leaving in June alone. That money should be creating Canadian jobs and growth, instead it’s meant poorer wages, more poverty and greater dependency on the United States.

Making matters worse, the cost of school

Hang on everyone, it’s still summer! Even though aisles are already loaded with Fall and Halloween decorations, and everyone is insisting that autumn is upon us, I am still hanging on to summer as long as possible.

I guess it depends on how you look at it – many people might see it as the end of summer, but even though my favorite time of the year is spring, I do enjoy summer.

Don’t put away those flip-flops yet, my friend. However, I do see September as the month of new beginnings. Remember when you were young, it was an exciting time when you went back to school and saw all your old friends and showed off your new clothes and nice tan. But it was also a stressful time, too, when you started a new grade or perhaps, like me, went to a new school again, along with new teachers and new kids in the class. I must say though as an adult I don’t miss those first few weeks in September.

Even though fall is just around the corner, there is something so beautiful about the fall – the brilliant colors changing on the trees or maybe it’s the cooler weather that slaps that lazy summer feeling out of you.

Do you notice that your appetite changes? We tend to crave those casseroles laden with carbs. I always pay closer attention to the grocery flyers that come home with hopes of seeing my flour on sale. Nothing makes me happier than making my own bread and, on a cool afternoon, the smell of fresh bread fills the air with the sound of hungry

Preventing injury, navigating transit on tap for Seniors’ Active Living Fair

Annual showcase will feature 50 vendors on Saturday

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

From navigating the sometimes-complicated world of transit to learning how to avoid injury, even on the

pickleball court, the Aurora Seniors’ Centre will host a morning of learning this weekend at the Town’s annual Seniors’ Active Living Fair.

Featuring more than 50 local vendors, the free Active Living Fair will take place at the Seniors’ Centre, just off John West Way, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. this Saturday, September 6.

“This is our third post-COVID Fair and we’re always excited to have

things that invite the community into the Centre,” says Karie Papillon of the Town of Aurora. “I think we have a really nice mix this year of services like the Alzheimer Society of York Region, the Ministry of Transportation, and the Region of York, and we’ll also have the Seniors’ Iranian Multicultural Association and the Probus Club, so it’s a nice mixture of information and fun.”

Helping organizers to plan this year’s event, Papillon says the Centre has fielded many questions in the last year about injury prevention and balance – mentally and physically.

“A lot of retirees are busier than they were before they retired because they’ve picked up so much, but a lot are also looking for something to do to make sure they stay busy,” she says. “The Fair addresses the ‘how’ we can stay busy by showing what’s highlighted in Aurora and at the Centre.

“In regards to injury prevention, we’re really excited to partner with Aurora Sports Medicine Professionals this year and at 10.15, they will be doing a racquet sport injury prevention seminar. We’ve all heard about the rise of pickleball, and then there’s still badminton and table tennis, too, and we would love to teach people how to stay injury free or even enhance their performance with this seminar.”

Seminars begin at 9.20 a.m. when the Ontario Securities Commission will speak about financial wellness and “steps to help you achieve financial balance in your life,” says Papillon. From 10.30 – 11.30, Chartwell Retirement will offer a free blood pressure clinic where participants can get a reading from a registered nurse.

Beginning at 11.10, the Region of York and York Region Transit will offer a talk about their plan to support seniors, including an outline of all available transit options.

“The other thing we hear is there’s a big fear around not driving anymore, losing independence, losing mobility freedom, and this will show them that there’s options out there that will help you stay independent, access your services, [and] access your social connections,” says Papillon. “That will wrap around what York Region is doing to support seniors and we hope that they’ll see that it’s not just Aurora that is working really hard to keep older adults active, but the Region as well.”

Beginning at 11.30 a.m. the Optimist Club will serve a free barbecue featuring hamburgers. As quantities are limited, those interested in a bite can secure a free ticket upon arrival at the Fair. The

We’ve all heard about the rise of pickleball, and then there’s still badminton and table tennis, too, and we would love to teach people how to stay injury free or even enhance their performance with this seminar

first 200 attendees will also receive a free grab bag filled with swag and information from their 51 participating vendors.

“I think we’ll have every nook and cranny of the Centre filled – we can’t get any more in unless we try to put them on the roof!” says Papillon of the assembled vendors.

Beyond the Fair, the event is a chance for the Aurora Seniors’ Centre to showcase the myriad programs they host under their roof year-round.

Among the initiatives are with Seniors’ Centre without Walls program that offers free virtual and telephone programming for older adults; their free Seniors’ Centre in the Mail program, a twice-monthly delivery of puzzles, games and activities to members to “keep your brain smart in different ways than social connections do,” and more.

Following the Fair, there will be even more opportunities to get a flavour of the services provided by the Aurora Seniors’ Centre.

The week of September 8 is their annual Try-Out Week where residents can sign up for a number of free activities, including snooker, billiards, fitness classes, and much more.

“It’s a nice way to come into the Centre without any financial or time commitment and see if we’re the place for you where you come in and feel comfortable, meet your friends and have a good time,” says Papillon. “I think sometimes people think we’re all sitting here playing cards and not being very active, but this is a really active place. When you come in, there’s a positive hum of activity. More often than not, you walk around and you hear people laughing and you see people sitting together having fun, enjoying each other’s company, having that conversation, and sometimes making plans not just to be here, but plans outside the building. We’re really about bringing people together and building that social connection.”

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Optimists have raised over \$2.5M for local youth since 1985

From page 1

Ansell who was encircled by club artefacts on display in the Legion’s main dining hall.

Ansell, who was inducted into the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame in 2014 as a community builder, reflected with fondness on building upon the service club’s modest beginnings in 1985.

“The Kiwanis and Kinsmen Clubs had met their demise in the 80’s and we needed 35 members to charter. On June 12, 1985, we chartered with 37 members and we have never dropped below that number in membership. Ken McIsaac, Neville Gynan, and George Gonsalves were there at the beginning of the club’s formation and they’re here tonight. After not being allowed to join service clubs, women joined our club for the first time in 1988.”

Ansell, 89, spoke glowingly about the significance of the current female leadership in the club and cited the Optimists’ historical achievements including “our continuing role in the Town’s Santa Claus Parade, and getting the Mobile Kitchen up and running in 1992 with a grant from Frank’s Fiesta—the precursor to the Hoedown.”

“Our Book Sales raised \$140,000 for the Aurora Library and there is a room on the second floor of the Library honoring our club’s contributions and legacy.”

The engaging keynote speaker also discussed initiatives that were developed to help the youth of Aurora and are still running today decades after their launches.

“Our Chess Tournament has been running for over 26 years, engaging hundreds of elementary school children, and our Aurora Hockey Showcase has been around for 24 years. All in all, we’ve raised over \$2.5 million for the youth of our community here in Aurora. We’re going to keep on changing with the times – just as we



Past presidents of the Aurora Optimist Club gathered for a group picture at Thursday night’s dinner marking the 40th anniversary of the service club.
Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

did in the club’s early years. The evidence of achievement is there—it’s all around us tonight in the scrapbooks, the binders, and the banners we have on display.”

Ever the Optimist, Ansell segued from honoring the past to predicting the service club’s bright future as the energetic octogenarian concluded his keynote: “As we celebrate these milestones, let us remember our best achievements are still to come.”

Ansell received a standing ovation from the assembly and took his place among the fourteen former Optimist Club Presidents in attendance for a historic group photo taken by Glenn Rodger that capped off the evening’s festivities.

A Million Mouthfuls also played a starring role in those festivities. Dinner guests praised the catering company’s tender and flavorful braised beef short rib and the Fuzion Shiraz Malbec table wine as an indomitable pairing. They also lauded the range of flavors in the seasonal greens appetizer.

Chef and owner Anne-Marie Million discussed the ingredients of the starter: “Tonight’s Summer Salad [was comprised of] baby lettuces, baby heirloom tomatoes, roasted yellow beets, shredded heirloom carrots, fresh herbs, watermelon radish, toasted almonds, blueberries, and a honey lavender dragon vinaigrette infused with local dragon fruit powder. All ingredients are sourced from local, small farms.”

Million’s main course also featured the fresh flavors associated with late-summer Farm to Table events in Central Ontario.

The community spirit of the Optimists has also been locally-sourced since 1985 and Thursday night’s celebration of the esteemed service club’s 40th anniversary was a testament to its ongoing support of local youth over parts of the last five decades.

to the eighties – the longevity and the exemplary spirit of the Optimist Club is remarkable. They’ve given so much to the youth of the community. Anytime we have an event, the Mobile Kitchen is a great partnership as they’ve provided food and drinks for us for over thirty years. Money that goes to the Optimist Club is always a win-win for Aurora whether it’s the Chess Tournament, the Old Soap Box Derby, or the Santa Claus Parade—the Club is always here to help.” In his post-dinner speech, Mayor Mrakas recalled joining the Optimist Club twenty years ago and praised the Club’s positive impact on Aurora: “You’ve made such a difference in empowering our community’s youth. Your presence is felt in every corner of the Town. Through scholarships, bursaries, and events like the Chess Tournament and the Santa Claus Parade, you make a difference and that’s the real gift of the Optimist Club. Here’s to many more years of Optimism and community-building.”

- Incoming Optimist Club President Stu Bundy was pleased to announce that “We are going to be holding Bingo Nights again starting in January” and he thanked “[former Club President] Glen Sharp for the heavy lifting. Thousands of dollars are going to be raised for kids in our community.”
- Optimist Club Lieutenant-Governor Rob Gaby brought greetings from Governor Bonnie Sheer-Porteous who extended “her sincere thanks and congratulations to the Optimist Club of Aurora in achieving this momentous milestone.” Gaby also introduced Sheril and Paul Thomson and Lauralee Reily from the Optimist Club of Keswick as well as John Large from the Optimist Club of Newmarket. The long-time member of the Optimist Club also acknowledged “our founding Vice President Alex Ansell who holds the district position as Parliamentarian. He most recently spearheaded us to a third-place finish in our inaugural entry at the Bed Races sponsored by the Optimist Club of Keswick. We were a formidable team with an average age of 72.3 years. We gave the Junior C Georgina Ice Dogs a real walk for their money! We want to thank him for his display tonight of our accomplishments to date.” In closing, Gaby applauded the chief organizers of the dinner: “Carol Bartlett, Deb Finnear, Sandra Watson, Maggie Thornton, and Aurora Citizen of the Year, Sandy Bundy.”



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Event Notes:

- Outgoing Optimist President Deb Finnear was pleased with the level of participation at the 40th anniversary party: “It’s a really big event for the club. It’s a big achievement for a service club to be growing in membership after forty years. Over 66 guests joined us for dinner tonight and it was nice to have ‘Take 2’ provide us with music during the reception. It’s great to see so many people here tonight from Tiny Township, Peterborough, Niagara Region, Newmarket, and Keswick to join our celebration.” Finnear took great pride in presenting the Club’s 2025 Rookie of the Year Award to Harold Reiter and lauded the accomplishments of 2025 Optimist of the Year Maggie Thornton.
- Aurora Mayor Tom Mrakas expressed his admiration of the Optimist Club’s achievements during our pre-meal chat: “Forty years of contributions going back

Revi Mula’s book charts grandparents’ harrowing flight from Poland

Aurora business owner is first-time novelist with The Red Apple



Revi Mulla, owner of Aurora’s Monaco Interiors, is a first-time author – pictured her with her debut novel, The Red Apple, inspired by her grandparents’ harrowing story of resilience.
Auroran photo by Brock Weir

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Revital Mula and her grandmother shared an unbreakable bond.

Growing up in Montreal after emigrating from Israel, Revi spent just about every Saturday with her grandparents as they shared harrowing stories about their journey to Canada, fleeing Poland near the start of the Second World War, and doing everything they could to survive.

As she got older, she knew these stories had to be preserved for posterity, and at one point even formed the kernel of a book – but doing anything further with the story was put on hold when marriage, motherhood to twins, and the establishment of Monaco Interiors took over.

But the lessons she learned from her grandmother took on added resonance when war broke out in Gaza following the attacks of October 7, 2023.

“I woke up on October 8 and said, ‘Okay, I have to be involved in what’s going on and I have to finish this story,” says Mula.

The result is The Red Apple, a first-time novel for the Aurora-based designer.

The Red Apple follows sixteen-year-old Hanna who is forced to flee with her boyfriend, Ben, “leaving behind everything she knows in a desperate bid to survive.”

“From the occupied streets of Lublin to the freezing depths of a Soviet labour camp, The Red Apple follows one young woman’s harrowing journey through violence,

loss, and unthinkable choices,” reads the synopsis. “Haunted by what she witnesses – and what she must do to stay alive – Hanna clings to the only constant left: love.

“But survival comes at a price. Raw, intense, and unflinchingly honest, The Red Apple is a powerful work of historical fiction, based on the true story of the author’s grandparents. In a world at war, this is a story not just of endurance, but of the quiet, defiant strength it takes to keep going.”

In picking up the story, Revi says she wanted people to “truly understand” what people like her grandmother experienced – “leaving everything behind, losing your entire family, all the while being in love.”

“I think it’s a story of love, and I think it’s a story of hope,” she says. “I really grew up with this feeling that everybody was equal, that racism was evil, and I grew up that way, I think, because of my grandparents’ experience,” she says. “It’s not just about her being Jewish, it’s about families that got obliterated because of hate.”

In picking up the threads of the book again after so long, Mula undertook extensive research of the era, seeking out anything she could get her hands on “to really get a sense of what young women felt like during that time.”

“There’s a lot of vulnerabilities that women would feel I know men wouldn’t feel, and I really wanted to include those vulnerabilities, maybe more so than what my grandmother was willing to share,” she says, noting that some of the rawer details in the

story may have been omitted by her grandmother. “I feel like she never wanted to hurt me or traumatize me further because they really did tell me a lot of things. My grandmother suffered a lot of PTSD after the war and I think talking about it made me feel better but, at the same time, I don’t think she wanted me to suffer alongside her. There’s a lot of generational trauma there. Women were really, really at risk every day. They’re at risk every day in the war; not unlike some of the gender-based violence that happens in any war is 99 per cent targeted at women. I think it’s important that people can truly resonate with and understand what’s happening in the greater world through her eyes and experiences.”

Despite the fact that when Revi told her grandmother she had visited Poland and saw many of the places she described in her stories she was greeted by, “Why’d you waste your money and go there?” her granddaughter ventures she would have been proud with the finished

product that is The Red Apple. “I think she would have been very happy the story lives,” she says, adding that being a first-time author is a bit surreal. “I think I am still living in that suspended world where I can’t believe I wrote a book, it’s published and people are reading it. I want people to enjoy the novel, first of all. I think it’s a great story, moves quickly, and it’s interesting and suspenseful in some ways. When they get to the end, I would like them to remember that hate has consequences – and it’s not just about Jewish people. Hate has consequences for everyone and if people can put the book down and tell themselves that they will move through their life without carrying that burden of hate, I think that would be the greatest thing in the world for me.”

A book signing with author Revi Mula will take place at Royal Rose Gallery (15210 Yonge Street, Aurora) on September 21 at 7 p.m. To register, call 905-503-0121. For more on The Red Apple, visit the redapple.ca.



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Multicultural Festival will span two locations in Culture Days kick-off

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Culture Days in Aurora will kick off with a spicy celebration of the diversity that calls Aurora home at the Town’s annual Multicultural Festival.

Set for Saturday, September 20, the Multicultural Festival will offer a full day of activities at both Aurora Town Park and Aurora Town Square, and include music, dancing, a film screening – which come together in the perfect blend of sweet and spicy.

“Get ready to embark on a vibrant cultural adventure right in the heart of Aurora,” said the Town of Aurora in a statement. “This celebration brings together the rich traditions, flavours, and rhythms of cultures from around the globe – all on one unforgettable day.”

The international showcase begins at Town Park with cultural dance performances at the band shell from



The cultures that call Aurora home will be showcased at Town Park and Town Square this month as part of the Aurora Multicultural Festival. Pictured here, Ukrainian dancers take centre stage at the band shell at the 2024 Multicultural Festival. **Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger**

9 a.m. until 12 noon. Cultures to be represented on stage include Brazilian,

Egyptian, Ukrainian, Chinese and South Asian – with representation from India in the form of a Bollywood presentation.

The fun continues at Aurora Town Square from 12.30 – 6 p.m. with further cultural performances – including a Chinese lion and changing face dances – and a special film screening in the Davide De Simone Performance Hall of the documentary “Honeyland,” which “follows the last female wild beekeeper in Europe as her traditional, sustainable way of life is threatened by new neighbours who exploit natural resources.”

While the Multicultural Festival closes on a sweet note with the documentary, spice will be the order of the day, according to Shelley Ware, Special Events Coordinator for the Town of Aurora.

“Last year, we celebrated desserts from around the world, the year before it was appetizers from around the world, and this year it is spices,” says Ware. “This year, we’re celebrating flavour. We’re going to have different spices throughout the building with food samples, so people can taste the dominant spices for different countries and see how it’s used. We’re even going to have a station where you can make your own little spice kit, take it home and try it with your dinner that night.”

The Optimist Club of Aurora is also lending a hand in the Multicultural Festival’s culinary fare, offering a free corn roast where participants can try out a variety of spices on the sweet late summer staple.

“Last year was the grand opening of Aurora Town Square, and last year we held the Festival over two locations and it worked out really, really well,” Ware continues. “Having morning shows when

the Aurora Farmers’ Market is bustling works out really well, and then having additional amenities at Town Square, and Town Square being the shortest walk ever away, it enabled us to lengthen our day, expand our program, and offer more enhanced experiences, such as the documentary Honeyland.

“There will be six different back-to-back cultural dance performances at Town Park, then we move over to Town Square, where there will be six different back-to-back cultural performances outside in the Square. If you’re coming to both sites, they’re two totally different experiences.”

Another point of pride for Ware and her team is the Multicultural Festival kicks off Culture Days, the Province-wide celebration of Culture, and, here at home, events are being organized by a number of the Town’s Cultural Partners, including the Aurora Cultural Centre, Aurora Public Library, the Aurora Museum & Archives and more.

“I think it is amazing that this can start Culture Days,” says Ware. “We can help promote all the other activities that are happening because it’s not just one day; we’re moving into other experiences because a lot of community organizations do fantastic work. No two years are the same. I think every single year is an enriching experience. Sometimes the experiences are too short and you wish they were longer, but the Multicultural Festival itself is about packing a variety of cultures into your suitcase in one day!”

For a full lineup on Aurora’s 2025 Multicultural Festival, visit aurora.ca/multiculturalfestival. To book your ticket for the documentary screening of Honeyland, visit auroratownsquare.ca/events-tickets/whats-on.



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Curtain falls on Movies in the Park



Aurora's Movies in the Park summer series drew to a close last Thursday evening with a screening of the perennial favourite, Toy Story. Before showtime at 8.15, crowds gathered for plenty of activities themed around the movie – and even included a visit from Woody! (FIRST) Central York Fire Services offered kids – and their families – a chance to get inside a fire truck. (SECOND) Cassidy and Nyia found a prime spot at a picnic table. (THIRD) Alannah and Zoe flexed their creative muscles at a colouring station. (FOURTH) Shelley, Jamie and Mohammed of the Town of Aurora kept the popcorn flowing. (FIFTH) Sabrina, Liz and Philip met up with Woody. (SIXTH) Also enjoying some crafting time were Olesya, Mia, Suzy and Andrew.

Auroran photos by Brock Weir

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Aurora teacher to be honoured by Toronto independent school

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

A dedicated Aurora teacher will join the distinguished ranks of Gerald Emmett Cardinal Carter, Red Kelly and Frank Mahavolich this month as he’s inducted by St. Michael’s College School into the Order of St. Michael.

Joe Younder, a life-long educator and Aurora resident who became a “beloved” English teacher and debating coach at the independent school will be celebrated Wednesday, September 17, at the Liberty Grand Entertainment Complex, when he’s inducted into the Order alongside lawyer Brian Bellmore, physicist Dr. Robert J. Birgeneau, and school benefactor Dominic

Montemurro.

The Order of St. Michael was established by the school in 1996 to recognize those who “exemplify the Basilian Fathers’ motto, ‘Teach Me Goodness, Discipline, and Knowledge’ through their outstanding contribution to the spiritual, academic, or material welfare of the school and society.”

“Joe Younder is a lifelong award-winning educator who taught for 24 years at St. Michael’s College School, as well as at Brebeuf and overseas in Ireland and Italy,” said the school of Younder, a graduate of their 1956 class. “At SMCS, he was a beloved English teacher, department head and debating coach. He remained highly active post-retirement through various Alumni Association roles, including [as] an



Joe Younder
Contributed photo



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ambassador with older alumni, and as a long-time editor of the school’s alumni magazine.”

Younder, a former member of Aurora’s Public Library Board and the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame’s Selection Committee, tells The Auroran he’s “extremely honoured” be inducted into the Order.

He says it’s all about the relationships formed at the school and says some of the students he taught in his early days as an educator have become life-long friends.

“When I graduated from university, I had to earn money to continue my education,” he says. “I took a year off and taught elementary school where I earned some money. My intentions were to go to the Faculty of Education at the University of Toronto for two years to do that. I got a call from a friend who was teaching [at St. Michael’s] and one of the teachers had just died that August and they were looking for a history and English teacher.”

While he jokes he didn’t know anything about high school at the time, his friend assured him that “all you had to do was know how to use a Gestetner” (an early type of copy machine) and, after a brief interview with the principal who he already knew, the rest was, well, history.

“I stayed there for 25 years,” says Younder. “I like working with young people, I enjoy seeing their enthusiasm, their desire to learn, and for some that didn’t want to learn, it was a challenge. One of the things was I wasn’t really a good student myself. I had a struggle in the learning process and how to study, and I didn’t have all the skills and assistance the kids now have in helping

them along. Guidance was limited, but I found I had some good teachers that helped me along the way; they gave me breaks, they gave me help after school, and I guess I want to repay that kind of thing. I felt kids responded to what I was trying to say and that was kind of a spark, that I had something to offer.”

Indeed, seeing where his students have ended up has been part of that magic spark.

One such moment of magic, he said, happened when he was a debate coach and preparing one of his students, Michael Brown, to contend for the Churchill Medals in Communication.

Brown, a friend to this day, is now an Associate Judge at the Ontario Superior Court of Justice.

“To be a teacher is not just an 8 – 4 job, you’re really doing it 24-7, either preparing lessons, helping kids, attending events and, at the same time, trying to balance your family,” he says. “I learned more in a car or a bus travelling and going to a debate with kids than I probably would learn in a classroom. It was in the stands, the locker rooms... when you’re working with kids on a daily basis, I learned who they were, where they were coming from, their families, their backgrounds, their likes, their dislikes, all the troubles that they have.

“I think if you get inside a kid’s head, there’s a lot of things going on in there, and you as a teacher can directly and indirectly influence that in your teaching. Just by saying a few words in the hall like, ‘Hey, good game last night,’ ‘Hey, do up your tie,’ ‘I really liked when you scored that goal,’ you can instruct and, at the same time, praise. I think that’s what I really enjoyed.”

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Aurora shows support for Race for Plunkett, Special Olympics Ontario



Photo courtesy of the YRP

BY BRITTANY GRENCI
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The streets and trails of Aurora and Newmarket were filled with energy and determination on Wednesday, August 6, as York Regional Police welcomed residents to the annual Race for Plunkett.

This special Law Enforcement Torch Run brought together law enforcement, athletes, families, and supporters to raise awareness and funds for Special Olympics Ontario.

The event, held along the scenic Tom Taylor Trail, offered participants the chance to run or walk either a five- or ten-kilometre route.

Registration fees and donations collected went directly to Special Olympics Ontario, ensuring athletes with intellectual disabilities have continued access to meaningful opportunities in sport and beyond.

This year’s race raised an impressive

\$30,000 with 29 participants taking part.

Before the race officially began, the Riverwalk Commons in downtown Newmarket came alive with music, police displays, commemorative photo opportunities, and the chance for participants to meet local Special Olympics athletes. Runners and walkers picked up their official Torch Run t-shirt, race kit, and electronic timing chip with anticipation.

At 6 p.m., a moving ceremony marked the official start of the evening. From the Riverwalk Commons stage, the iconic Flame of Hope—a symbol carried by law enforcement officers and Special Olympics athletes around the world—was proudly escorted into the crowd.

Local Special Olympics athletes had the honour of bringing the flame forward, and in that moment, every participant became a “Guardian of the Flame,” joining a global community

committed to inclusion and support. Together, the flame was carried 500 metres to the starting line at Fairy Lake Park.

The Race for Plunkett holds special meaning in York Region, named in memory of Detective Constable Rob Plunkett.

Plunkett, who was tragically killed in the line of duty in August 2007, had been a dedicated advocate for Special Olympics.

He served as Chair of the 2000 Special Olympics Spring Games in York Region and worked tirelessly to champion athletes and the cause they represent. For more than 35 years, York Regional Police have supported the Law Enforcement Torch Run, and the Race for Plunkett ensures his legacy lives on.

Events like this are part of a much larger movement.

The Law Enforcement Torch Run is the single largest grassroots fundraiser for Special Olympics worldwide, with

law enforcement officers in more than 30 countries carrying the Flame of Hope each year.

Funds raised not only help athletes compete but also empower them to build friendships, confidence, and life skills.

The evening closed on a note of hope, reminding everyone in attendance that when a community comes together, change is possible. The Race for Plunkett was more than a run; it was a heartfelt tribute, a fundraiser, and a symbol of what can be achieved when people rally behind a cause greater than themselves.

Those wishing to support Special Olympics Ontario through the Race for Plunkett can still register or donate by visiting yrp.ca/TorchRun.



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Comars retirement from AUC closes chapter of community change

From page 1

more than that.

The Comars first came to Aurora United Church after serving at Guelph’s Trinity United Church.

They weren’t looking for a move, but as AUC was coming out of what Lorraine describes as a “challenging time,” the congregation was looking for stability – and that’s just what they found in the husband-and-wife preachers.

Both Lorraine and Andy followed similar paths to seminary.

They both grew up within the Aurora United Church, embracing what they describe as their “service ministry” of community outreach.

They both became intended candidates at the age of 16, making good on their calling as full candidates at university.

“We both knew this was our life’s calling because we had very loving congregations that nurtured us and were very supportive of what we wanted to do in life,” Andy recalls. “When we were going into seminary in the early 1980s, basically everybody in our classes had that same pathway – but, later on, more and more ministers are coming from second, third careers, they’re older coming into the ministry, but young people are also coming back in.”

“We’re kind of a dying breed that way,” says Lorraine of being younger grads. “That cohort of younger undergrad, masters and ordained – there are not a lot of us left. We’ve often met clergy who are older than us, who were just ordained a year ago, and that really speaks to the change in the church.”

What doesn’t change, however, is their Social Gospel Church, which is what the couple was keen to bring to Aurora after they decided they were, in fact, ready to move on from Guelph and take on a new challenge.

“We did a workshop with them about what we thought we could help them with and, given their needs for the church and where we thought we could assist, they offered us the call and we came,” says Lorraine of talks with the AUC, emphasizing that the quest for stability was key. “We felt that as a married couple, certainly, with a united front, we could help in that regard, and I think that proved out.”

One of their first tasks was taking part in AUC’s Visioning Group to chart its future. Coming out of that group was a renewed mission statement and a new logo and brand, “Uniting Hearts and Hands on the Journey.”

“It’s funny because people at the time were saying, ‘Gee, I wonder what the journey is going to be,’” says Lorraine, with a slight chuckle, hindsight now on her side of how that journey unfolded.

It was a journey of uncertainty that was certainly aided by their two sets of stable hands as fire ripped through the church at the corner of Yonge and Tyler Streets just before Easter 2014, bringing them into an unimaginable situation just a few years into their mandate.

Their community outreach and quick thinking ensured at AUC and its community work, including its Rise and Shine Breakfast for underserved members of the community, continued barely skipping a beat, speedily forming a new partnership and shared space with Trinity Anglican Church.

“You always come in with a job

description and we created our own job description with the aid of the search committee, etc., but our job description ultimately was written by the circumstances,” says Lorraine.

Adds Andy: “They don’t teach any of this at theological college!”

“Coming in, you had to learn how to adapt on the fly and that is not really a big thing you learn in seminary,” Lorraine continues. “I mean, church often is so much ‘same, same, same’ and it has been a very dynamic experience. You just never know what’s coming – and I think that’s not a bad thing, in a way.”

Rebuilding a long-established church – something else they don’t teach you in seminary! – has certainly been a challenging experience for the Comars, but it has also been a rewarding one.

Work on the new building and sanctuary continues apace with construction tentatively expected to be complete by the end of this year, while the Amica Retirement Community being built in conjunction and partnership with AUC will most likely welcome its first residents this fall.

As the church began to quite literally rise from the ashes once again, COVID-19 was the next hurdle they had to shepherd their congregation over.

This was another instance where being married preachers helped as they, with the help of some tech-savvy parishioners, were able to almost-seamlessly deliver services to the AUC community via Zoom directly from their living room.

“As the pandemic became a reality, people still had the vision of going home to Yonge Street,” says Lorraine. “It was a pandemic, we were all experiencing it, we were not alone in it, but we were still keeping the dream alive. Whatever we had to do to maintain our ministries, our pastoral care team, they were on the phones all the time calling people, making sure folks were okay. We adapted to all we had to – to keep going.”

“We’re very organized people. I hope people know that we also reach out to get help because we cannot do everything on our own. That’s the whole ethos of the church, right? You reach out, you do it together. We’re happy to lead in that way, but so deeply happy that we had these amazing people who were so adept at different things that enabled us to continue most of our ministries in that time, even the breakfasts.”

But, all good things must come to an end – and that’s how the Comars feel about their retirement.

Having made the decision to retire earlier this year, the last few months have been as much about celebration as it has been about tying up loose ends.

They participated in the traditional Return of the Symbols service this past June, bringing it up a bit ahead of their actual retirement before parishioners scattered for the summer, and they were particularly happy to be able to preside over the reinterment last month of 180 early pioneers whose long-forgotten remains were uncovered during the reconstruction process.

Despite hanging up their vestments, they are excited about Aurora United Church’s future and hope to be able to participate in its grand re-opening in the New Year.

“There have been a lot of changes in the



At their final service, the Comars led the congregation in a rendition of the Mushroom Story, with parishioner Joan Brownlow taking a starring role as the mushroom. **Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger**

16 years we have been here, but certainly a lot has stayed the same,” says Andy, pointing into one unshakable partnership, AUC’s participation as one of seven churches in the ecumenical organization Welcoming Arms, which provides invaluable services to residents in need, as a prime example.

“To think Aurora provides five-plus meals every week for a Town this size? That’s incredible. There’s still enough of the old Aurora here when you talk to people, but there’s also the new and people from every continent under the sun seem to be here in Aurora – and we noticed at the Street Festival this year people coming up to the church site that hadn’t been here in 2014 who didn’t even know a church was on this site.”

“It’s a beautiful change,” Lorraine adds.

“It’s a lot of years to cover and looking back in time, in years to come, people might ask, ‘What happened when Andy and Lorraine were there?’ ‘Oh, well, our church burned, then there was a pandemic,’ and that’s what they’ll remember, right? Definitely our four years before the fire was preparation, learning, making connections with people, relationships – Get ready, go! Our true ministry came after that – that’s what will be remembered. It was a time of trauma, it was a time of trauma and grief, and then renewal.

“Our theme running through our build and the design is the rising of the phoenix and that will certainly be the case for the organization feeling like, finally, we’re back home – we’ve risen from the ashes and that is coming true.”

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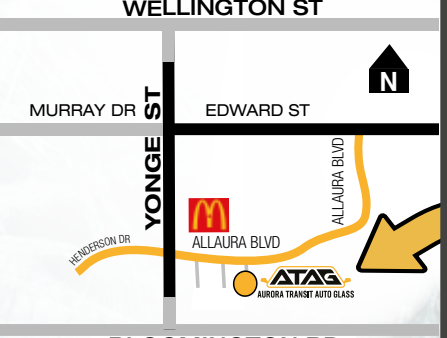


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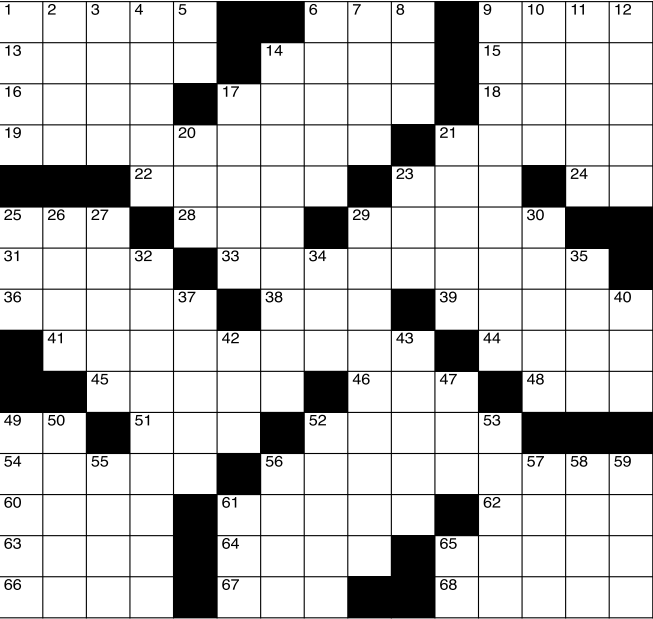
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- 6. Barrels per day (abbr.)
- 9. Cover the entirety of
- 13. Leafy appetizer
- 14. Showy ornament
- 15. Norse personification of old age
- 16. Athletes
- 17. Closes tightly
- 18. Attack via hurling items
- 19. Where the reserves stand
- 21. Sword
- 22. Begat
- 23. Damage another’s reputation
- 24. Northeast
- 25. Turf
- 28. For each
- 29. Hours (Spanish)
- 31. Western state
- 33. One who offers help
- 36. Flanks
- 38. A woolen cap of Scottish origin



CLUES DOWN

- 39. Free from drink or drugs
- 41. Tunnels
- 44. Mature
- 45. More dried-up
- 46. News organization
- 48. Steal something
- 49. Forms one’s public persona (abbr.)
- 51. Female fish eggs
- 52. Small petrel of southern seas
- 54. Edible starches
- 56. Historical
- 60. In a place to sleep
- 61. Horse grooms
- 62. Off-Broadway theater award
- 63. Chinese dynasty
- 64. Resembling a wing
- 65. Small projection on a bird’s wing
- 66. Of the Isle of Man
- 67. Derived unit of force (abbr.)
- 68. Plate for Eucharist
- 27. Male parents
- 29. Popular grilled food
- 30. Vaccine developer
- 32. Not conforming
- 34. Polite address for women
- 35. 1970 U.S. environmental law
- 37. Astronomical period of 18 years
- 40. One who fights the government
- 42. Center for Excellence in Education
- 43. Watches discreetly
- 47. An electrically charged atom
- 49. Hymn
- 50. Arabic given name
- 52. Popular pie nut
- 53. City in Zambia
- 55. Species of cherry
- 56. John __, British writer
- 57. Be next to
- 58. Make angry
- 59. Give birth to a lamb or kid

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2. Exceptional dining

Choose from a menu of delicious, balanced meals prepared daily by our culinary team using fresh local ingredients. You decide what, when and where you'd like to eat: in the dining room, on the patio, in the bistro or in your suite.

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4. Best-in-class care

Our personalized, professional care and 24/7 on-site nurses offer peace of mind. We offer lifestyle options of Independent Living, Assisted Living and Memory Care at Amica Aurora Promenade. *“That continuum and level of care is unique, and it means you don't have to move if your needs change,”* says Curcuruto. Even with different care needs, couples can continue to live together.

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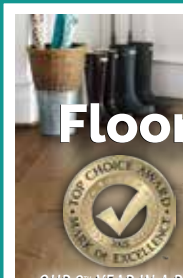


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Junior Tigers roll to 3-0-1 record heading into OJHL regular season opener on Saturday in Newmarket



Tigers' forward Marcus Carter clears a puck from harm's way versus King. Carter has scored five goals in Aurora's last four games. Auroran photo by Jim Stewart

BY JIM STEWART

The Aurora Junior Tigers are on a roll heading into their OJHL season opener on Saturday in Newmarket versus the Hurricanes.

Including their hotly-contested 2-1 home win versus the King Rebellion on August 21, the rebuilding Tigers have cobbled together an impressive 3-0-1 record with a 4-3 win over the Rangers in North York on August 26, an emphatic 7-2 win over the Pickering Panthers on home ice on Saturday night, and a narrow 5-4 OT loss to the Panthers in Pickering on Sunday afternoon.

Picking up points in each of their last four games is giving the team momentum heading into the 2025-26 season and it started with a close win over their regional rivals from King Township.

The Thursday night win at the ACC was due to opportunistic scoring as well as the stellar goaltending of Rafael Defina and William Whited who turned aside 33 of 34 shots.

Tigers General Manager and Assistant Coach James Thomson complimented the tenders' talents: "Both played well and kept us in the game in crucial times. They both managed the ebbs and flows and battled through several penalty kill situations."

Thomson also attributed the win versus King to a total team effort.

"Key to our success was a solid work ethic from everyone in the lineup. It certainly wasn't a perfect outing, but lots of positive signs to build off."

The Tigers validated their GM's assessment by putting forth a string of strong performances against North York and Pickering.

In Saturday's home ice victory, the Tigers built a 5-0 lead after two

periods on markers by Luke Howard, Cayden Smith, Simon Howard, Marcus Carter, and Jamie Buscarini. After Cayden O'Hearn's power play goal 6:51 into the third period got Pickering on the board, the Tigers put the game away 19 seconds later when Carter notched his second of the evening. Cole Crawford's goal with five minutes to play finished the Junior Tigers' scoring.

Pickering turned the tables on Sunday afternoon when Brandon Scott fired the game winner at 11:44 of the first overtime period to avenge their lop-sided loss to the Tigers on Saturday night.

At 16:54 of the third period, red-hot Marcus Carter fired his second goal of the game and fifth of the preseason to tie the game, secure a point for the Tigers, and send both clubs into OT.

Carter opened the scoring with a shortie at 4:51 of the opening frame and Matthew Scozzese gave the Tigers a 2-0 lead seven minutes later. The Panthers responded with goals by Tyler Bruce and Ty Robar to pull the home side even 2-2 at the end of the first period.

Robar's second tally of the contest provided Pickering with its first lead of the game at 3:50 of the middle frame, but Tiger centre Cayden Smith tied it 3-3 forty-nine seconds later.

Kyle Costello's goal at 11:40 of the second period reestablished the home side's lead which they held until surrendering Carter's marker with 3:06 left in regulation.

In the Tigers' narrow victory over the Rangers in North York on Monday, Aurora trailed 2-0 after the first period. However, Matthew Scozzese and Thomas Leone tied the game with a pair of second period

goals to rally the Tigers.

Neil Steinberg's goal at 17:49 restored North York's lead before the middle frame ended, but the Junior Tigers fired two unanswered goals in the third period to claim the road victory. Leone's second of the game tied it 3-3 and Luke Bovoletis fired home the game winner with 15:35 on the clock to keep the Rangers winless in the preseason.

The Junior Tigers finished the preseason with an impressive 4-2-0-1 record heading into their regular

season lid lifter on Saturday with the Newmarket Hurricanes at Ray Twinney Recreation Centre. Puck drop will be 4.30 p.m. as the former rivals resuscitate the Battle of Yonge Street.

Round Two of The Battle of Yonge Street will take place during the Junior Tigers' home opener on Saturday, September 13. Puck drop at the ACC will be 7 p.m. —marking the first time the former Toronto Junior Canadiens will skate into Aurora as the newly-rebranded Newmarket Hurricanes.

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SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 6
The Aurora Farmers' Market returns to Town Park today from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Saturday Night Fever becomes Maple Leaf Fever on Yonge Street from 4 – 11 p.m. for a street celebration featuring an all-Canadian music lineup. Maple Leaf Fever will see Yonge Street closed between Wellington and Mosley Streets and will feature a musical program of After The Gold Rush – A Tribute to Neil Young, Shania Twain – A Tribute to Shania Twain, and From the Hip: A Tribute to Tragically Hip. Live art demonstrations will also be hosted by the Royal Rose Gallery. For a full lineup, visit www.aurora.ca/saturdaynightfever.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 13
The Aurora Farmers' Market returns to Town Park today from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The Aurora Historical Society will host a Victorian Harvest Tea today at 12 noon and 2:30 p.m. at Hillary House National Historic Site. (\$35 pp) It's our 6th Annual Victorian Harvest Tea at Hillary House National Historic Site! Happening on Saturday, September 13, choose between two seatings: 12:00 p.m. or 2:30 p.m. Join us on our stunning grounds this Fall season to enjoy an afternoon tea that includes sandwiches, scones, and desserts. Wander around our historic house museum after tea service and get to know a unique heritage property in Aurora. Tickets can be purchased on the AHS website here: aurorahs.com/victorian-harvest-tea-2025.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17
The AHS Speaker Series continues this evening at 7 p.m. with Behind the Bricks: The Life and Times of the Mohawk Institute with Alison Norman. Held at Hillary House National Historic Site and virtually over Zoom. Tickets are \$10.50 for AHS members, or \$12.50 for non-members. The Mohawk Institute, located in Brantford, ON, was a model for the larger residential school system, and learning about its history helps us work towards reconciliation. Join us for a talk by historian Alison Norman who will speak about the history of Canada's oldest and longest running residential

school, just in time for September 30th, National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. Alison Norman is a historian working at Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada. She has also taught through various lifelong learning organizations. Tickets can be purchased on the AHS website here: aurorahs.com/life-and-times-mohawk-institute.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 20
The Town of Aurora will host its annual Multicultural Festival at Aurora Town Park from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., and at Aurora Town Square from 12:30 – 6 p.m. Highlights include music, dancing and cultural displays from around the world, activities based around the theme of “spice” and a screening of the documentary Honeyland. For a full lineup, visit www.aurora.ca/multiculturalfestival.

The Aurora Farmers' Market returns to Town Park today from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

ONGOING
Partagez le Français: Ce groupe accueille les ADULTES / 18+ (des francophones aux débutants capables de converser) - qui cherchent à mettre en pratique leurs compétences Conversationnelle en français. Over Zoom with a nominal fee of \$2.50. RSVP by visiting meetup.com/Partagez-le-francais. For more information, email partagez.york@outlook.com.

Support AbuseHurts' Delivering Hope Full Circle Program textile recycling and donation program. In the current COVID climate, a greater number of people are wanting to donate or get rid of unwanted items, increasing the need for more outlets being available to receive the items. This program will provide a convenient way for people to donate or get rid of used/unwanted clothing, blankets, linens and furniture and will help lessen the amount of items ending up in landfills. Materials that were previously perceived as waste will now be seen as a valuable resource further encouraging redistribution. The items will be recycled in the following ways: To be given to individuals who are survivors of violence and are transitioning from shelters into new homes; To be sold in our store; To be sold to a textile recycler, which makes for an ongoing source of funding for Abuse Hurts enabling them to provide their services to the thousands of people that require them each year. When and Where: Monday and Wednesday, every week, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m., with 30-minute time slots – only 1 drop off per time slot. If you do not have an appointment, we cannot accept your donation. The Abuse Hurts Warehouse is located at 1208 Gorham St, Unit 4, Newmarket - rear unloading dock. Visit AbuseHurts.ca to select your drop off time slot.

Sport Aurora’s first annual “All Kids All Adults All Sport One Day” event rolls out September 27 at AFLC

JIM STEWART
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Sport Aurora’s popular “All Sport- One Day” will roll out on Saturday, September 27, at the Aurora Family Leisure Complex. During this year’s version of the annual Autumn event, kids will enjoy the morning session while much bigger kids will enjoy the afternoon session.

For the first time in the event’s history, adult sports enthusiasts from 18-55 years of age will enjoy introductions to four sports from 12:30-3:30 PM. For \$30 per person, participants can deepen an appreciation for the Martial Arts in a workshop instructed by the KO Club.

Station 2 will deepen the participants’ spiking, serving, and bumping skills in a Beach Volleyball demonstration led by the Aurora Storm. The third stop for the intrepid adult athletes will be Bocce with the Aurora Seniors Association providing the sport’s introductory skills. The afternoon session will close with the finer art of hitting, throwing, catching, and running on the Softball diamond, courtesy of the Aurora Diggers.

The afternoon session for adults was implemented due to popular demand over the last two years.

As Sport Aurora fulfils its mandate of making the Town’s community healthier and more active by broadening this event to include adults, it will also reinforce its commitment to youth fitness when it showcases four sports for kids 6-17 years of age during the morning session that will run from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

The youngsters will enjoy four stations at the AFLC featuring Archery, instructed by the Town of Aurora; Baton Twirling techniques taught by Spectrum Baton; Cheerleading

promoted by Alpha Cheer & Tumbling; and Beach Volleyball coached by Storm Volleyball.

Although the session costs \$30 per participant, Sport Aurora Executive Director Laurie Mueller noted that “Financial Assistance is not a Barrier. Please contact me about our All Kids Can Play Program to help you fund your child’s participation. The Application for the All Kids Can Play Program can be found at www.sportaurora.ca.”

Mueller assured all prospective participants that the quality of the instructors is one of the features of All Sport One Day for kids and adults alike.

“The session involves instruction and play at all levels by qualified Sport Aurora Member Organizations who want you to fall in love with their sport. We’re encouraging residents to try something new and start your fitness and fun with others led by our certified coaches. It’s a great opportunity to learn a new skill, build an old skill, or just come and enjoy something outdoors and fun. Engage in a half day of Multisport programming: four sports in the morning for the children, and four sports in the afternoon for the adults.”

Being the careful parent, the long-time Sport Aurora administrator reminded all the first-timers to “Please bring your water and a hat.”

Registration for Sport Aurora’s first annual All Kids All Adults All Sport One Day opened on August 27. Registration closes on September 25. Openings are on a first come/first served basis at www.sportaurora.ca.

No refunds will be issued after September 25.

The Aurora Family Leisure Complex is located at 135 Industrial Pkwy N, Aurora, ON L4G 4C4.

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August 30th was

National Grief Awareness Day

A day encouraging people to offer support, listen, and connect with those who are grieving.

In honour of this day, we want to remind you of the wide range of free services for children, youth, adults and seniors at Doane House Hospice in Newmarket.

Services include individual counselling, support groups, home visits, art therapy and a wide variety of activities that help people feel they are not alone in their grief.

Grief programs



8-Week Groups (In-Person)

- Afternoon: Wednesdays, September 10 – November 5 (no October 15), 2 – 4 p.m.
- Evening: Wednesdays, September 10 – November 5 (no October 15), 5 – 7 p.m.

Monthly Drop-In Groups (In-Person, 2 – 4 p.m.)

- October 14: “Spousal Loss” Group
- November 18: “Remembering in Grief” Group
- December 9: “Baking Spirits Bright” Holiday Group

All of the above groups and programs require registration and are open to individuals who have been grieving a death for a minimum of 2 months.

To register, please contact Anica Butters, Grief and Bereavement Coordinator, at abutters@myhospice.ca or **905-967-0259 ext. 151**.

Mariposa



Art Club
for Grieving Children

Elementary students in York Region experiencing grief are invited to join the new Mariposa Art Club for Grieving Children. The club provides free art-making activities designed to help children safely express their feelings, learn healthy ways to cope, and support each other.

These 2-hour sessions are hosted at Doane House Hospice on PA Days in the York Region District School Board’s calendar. Professional facilitation is provided by certified therapists with expertise in grief and bereavement.

To register, please contact Cynthia Gardner, Art Therapist, at cgardner@myhospice.ca

1 p.m. to 3 p.m. on PA Days:

- Friday, September 26, 2025
- Friday, October 24, 2025
- Friday, November 21, 2025
- Friday, January 16, 2026
- Friday, January 30, 2026

www.doanehospice.org



653 Queen Street, Newmarket ON L3Y 2J1 | events@myhospice.ca | 905-967-1500 ext. 134

Advertising generously donated by an anonymous donor. Charitable registration #896696804 RR0001

Fall Cleanup Day is chance to help keep Aurora beautiful

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Fall is just around the corner, and if you relish the chance to get out in the fall colours, you can do so while lending Aurora a helping hand as the Town hosts its annual Fall Community Cleanup.

Set for Saturday, September 27, from 8 a.m. to 12 noon, residents are invited to register to participate as individuals or teams who will fan out to identified locations in the community ready to make a difference.

“Our Community Cleanup events reflect Aurora’s strong sense of community pride,” said Mayor Tom Mrakas in a statement. “This initiative is a chance for residents to take an active role in maintaining the beauty and health of our Town. I encourage everyone to join me and contribute to a cleaner, greener Aurora.”

Those interested in participating can

sign up at aurora.ca/cleanup.

On the morning of the event, cleanup kits will be made available for pickup at Machell Park while quantities last. Participants can select from a number of areas around Aurora that have been identified as in need of a lift when it comes to litter. Participants can also pick a spot in their own neighbourhoods on which to focus.

“The initiative is open to individuals, families, schools and community organizations,” says the Town. “Students seeking volunteer hours for school credit are also welcome to participate and will receive confirmation of their contributions upon request.”

Amanda Cutler, Aurora’s Waste and Recycling Coordinator, tells The Auroran the Community Cleanup provides residents “with a great opportunity to get outside with their family and friends and help clean up their neighbourhoods. It’s also a great

way for students to earn community service hours.”

This is the third year the Town of Aurora has hosted a Fall Cleanup, complementing their long-standing Spring Community Clean-Up, which helps keep the Town camera ready after the snow melts and reveals a snowbank’s sometimes-trashy secrets.

While Cutler says turnout for the fall event is not typically as high as the spring, it’s no less valuable.

“We focus our Community Cleanups in the spring and fall because each season serves a specific purpose,” says Cutler. “The Spring Cleanup is essential for addressing the debris and mess left behind by winter, while the Fall Cleanup helps us prepare and tidy up our community before the winter sets in. Plus, many people are busy enjoying the summer weather and vacations with family and friends, so fall and spring tend to attract more attendees.

“Our regular volunteers consistently

attend our events due to the positive atmosphere and their shared passion for keeping our community clean and litter-free. It’s also a great chance for families and friends to get outside and work together, and we do thank all our volunteers by providing a free barbecue.”

September 27’s Fall Community Cleanup is just the latest green initiative rolled out by Cutler, the Department and the Town.

Being explored for the future, says Cutler, is a potential partnership with the Region of York to roll out its Repair Café program in Aurora, which brings together volunteer experts and repair people to help residents get the most out of their small appliances, tools, and more.

The Town, says Cutler, would provide a location where “people can bring in their broken items to be fixed, promoting sustainability and reducing waste.”

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A Head-Start on the 2025-2026 School Year



The Aurora Black Community Association, Town of Aurora, York Regional Police, and Catholic Community Services of York Region, and Play Forever Canada, came together at the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex on Saturday for the inaugural Back to School Sports Day. As various sports carried on throughout the facility, dignitaries gathered to welcome students, including Mayor Tom Mrakas, Ward 6 Councillor Harold Kim, Aurora Black Community Association President Phiona Durrant, and representatives from partner organizations. (Second Row Left) Yrijah tried his hand at basketball, while (Second Row Right) Melinda modelled a backpack fully loaded with school supplies, which were received by the first 200 attendees.

Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger

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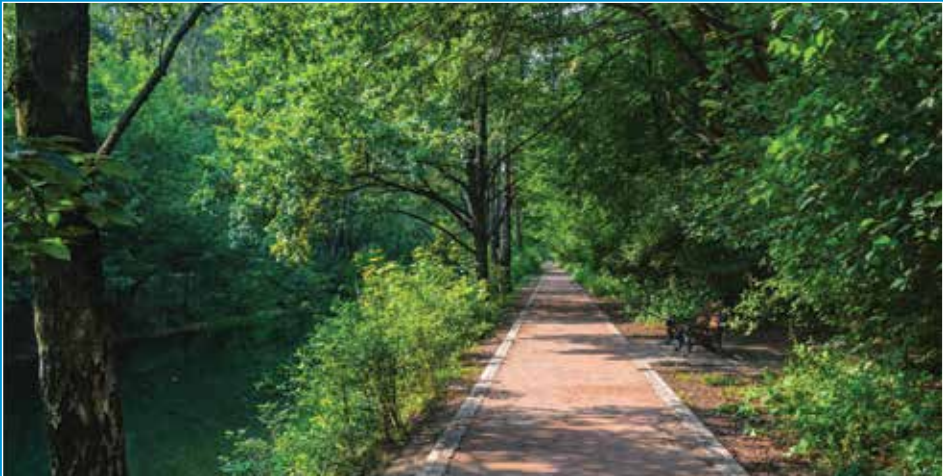
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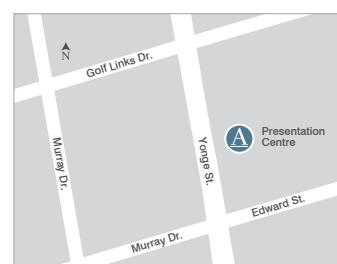
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