

## Dragons set to roar at Aurora's Family First Night

2024 is the Year of the Dragon and, on New Year's Eve, residents are invited to wing their way to the Aurora Family Leisure Complex for the annual Family First Night.

A popular local tradition to ring in the New Year, Family First Night will run from 6 - 9 p.m., and will include a bevy of activities, from free public swims and skates, to animal shows, to science demonstrations.

"We have been fortunate that we have been able to expand the number of shows we're offering this year," says Shelley Ware, Special Events Coordinator for the Town of Aurora. "For those who have attended in the past, you know the shows are really, really busy and this year we will have three reptile shows presented by ZooTek at 6, 7 and 8 p.m. At the same time, we're offering bubble shows, which are wildly popular, and then we will have our two magician shows at 6.45 and 7.30 p.m. Ongoing throughout this time, we will have Mad Science demonstrations set up, inflatables, a free community skate, free swimming, as well as face painting.

"New this year, we will have balloon twisting for animals to be made for kids and, since this is the Year of the Dragon, we'll have dragon learnings throughout the spaces."

As this is the final celebration in the Town's 2023 calendar, Ware is looking back at a season of special events that not only brought the community together but also, with the exception of a few rainy Movies in the Park events, saw Mother Nature on their side.

"We saw many new and familiar faces at these events; it's always exciting to see familiar faces, but it's twice as exciting when you get to meet many new residents and new visitors to the community and those have been some really rewarding reflections to look back on."

There will, however, be little time to rest as events will be coming fast as soon as the proverbial ball drops at the stroke of midnight on January 1.

"The event roster will be fully robust right from the very beginning as we start off the year with the Mayor and Council Levee, which is going to be happening on Saturday, January 6, and then full steam ahead with Arctic Adventure, which will be on the Family Day weekend for two days, an evening on Saturday and all-day on the Family Day Monday. From there, we just hop through to the next series of events to Hello, Spring, onwards to the Aurora Art Show, and during the first business quarter of the year is also the great, great, time to nominate someone, an individual, group or organization, because that is when we start accepting nominations for the Community Recognition Awards."

But, as things slow down a bit for the holiday season, the focus remains very firmly on Family First Night.

"The Reptile Show is so educational and so interesting. Then again, the face painting team does phenomenal work and with the Year of the Dragon we're quite excited to see what they come up with. Then, Mad Science, that always blows me away because we all think we know enough about science but they always come up with a new twist that always outwits me," says Ware. "I think it is nice that there are so many different experiences to go from one to the other, and then explore all the functions that are available within the Aurora Family Leisure Complex.

"On Family First Night, it's about the coming together of the community. Everything is free, but what is unlimited are the smiles, the connections. Family First Night out of all of the events might be the one I see the most number of unfamiliar new faces, and it is always really nice to be greeting new people into the facility, as well and educating them on our year-round roster of events. It is also nice, especially for families, regardless of what age and stage they are at, because of the early hours we hold this from 6 - 9, it enables families to still participate in this as well as carry on to other festivities for the rest of their evening. For some families, this will be their big highlight and it is nice to offer that to all of them."

For more on the December 31 event, visit [aurora.ca/familyfirst](http://aurora.ca/familyfirst).

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