

Hundreds flock to Active Living Fair



By Brock Weir

Peggy Strange is a regular face at the Aurora Family Leisure Complex.

At 99 years old, she frequently hits the Complex's running track to keep active and limber as she approaches her 100th birthday this fall, but Thursday's trip to the track was a bit different as she went from booth to booth learning about further opportunities and resources in Aurora tailored to the 55+ at the annual Seniors Information and Active Living Fair.

Hosted by the Town of Aurora, the event featured nearly 40 exhibitors ranging from Activate Aurora – the campaign to make Aurora the country's most active community – and the Club Aurora Fitness Centre, to CHATS (Community and Home Assistance To Seniors), Diabetes Canada, and even the York Regional Police.

"I came out because everything is free!" joked Ms. Strange, a veteran of the Second World War. "No! I like to use the track to walk inside and today I learned lots of good things."

Chances are, Ms. Strange was among the eldest of the seniors in attendance on Friday, but near the other end of the spectrum was Councillor John Abel, who sits on the Board of the Aurora Seniors' Association. Not yet 65, he said he is often described as a "junior senior" but marvelled at the opportunities highlighted on Thursday afternoon, including 12 on-stage demonstrations on activities as diverse as yoga, tai chi, Zumba, and even the ukulele.

"I am just so impressed that we have so many in our community of seniors and so many services and products that are available for healthy living," said Councillor Abel. "The new medicine is exercise – good diet and good mental health. We have great programs and a great conference here."

As a Centre Board Member, he said he is continually reminded of the importance of remaining social as one ages. It "really eases the aging process and makes an improved quality of life."

"That is one of my biggest takeaways: how socially active and how healthy everyone is," he said.

This was certainly noticed by Activate Aurora's Ron Weese, who was also on hand not only to take in the exhibitors, but encourage others to "take the pledge" to get up and stay active.

"I think this is an out-of-the-park day, and the biggest one we have ever had," he said. "We have been growing year after year. Karie [Papillon] and the others have been doing a great job building this and this is becoming one of those must-see events if you are an older adult. There are lots of exhibits that are meaningful to people, but it is also the first time we have done these demonstrations and you see people slowly come up and actually getting engaged. The engagement in this is a lot better than we ever thought and it is a really good thing."

As the day went on, Mr. Weese noted synergies emerging between the vendors and those offering programs, including Activate Aurora referring people to Club Aurora and vice versa.

Wayne DeRyck of Club Aurora says that, over time, he has seen the majority of those coming out to the fitness facility is increasingly an older adult population and, as such, they are developing programs to meet these needs, including osteo classes and yoga.

"We really appreciate the seniors that are in our community and surrounding area who do come to our facility and we try to meet

their needs as best as possible," he said. "I hope [this event] would give them a better awareness of what we have to offer and what is actually within the community for them to take advantage of."