

Innovation Fair is chance for youth to show off inventions, visions for future

Aurora youth are invited to register to take part in an 'Innovation Disneyland' as the Town re-launches its Youth Innovation Fair after a five-year hiatus.

Originally organized as part of the Canada 150 celebrations in 2017, the Youth Innovation Fair was put on the backburner due to the global pandemic, but organizers this year are looking to bring together more young residents than ever before to share their ideas and their visions for a better world.

Geared towards students in Grades 4 to 12 in Aurora and the surrounding areas, the Fair is a chance for students, or even teams of students, to 'showcase their ideas and innovations to tackle real-world issues,' whether it's in technology, science, performance, conservation, building projects and more.

'We're excited to get this back off the ground,' says Shelley Ware, Special Events Coordinator for the Town of Aurora. 'If you need the extra push to enter, just re-watch Iron Man and look at Stark Industries at their innovation expo. This could be your first step trying something like this. I can't underscore enough how much opportunity is there for like-minded youth to meet others from different schools, different towns and cities and bringing these exceptional minds into one space is like an innovation Disneyland.'

Helping to spearhead the 2024 Youth Innovation Fair is Erin Hamilton, Sport & Community Development Specialist with the Town of Aurora.

After a five-year hiatus, Hamilton says she's looking forward to seeing what the youth in the community are looking to innovate and the problems they're trying to solve as the world we're living in today is quite different than the one of 2019.

'Society as a whole has developed around technology, math and how students are learning,' says Hamilton. 'We're in a different realm of what could potentially be presented at a Youth Innovation Fair with what students are using in the classroom to be able to learn and evolve. What they're coming up with, I think, is pretty exciting.'

'If we look at things around climate change and what's going on in the real world right now, we have a group of youth who are really engaged in those topics and have some strong views and ideas as to how to address them. I think we're going to see a whole new realm of potential inventions and ideas that we may not have seen in 2017.'

Registrations for the 2024 Youth Innovation Fair are being accepted online through Wednesday, April 24 - visit aurora.ca/youthinnovation for more - while the event itself will be held Wednesday, May 15 at Town Hall from 6 - 9 p.m. This year's event is sponsored by Desjardins and Alectra.

'We know the next generation is highly creative, highly innovative, and this is such a unique event,' says Ware. 'It's a chance for students [to] come up with all that will make their life faster and more efficient, maybe the things we take for granted and just accept as adults because that's just the way it goes.'

Adds Hamilton: 'This is the perfect environment where you can be around other individuals with innovative ideas and share that knowledge with one another.'

By Brock Weir
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