

Local houses get into festive fun for Holiday Home Tour

By Brock Weir

Two Aurora homes will be among the five York Region showplaces dressed up to the Christmas nines this week as Pickering College hosts its 13th annual Holiday Home Tour.

Featuring two homes each in Aurora and Sharon and one in Newmarket, this year's Tour, which takes place this Friday, November 17 and Saturday, November 18, will benefit Doane House Hospice.

?There is a lot of energy and excitement put into this year's tour,? says Pickering College's Shelley Frank. ?As a result of some feedback from our previous tour guests, we've limited the tour to five homes rather than six this year. They just felt it was a lot to get around to see.?

Although there is one less house on the tour this year, there will still be a lot to take in.

Each carefully decorated home will feature catering from companies ranging from chefs from Silver Lakes and Cardinal Golf Clubs, to Nature's Emporium to local bakeries, and live music.

In addition to the five tour homes, the two-day event will feature a new Concert Series in partnership with the Sharon Temple on Friday and Saturday showcasing the talents of Pickering College students ? jazz combos, string ensembles and choirs ? along with local bands, including a 45 piece ensemble, the Salvation Army Kettle Band and a steel drum band from Arcadia Academy of Music.

Over at Pickering College itself, the Newmarket school's Dining Hall will be transformed on Saturday into the popular annual Seasonal Boutique featuring over 40 vendors and a special ?Designer's Hall? showcasing the work of the participating decorating firms which will undoubtedly provide plenty of ideas for patrons.

?We're excited to have a lot of big companies on board this year supporting us, including our title sponsor Buckley Insurance Brokers Limited, and also Mercedes Benz Newmarket, which is providing our VIP transportation. One of our ticket purchasers won the VIP Transportation so she and five friends will see the tour from the comfort of their Mercedes Benz and driver,? says Ms. Frank.

Proceeds from this year's Tour will benefit Doane House Hospice, which provides care to residents of Aurora, Newmarket and beyond. They were selected through what Ms. Frank describes as ?arduous? process of evaluation following pitches from six different charities.

?Doane House was viewed as the charity most in need of our support,? she explains. ?We are really excited to be participating with Doane House for this year's event and hope that we can raise a great deal of money to support hospice programs.

?Many of our guests are long-time supporters and they really are enthusiastic about supporting the local charity. Homeowners (who have offered their homes up for the tour) are really proud of their property and are willing to feature it and invite people to come in and look around. The Tour committee has been working on this for over seven months ? I cannot wait to get out there to see the homes and enjoy the performances at the Sharon Temple. It's truly uplifting to see the event coming together and to be so well supported by the community.?

If you want to be a part of the excitement, tickets for both tour dates are selling fast. For more information, visit www.pickeringcollege.on.ca/events/hht. The Seasonal Boutique is free and open to the public on Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at Pickering College (16945 Bayview Avenue, Newmarket). For more, call 905-895-1700.