

Magna cancels 2021 Hoedown due to health restrictions

Revellers will have to wait a little while longer for a good excuse to spiff up their Stetsons.

On Thursday, Magna announced that for the second year running the annual Wild, Wild West Hoedown was cancelled due to COVID-19.

The Hoedown is one of York Region's biggest annual parties, regularly raising more than \$500,000 each year over two nights, which is then split equally between 20 organizations and non-profits serving the community. These charities won't go without these necessary contributions, however. The auto parts giant will be supporting 30 organizations through the Magna Hoedown Community Fund.

"In keeping with this spirit of Hoedown, I am proud to announce on behalf of Magna and Neighbourhood Network the Magna Hoedown Community Fund benefiting thirty local charities in lieu of this year's event," said Swamy Kotagiri, CEO of Magna International. "Thank you to our Magna employees and the community for your ongoing support of the Magna Hoedown, and for helping us spread joy, not germs throughout the pandemic."

Spreading joy and not germs has been the mantra of Neighbourhood Network since the early days of the pandemic a year ago.

Although existing public health restrictions have long cast doubt on the 2021 Hoedown, the move to cancel it outright is not a decision that organizers made lightly.

"At Magna, giving back is a cornerstone of our Fair Enterprise culture," said the company in a statement. "We invest in our people and our communities to make positive social and environmental impacts globally, and right here at home. The Magna Hoedown is part of this legacy of giving and has united York Region residents to support charitable organizations and raise almost \$14 million over three decades.

"The planning required to deliver the high calibre successful Magna Hoedown we all know and love is typically a year-long endeavour by Magna's Neighbourhood Network team. Given the considerable lead time needed for an event of this magnitude as well as the evolving public health guidelines related to the pandemic, we have made the difficult decision to cancel this year's event.

"As we continue in the fight against COVID-19, it is more important than ever to support local charities who are providing critical services to our communities. This is what the Magna Hoedown tradition has always been about: neighbours coming together and raising much needed funds for important causes."

As important as raising funds is, the Magna Hoedown has also been a significant draw for music lovers into the Aurora community. Thousands of people gather under the big top each year to not only enjoy established country headliners but scores of aspiring country stars looking for their big break through the Hoedown Showdown competition.

"While we are, of course, sad to miss out on another year of Hoedown fun, the decision is responsible given the circumstances," said Mayor Tom Mrakas. "I want to thank and commend Magna for finding a way to continue their legacy of giving back to the community. As Magna said, the Hoedown event is ultimately about neighbours coming together to support our most vulnerable. I am proud Magna continues to step up as a great corporate citizen and will be supporting 30 of our local charities.

"I am looking forward to our strong partnership and the possible return of the Magna Hoedown in 2022."

By Brock Weir Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter