

MARKET MUSINGS

By Jan Freedman

Despite the cool, overcast and breezy weather we had on Saturday, our first Family Day was a great success.

The Farmers' Market was full of families eager to take advantage of the many mom-to-mom sales and enjoy the face painting, balloon animals and the great children's entertainer. We had a wonderful raffle which, among the items available, included two bikes and a flat screen T.V. I don't know yet how much money we raised, but it is all going to the Aurora Food Pantry.

We also have some exciting news: Peter of Oakridge's Finest will be bringing cheese from the fabulous Montforte Dairy in Stratford to our Market within the next two weeks. The dairy is owned by Ruth Klaasen and specialises in goat and sheep's milk cheeses, although I believe that they have a few made from cow's milk. So, finally we will have some soft brie-type cheeses to augment the hard cheeses that are already represented at the Market.

You may have noticed that the Market now partners with several community groups on some occasions. You will have seen Beverley Wood, Aurora's Citizen of the Year, among those selling raffle tickets for Magna's Wild Wild West Hoedown on behalf of Welcoming Arms.

Welcoming Arms is a registered charity and is an ecumenical partnership of six churches: Aurora Cornerstone, Aurora United, Campus Bible, Our Lady of Grace, St. Andrew's and Trinity and is housed in Trinity's former rectory. Their purpose is to assist Aurora residents who are in need.

Each church provides financial and volunteer support. Additional funding and donations have been gratefully received from: Empty Bowls, the Christmas Dream Dinner, individuals, businesses, community organizations, the Regional Municipality of York through the Christmas Hamper Programme and the Wild Wild West Hoedown.

The vision statement says: "a Christ-centered partnership, relieving the burden of poverty in our community". Their Mission Statement is "In loving partnership, we seek to be the hands and feet of Christ by promoting human, physical and spiritual well-being within our community."

Their focus strategies are fundraising, marketing, communications, growth, sustainability and volunteer programmes. These all reflect the love, joy, compassion and commitment of Welcoming Arms clergy and volunteers.

From July 2013-2014, Welcoming Arms distributed \$67,460 in monthly food vouchers, 3,190 York Region Transit tickets, and toiletries, kitchen and cleaning items from donations received from individuals and community groups.

They also provided assistance with medical, dental, housing, utility, tutorial and children's programme needs. They also gave vouchers from Tim Horton's and the Clothes Closet to homeless persons.

Some of the comments received from those who have been helped include: "Christmas really happened at our house this year, thanks to the support of Welcoming Arms" and, "to everyone involved in the Christmas programme, thank you for listening, caring and sharing."

While their main focus is on helping those in need in our community, they participate in many other activities such as: attendance at seminars, ongoing meetings and forums with York Region agencies, involvement in community activities including the Pine Tree Potters Guild, the Aurora Christmas Dream Dinner, and Hoedown. This year, Welcoming Arms was selected as one of fifteen participating charities for the 2014 Hoedown.

With the invitation of the Optimist Club of Aurora to join them at the Farmers' Market on summer Saturdays, Welcoming Arms volunteers have enjoyed meeting shoppers, selling Hoedown tickets (3 for \$20) and sharing the Welcoming Arms story, a programme that began in 2006 at Our Lady of Grace Church.

To the Optimist Club of Aurora and the Farmers' Market, Welcoming Arms volunteers and visitors extend a special thank you for the kindness, goodwill and generosity they have been shown.

Welcoming Arms is located at 44 Metcalfe Street and is staffed by trained volunteers from participating churches. They are open Mondays and Thursdays from 9.30 a.m. to 1.30 p.m., and on Wednesdays from 6.30 ? 8.30 p.m.

The next Special Event at the Farmers' Market is our annual Community Corn Roast on Saturday, August 23. This year we have invited guests from three of our community partners to barbecue and hand out the corn.

We will have two people each from the Aurora Cultural Centre, the Aurora Public Library and the Aurora Seniors' Association helping with the barbecue and the public will have the opportunity to ask questions about these groups and their programmes.

There will be great music from the band shell featuring the After Hours Big Band from 10 ? 11.30 a.m. There will also be a kids' crafts, a scavenger hunt and a draw for a Market bag at 12 Noon. The cost of the corn is by donation and all money raised will go to

the Food Pantry. It will be an exciting day at the Market.
See you at the Market!