

MARKET MUSINGS

By Jan Freedman

The weather at the end of summer has not been too kind to us, but it's difficult to complain as we have had pleasant weather for most of the season.

Thank you to all the hardy Aurorans who came to the Market this past wet Saturday. It was almost difficult to see the farmers behind their tables that were heaped with mounds of colourful fruit and vegetables. I brought home a veritable cornucopia of produce for the pot roast and fruit crisp I plan to make on Sunday.

There are even fall strawberries still available as well as the end of the raspberries. These are joined by peaches, plums, pears, grapes and the early apples. It is indeed a time of plenty at the Market.

On Saturday, September 20, Amnesty International will be visiting the Market, so I'd like you to know more about the group. They describe themselves as ordinary people from across the world standing up for humanity and human rights (full disclosure: I am a member).

Amnesty International's mission is to stop human rights' abuses around the world by shining a spotlight on injustice that might otherwise remain hidden. Amnesty helps prisoners of conscience who have been locked away from their families, often beaten and tortured, just for defending human rights. They are the peaceful protesters, the oppressed, the displaced, the victims of death by execution and stoning, the people who are persecuted because of their race, religion, gender or beliefs.

For over a third of these political prisoners, a real difference is made as a direct result of Amnesty's campaigning: e.g. they are freed, acquire access to a lawyer or doctor, are finally allowed family visits or are granted a retrial. After release, many have said that Amnesty letters and support gave them the strength to carry on during their darkest days of despair.

Once a human rights abuse has been identified and verified by Amnesty, the organization will publish reports, inform the media and notify its members. The worldwide network then generates hundreds of appeal letters to Governments on behalf of individuals at risk. Amnesty provides clear guidelines as to how to word letters and emails respectfully and effectively.

Founded by a British lawyer in 1961, and with three million supporters in over 150 countries, Amnesty International is the world's largest grassroots human rights organization. It has renowned credibility as it is independent of any Government, political ideology economic interest or religion.

It does not support or oppose any particular Government or political system, nor does it accept money from any such groups. It is answerable only to its membership.

Amnesty International was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1977 for 'having contributed to securing the ground for freedom, for justice, and thereby peace for the world'. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides the bedrock for campaigns.

Intense public pressure from around the globe CAN bring about justice and freedom for the oppressed. Whether you have 10 minutes or 10 hours, you can help:

You can join the Newmarket-Aurora group which meets monthly at The Rectory (house behind Trinity Anglican Church at 79 Victoria St., in Aurora. New members are always welcome. For more information, contact Renee and Len at 905-713-6713 or reneeandlen@rogers.com.

Visit www.amnesty.ca or www.aito.ca(GTA) to learn more. Receive e-newsletters about local events and find ways that you can help from home.

The Urgent Action Network (www.amnesty.ca/urgentaction) allows you to customize how often you wish to be notified regarding urgent appeals. There is also a special subgroup known as Lifesaver for 10-15 year old writers.

Students who are interested in starting an Amnesty group at their school can find ideas at www.amnesty.ca/youth/get_involved.

Please be sure to visit their booth at the Market this Sunday to find out more about the wonderful and necessary work that Amnesty does and perhaps sign up to become a member.

The next Special Event at the Market is on September 27 and is our annual and popular celebration of Culture Days, our Culinary Arts Day. This year, our six Market chefs will be preparing dishes featuring squash and pumpkins celebrating their own ethnic and cultural heritage.

They will be preparing their dishes at the Market for you to watch and, of course, to sample. Most of the chefs will also provide recipes. So, be sure to be there so you don't miss this extremely popular Market event.

The Aurora Community Band will be playing from 10 ? 10.30 a.m. and 11.30 to 12 noon. As usual, there will be crafts for kids, a scavenger hunt and a draw for a market bag full of goodies at 12 noon.

As the Town ramps up to full election mode, the Aurora Farmers' Market and Artisan Fair reminds all candidates for political office that we are a politics and campaign-free zone. We respectfully request that there be NO active campaigning or handing out of campaign literature or buttons while you are visiting the Market. We thank you in advance for your understanding and co-operation.

See you at the market!