

MARKET MUSINGS

By Jan Freedman

What an absolutely wonderful Canada Day we had at the Farmers' Market last Saturday.

What you may not realize it that it was an historic day for us. That's because, since the return of the parade to Aurora, we have always participated in the parade as Canada Day has not fallen on a Saturday, until now.

So, it was a new experience for us to have a Farmers' Market on Canada Day, and we didn't know what to expect. Would people come after the parade, or would they drift off to activities elsewhere?

Well, people came in droves after the parade and we were extremely busy amid a sea of red shirts. The sun was shining, everyone was smiling, until some of us began to run short of coffee and food. Now we know how to prepare for a Canada Day at the Market. Thank you to the good people behind the new Music Aurora who connected us with jazz musician, James Brown, whose trio brought us wonderful jazz sounds on Saturday. The picnic benches and stands were full of Aurorans enjoying the great music. The next new vendor to introduce is Marc Kolb of 'Brainy Games', a small Aurora business that creates games and puzzles. Marc has been making online games since he was introduced to computers in high school, beginning with a tic-tac-toe game using punch cards.

Over the years, Mark has created close to 100 computer games and now is making tabletop games and puzzles with his sons, Devon and Justin. These include educational games, personalized puzzles and web games as well as free 'Print and Play' word games for teachers.

After having a word game prototype sitting around for 10 years, last year Marc asked his family if he should publish it. The result was the Connections Card Game which began in March of 2016.

Printed locally in Richmond Hill, this popular game has sold over 500 copies and was rated in the top 10 new games in the Hasbro Games Labs' 2016 competition out of 462 entries worldwide.

His wife, Denise, came up with the 'Secret Connections' version where the key to winning is to understand your spouse better than he/she understands you.

Mark conducts his play testing with people of all ages, including 'Brain Fitness' at the Oak Ridges Retirement Community as well as afterschool programmes. He finds new ideas and inspiration from the many and diverse people he meets.

Recently, he took a laser-cutting course and can now laser cut a variety of tabletop games and puzzles. These can be jigsaw or magnetic as well as any shape. There are some specialty items like wedding guest books and engagement surprises.

Marc has 'Colour your Own' puzzles and you can take any image and Marc can create a puzzle within a few days. His newest creation is a Canada 150 themed coaster puzzle where guests must put together their coasters in order to get a drink.

With his recent Ontario 150 Grant, Marc is excited to launch his web-based historical scavenger hunt at the Market this month. You can uncover 150+ years of secrets hidden in plain sight. Watch for it and visit Marc's booth next to Gabriel in Town Park. He will be delighted to talk about his interesting creations and how they work.

Next Saturday, July 8, is a regular day for us but we'll be sharing the park with Kerry's Place and their annual Appreciation Day and Art in the Park coordinated as usual by Aurora artist Deborah Campo.

See you at the Market!