

Outdoor market wraps for season as organizers gear up for indoors



By Brock Weir

Rain might have dampened and dispersed both customers and vendors at the final outdoor Aurora Farmers' Market of the seasons, but market organizers Saturday were looking forward to a busy ? and dry ? fall and winter ahead.

For Anna Kroeplin, this year's Market chair, the Committee set itself the objective to grow in size both on the ground and in the number of customers, and simply be a year of success for their vendors.

?If they succeed, we succeed,? says Ms. Kroeplin. ?One of my goals was making the northeast quadrant of Town aware that we even exist and extending that through Ontario. We really focused a lot on marketing and making sure we were getting the word out that Aurora has a fantastic Farmers' Market.?

They also asked their own customers to spread the word, and evidently it was a winning formula as speaking each week to vendors and customers, Ms. Kroeplin says each came across new faces.

?Every week there were new people there,? she says. ?Vendors were quite surprised there wasn't just the regulars and we were increasing in numbers.?

Market numbers often increased on the eight ?special event? days they held at the Market, including Seniors' Appreciation Day, special events in conjunction with Kerry's Place Autism Services, the annual Strawberry Festival, the Apple and Honey Festival, and this year's Culinary Day held in conjunction with events put on by the Aurora Historical Society, Library, and Cultural Centre for Culture Days. One special event day, however, was particularly memorable, she says.

?On our grand opening on May 4, we had our butterfly release,? she says. ?We never tried that before and it was not only astounding to me, seeing how many people actually attended it, I was [struck] by how many people actually showed up. It meant something very personal to each person, whether it was a celebration of life, a release, each butterfly that was released was very personal and really magical.?

These special event days, or the regular Market days, for that matter, could not have been possible without the many volunteers that came together for the occasion, notes Ms. Kroeplin. These numbers, she said, included 41 local high school students that came out early in the morning and stayed through closing, collecting over 1,100 volunteer hours all together.

Along with their hours, the market also collected over 1,000 items of fresh produce for the Aurora Food Pantry every Saturday.

With the outdoor events now in the proverbial can until next May, plans are already well underway for the first Indoor Market of the

season, which will take over the Aurora Cultural Centre on Saturday, November 23. In previous years, the Market was confined to Brevik Hall and the Aurora Room, both on the second floor, but this year there will be expansion downstairs as well.

‘We’re going to have a room on the first floor and our regular room on the second floor,’ says Ms. Kroeplin. ‘We’re going to expand it and open it up a bit. We have had a lot of interest from vendors who want to be at the indoor one and we want to provide as much variety as possible.’

A harpist will be on hand November 23 to add some ambiance to the occasion, extending the public conversation indoors, which is one of the things Ms. Kroeplin says was a hallmark of the season that has just wrapped.

‘There would be the most fun and impromptu conversations,’ she says of the season past. ‘People could relax and enjoy an afternoon in a quaint setting with meeting friends and family, and getting to know each other again over a coffee or a crepe and just reconnect. We want to be a place where people connect to each other again.’