

## Porchlight Arts aims to amplify arts, create 'homegrown' cultural experiences?



Creativity, culture and connection are what make a community feel alive, and this is the driving force behind Porchlight Arts, a new group of community organizers dedicated to supporting local arts and culture, while creating new 'homegrown' experiences for the community.

Porchlight Arts formally launched Thursday night at the Micak Gallery, one of the newest private arts venues in the community located at St. Andrew's Village Plaza.

The volunteers behind Porchlight began laying the groundwork for the organization about six months ago and, at last week's launch, shared one of their first large-scale initiatives, which will be a nod to their name - an evening this fall where the porches of homes in the Town's historic core will be activated with music and 'unexpected' art.

'At its core, Porchlight Arts is about inspiring and energizing our community through culture, creativity, and connection,' said Lauren Hanna, a founding member of Porchlight. 'It all started with a simple observation and conversations among the founding members that what we have here in Aurora is really, really incredible, and we wanted to amplify that. From Town Square, the world-class performing arts facility, to the galleries and creative spaces that we have, the music festivals that come through, like the Winter Blues Festival that we just had, and the caliber of the artists who are here locally creating, we realize there's so much to celebrate. We asked ourselves, how do we make this a bigger part of Aurora's identity, a source of pride for residents and business owners here, and also a destination that people want to come to from outside of Aurora?'

'We know something important: when people come for arts and culture, they don't just visit one place, and this is highlighted in the Town's tourism strategy earlier this year. They go to local restaurants, they shop at local businesses, they stay overnight. So, there's also a very enriching local impact economically that we can celebrate, too. And that's what Porchlight Arts is all about. We want to celebrate and amplify what's already happening. We want to help spread the word about incredible things that are happening here, whether it's promoting it ourselves or collectively, and we want to do more to foster collaboration between businesses, potential venues, artists, sponsors, just even to amplify what's happening at the Cultural Centre or Town Square. We just know there's more that can be done. And we want to create something special together.'

Thursday's opening reception brought out representatives from the Town, Aurora Town Square, the Aurora Cultural Centre, the Aurora Public Library, and other cultural partners within Aurora.

Organizers stressed this was just the first milestone on a journey towards further collaboration.

'This is not something we plan to create on our own, and we can't do it alone,' Hanna continued. 'Just by being here tonight and

being in this room, we've already taken an important step in that direction.?

The fall event was expanded upon by Ariana Dalie, another founding member of Porchlight. The owner of music production company Happiness Mafia and an Aurora resident of more than 18 years, she says she was inspired by the arts scene in Collingwood, ON, and wanted to foster these cultural connections here at home.

?Being connected with a music company and working with artists, I thought we'd reach out to some wonderful ladies that I knew would make this possible, and they're here, and they're willing to get this going,? Dalie told the audience at the reception. ?Thank you so much to everyone for coming and being a part of this, I think we're going to create something great.

?We have many ideas, many visions, and in September we plan to have an event where we need your help. We plan to have music, art, and just create something amazing. We're going to need sponsors, we're going to need venues, we're going to need artists, and we're going to be reaching out to all of you and see how you can support us and be a part of it. I think as a community we want to make this place great. We want people from Toronto to come here instead of us going to Toronto, so I think that's really important ? and I think as a community we can make this happen.?

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter