

Pride Fest organizers 'beyond excited' for this month's celebration

June is Pride Month and this month heralds a much-needed return to normalcy for organizers of the York Pride Festival.

York Pride launched their 2022 program last week at Upper Canada Mall, a full slate of activities designed for the whole family celebrating 'the power of the human connection,' a theme that has only been underscored by the global pandemic.

Festivities will kick off with a launch party this Friday, June 3, at Newmarket's Market Brewing Company.

'As the sun sets to the west, Market Brewery is getting fired up on the east side of Newmarket,' say organizers. 'Don't forget your blankets and lawn chairs as we prepare to rock the hillside for the opening night of the festival. We've seriously drawn some wild cards for this evening packed with stellar performances.'

The party will be headlined by Tangent, a five-piece band 'bringing you the hits from every decade that gets you.'

'In the artist lineup, you can expect various styles of drag, involving voguing and untamed outfit realness ' who knows, you might even catch a king onside. We go behind the intense heat and witness the deadly art of fire dancing as North Fire Circus lash out some extremely incredible visual displays.'

Featuring food trucks, an interactive zone with fair games and more, the launch party runs from 6 ' 11.30 p.m.

The party continues Saturday, June 18, with Pride on Riverwalk, which takes over Newmarket's Riverwalk Commons from 12 noon to 11.55 p.m., featuring live entertainment from local emerging artists.

'Throughout the afternoon right into the evening of the same day of the York Pride Parade join us at Riverwalk Commons, in Newmarket for the annual Main Stage Concert, Community Fair, Home Depot Interactive Zone, Grizzly Gardens Beer Garden, Pop-up Shops and lots of food options,' say Organizers.

'Enjoy picnic areas, street buskers, art installations, rock-climbing, picture-perfect moments. Plenty of beautiful and charming restaurants and bars to hop around from with varying parties and events to stop by in. The event will close with a secret special performance with a pyrotechnic display.'

The event is outdoors, open to the public and free to attend.

Perhaps the most visible part of the Pride celebrations is the Pride Parade which will transform Main Street Newmarket into a sea of rainbows from 3 ' 5 p.m.

'Unite in the streets with thousands of people in Newmarket on this special day to celebrate over 100 community groups, businesses, supporters, and 2SLGBTQ+ advocates doing some very important work in York Region. Come cheer on nearly 2,000 colourful participants with creative floats, marching groups, and interactive displays of rainbow awesomeness.'

Closing out the month for York Pride on June 30 is the Toodle-Pip party which promises 'dazzling performances under the night sky.

'Reserve your free picnic table under the twinkling night sky in the middle of the road in a special pride lounge setup and experience one of Ontario's wildest outdoor catwalk concerts in York Region.

'Building a platform for identifying artists is a key component to our programming. We've set out to promote the unseen talents of local 2SLGBTQ+ artists within and beyond York Region. The various art forms have unique ways of bringing communities

together.?

The Aurora Public Library is also offering an array of programs to mark Pride Month.

On Saturday, June 5, at 2 p.m., family-favourite drag queen Miss Eva Lasting will bring ?a little glitz and a lot of heart? to a Drag Queen Story Hour ? and participants are encouraged to ?wear your favourite outfit and participate in the action.?

The following week, on Thursday, June 9, at 7 p.m., the Library presents You Still Look the Same: An Evening with Farzana Doctor.?

?Farzana Doctor's debut poetry collection is both an intimate deep dive and a humourous glance at the tumultuous decade of her forties,? says the Library. ?Farzana's crisp and vivid language explores mid-life breakups and dating, female genital cutting, imprints of racism and misogyny, and the oddness of sex and love. Through her writing, she urges us to take a second look at the ways in which human relationships are never what we expect them to be.

?Farzana Doctor is a writer, activist and psychotherapist whose interest include gender violence and LGBTTTTIQ rights.?

For more on York Pride Fest's celebrations, visit yorkpride.ca.

For Library programming, visit aurorapl.ca.

Additionally, this Monday, June 6, the Aurora Black Community will host a virtual meeting called ?Parenting with Pride? and all parents, grandparents, guardians and other family members of school-aged children are invited to talk about how to raise kids to be allies ? in Pride month and year-round.

?We don't have to hide our feelings ? join us to share your experiences and anxieties and build a community of supportive parents,? say organizers. ?Reflect and connect with others in a similar situation. Get your fears validated and learn tips and strategies to cope. Hear from our school principals, teachers and other persons from the YRDSB (York Region District School Board) about our children's safety and wellbeing.?

For more information, visit aurorablackcommunity.com.

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter