

Second Hillary House ball offers glimpse of past, vision of future



By Brock Weir

Aurorans gathered in King Friday night to mark the 151st birthday of an old friend at the second annual Hillary House Ball.

Party goers, including members of the Aurora Historical Society, current and past presidents of the AHS, MP Lois Brown, Mayor Geoffrey Dawe, and Councillors John Abel, Paul Pirri, and Sandra Humfries filled King Valley Golf Course for the second annual event raising funds to keep Hillary House, Aurora's only National Heritage site, a showpiece.

In her remarks, Suzanne Reiner, President of the Aurora Historical Society, paid tribute to the Van Nostrand family, descendants of the original Hillary Family who helped pave the way for the AHS' purchase of Hillary House in 1981.

‘It is through their generosity today that Hillary House operates as a museum of medical practice and domestic life, based on our medical collections, our books, our papers, household furnishings, and their personal possessions,’ said Ms. Reiner. ‘What’s unique about Hillary House is personal family items, from the clothing in their closets, to their musical instruments and dishes, remain.’

They’re not resting on the laurels of the past, she added. Aside from the artefacts, Hillary House is also a dynamic place, holding regular yoga sessions on the front lawn, archeology and doctor-for-a-day programs for kids, and a soon-to-be-launched educational program taking the show on the road to local schools, integrating hands-on artefacts into the curriculum.

‘I am absolutely delighted we have people in our community who are prepared to invest their time and efforts to keep a facility like Hillary House alive and functioning,’ said Ms. Brown. ‘To all the volunteers, staff and board members, thank you for all you are doing because this investment in our community is going to preserve our heritage for years to come.’

MPP Frank Klees, via a message delivered by the evening’s emcee, Tim Jones, also saluted a recent move by the Town on the future of the Aurora Historical Society.

‘A special recognition is due to Aurora’s Town Council for its commitment to assume stewardship of the Aurora Collection, thus ensuring the continued access to the Aurora Collection by the public,’ he said of the Town’s decision to acquire the AHS’ historical collections.

For event chair Bill Albino, looking over the success of this year’s event, he said money raised Friday evening was ‘critical’ for Hillary House.

‘It is a national treasure we should all be a part of and I encourage everyone here to go and experience it,’ he said.