

Soroptimists, CFUW mark International Women's Day with LUNAFEST screening



International Women's Day was marked Tuesday with a series of in-person and virtual events throughout our community, but it is not the end of the celebration of strong women here at home and around the world.

On Friday, March 11, the York Region branch of the Soroptimists, in conjunction with the Canadian Federation of University Women Aurora-Newmarket (CFUW) will host LUNAFEST 2022, a virtual presentation of eight short films written and shot to empower and inspire.

Proceeds from the presentation will benefit both organizations as they spearhead programs locally, including grants, to further their own efforts to empower and inspire women of all ages.

This year's LUNAFEST films are told from a variety of perspectives that champion women and gender nonconforming individuals, highlighting their aspirations, accomplishments, resilience, strength and connections, say organizers.

The themes of the eight short films are very much in keeping with the mandates of both the CFUW and the Soroptimists and joining forces to present the films together virtually for the second year running came without question.

This is our fourth year doing this and our second year of doing it virtually, says Pat Giusti of Soroptimist York Region. Both of our charities raise funds for women in our local communities, and, in our case, we have a scholarship for women [who support their families] who have gone back to school and to help out with whatever their financial needs are at the time.

Ms. Giusti says she was brought into the Soroptimist program by friends and she stuck around because it gives her a way to give back to the community while also juggling her full-time job.

It's all about being with friends and giving back to the community where I could.

Valerie Hume of the CFUW found the Federation in a similar way.

Marking its 65th anniversary in Aurora and Newmarket this year, the Canadian Federation of University Women has been working hard during the pandemic to ensure that their fundraising programs, which also provide grants to women in the community, do not lose momentum.

Before the pandemic hit, Ms. Hume says the CFUW had about 235 active members. This tally has taken a bit of a hit over the last two years, with their numbers now standing at 195, but they are looking at ways to rebound, remount their in-person events, and to continue finding ways to build community.

One of our signature events is a home and garden tour which will take place on June 18, says Hume. We are trying to build up

our student awards. It has been difficult for students because they haven't had places where they can work and build up their stash of cash to go to university. We are trying to increase the number and the amount of awards we can give. Hopefully we will do well with this tour and in the fall we're looking forward to getting around in person.?

In the meantime, however, the focus for both organizations is ensuring LUNAFEST reaches the community and supports their work in turn.

LUNAFEST films will be available to ticket holders beginning at 7 p.m. this Friday until Sunday, March 13, at 6.59 p.m. Once you begin watching you will have 48 hours to finish watching.

Tickets are \$20 and are available through www.lunafest.org/screenings/virtual-york-region-on-031122.

For more on Soroptimist York Region, visit them on Facebook, and for further information on the Canadian Federation of University Women Aurora-Newmarket, visit www.cfuwauroranewmarket.com.

By Brock Weir Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter