

SOYRA excited for energy to come as they mount Showcase 2015



By Brock Weir

As York Region grows, so too does the Society of York Region Artists.

The Society (SOYRA) celebrates its 28th anniversary and now more than ever new artists are joining the group to learn, share and exhibit. This will be evident this week through February 22 as the members come together at the Aurora Cultural Centre for Showcase 2015.

‘The focus on this exhibit is to show your best,’ says SOYRA’s Linda Welch, who was on hand at the Centre on Monday as artists unpacked their best. ‘It is up to each artist to show the three items they feel most represent their very best work and because it is not a juried show, having them understand it is their best really does make a difference.

‘It is also an encouraging thing for artists because not everyone wants to be in a competitive environment.’

This year, 25 per cent of the exhibitors are newcomers to SOYRA. Not only does this statistic help keep things fresh, but it is also an indicator the artistic and creative community in York Region – and beyond – is on the rise. Outside of York Region, this showcase is also attracting talent from Toronto, Orangeville, the Kawarthas, and even further field.

‘These artists are bringing with them skills and techniques they have learned in other places,’ says Ms. Welch. ‘We are seeing a broadening out of the types of art that will be shown quite a bit. I was told at a recent event that if someone was to join an art association in the GTA that SOYRA was the one to join. It surprised me, but it means we’re maintaining the quality of our events, it means that we’re providing enough outlets for our members to exhibit, either at no cost or at a reasonable cost. You can paint at home all you want, but if you have no way of showing people what you are doing without renting a gallery space at a high cost, you just stay at home and you paint alone. We are offering a social environment where they have that opportunity.’

In addition to the artists themselves, art lovers will also be able to partake in this ‘social environment’ as the show progresses. On both Thursdays the exhibition covers, SOYRA artist Nancy Newman will be holding art classes in the Meridian Gallery. Visitors to the exhibition will be able to come in and observe the class in progress. Exhibiting artists will also be painting ‘live’ in the Blue Gallery on February 21 from 10 a.m. to noon, in conjunction with the Indoor Aurora Farmers’ Market.

‘I look forward to being able to encourage new members or shy members to get involved,’ says Ms. Welch. ‘It is really gratifying to see someone who is maybe a little reluctant to speak in public, but they will come and be there with another artist chatting with visitors. They get quite animated and quite excited explaining how something was done, how the technique was created on the

surface. That gives them a little bit more encouragement to get involved in other ways and I really enjoy that part of it.

?But, that is an in-house experience. I like the energy that is created by outsiders coming in and seeing what kind of high quality work local artists can produce.?

