

Family-friendly activities return to Aurora's Movies in the Park series

If you've ever wanted to learn how to make your own comic strip, or even more about some of the arts and crafts traditions of South America, come out early to Aurora's Movies in the Park programs this summer.

The popular film series, which sees feature films unspool on an inflatable screen in local parks is back this year and making up for lost time.

While the Movies in the Park drew families out last year, activities were limited due to public health restrictions. That's all changed for the 2022 season.

"For each of our movies, we're doing pre-movie programming an hour before the movie starts just to keep families settled in and keep them busy," says Shelley Ware, Special Events Coordinator for the Town of Aurora. "Last year, we still had our rectangles on the ground [for bubbles] and spaced families apart, and there wasn't encouragement of engagement amongst the community" but this time we're able to do activity stations for kids to bounce from one to another prior to the film with no guided seating placement.

"Families can literally come, set up where they would like to be in the park and go from there. It's just a lot more casual of an atmosphere."

The fun begins Thursday, August 18, at Town Park with the 1993 classic *Dennis the Menace* starring Walter Matthau. This first film is slated to begin at 9 p.m., with pre-show activities beginning at 8 p.m.

"Here, you can learn to make your own comic strip with templates at one of our activity stations," says Ms. Ware. "Once you learn how to make your own comic strip you can carry on this activity even after movie night!"

The second film, Disney's *Encanto*, will unspool Thursday, August 25 at Town Park beginning at 8.45 p.m., with a pre-show of activities exploring the world of Colombia through crafts and activities beginning at 8 p.m.

"*Encanto* is special because it follows a girl in the mountainside of Colombia as she tries to save the actual Encanto going through the dynamics of family and how it stays together," says Ms. Ware. "We're celebrating Colombian culture with themed crafts and activities for kids. Even though they'll see it in the movie, we're also hoping through the activities to teach them about another part of the world."

The series comes to a close on Thursday, September 1, with *Sonic the Hedgehog 2*, with activities, including obstacle courses, set to begin at 7.30 p.m. before an 8 p.m. showtime.

"This is a really action-packed, energetic one," says Ms. Ware. "Kids might be a little bit rambunctious and excited as they head back to school and we'll keep them busy on that night with obstacle courses to see how they can be the fastest because, with *Sonic*, it's all about speed."

But it's also about seeing a movie in the great outdoors, she adds.

You can sit in a theatre 12 months out of the year, but gathering with family, friends, and neighbours to see a film under starry skies is a unique experience that people should take advantage of, she says.

"You only have these three special nights to just take it in," she says.

For more, see aurora.ca/moviesinthepark.

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