

Home Show move provides new opportunities for Chamber of Commerce



By Brock Weir

It is crunch time for the Aurora Chamber of Commerce as they gear up for the annual Aurora Home Show next weekend.

For the first time in its nearly 30-year history, the Home Show will not be held at the Aurora Community Centre (ACC), but at the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex (SARC) on Wellington Street East, just west of Leslie Street.

At the Community Centre, they had a tried and true plan, but when circumstances conspired for them to make the move east, it provided the Show's organizing committee with a mixed bag of challenges and opportunities. But with little more than a week to go until they throw open the doors of the SARC for a refreshed exhibition of just about everything one needs to renovate one's home, many of the wrinkles are ironed out and they anticipate smooth sailing ahead.

“One of the biggest challenges was parking because at the old arena the exhibitors were able to park across the road or up behind [the arena] at the school nearby,” explains Robin Taylor Smith, Chair of the Home Show Committee. “This year we don't have that option, so Magna has been great in allowing us to use some of the Stronach Group parking across the road [from the SARC]. That is going to be accommodated and helped by Highland GM and we're going to be running a shuttle service for extra people.”

While the Magna lot is intended to be primarily for exhibitors, Ms. Taylor Smith anticipates show-goers will have ample parking directly at the SARC. Although some of the finer details of moving in and out of the building still are being hammered out, time will tell of the success of the move, she adds.

“A lot of people seem to be excited about the new venue and the new location,” she says. “That is not saying anything was wrong with the old one, but it is just something different. Having said that, we don't know what our turnout is going to be because I think some people just assume it is always going to be at the ACC and it is not. We're aggressively promoting the fact it is at the SARC. On the other hand, we're right next to ‘Mecca’ with that great, big subdivision right beside us, so I am hoping people will walk in some cases.”

Along with the new location came a completely new layout the Home Show Committee had to grapple with. While this was a challenge at first, there were a few bonuses along the way. Unlike the entrance of the ACC, the SARC provides a much larger venue. This space will largely be turned over to community groups ranging from the Run or Walk for Southlake to the Queen's York Rangers, as Pathways to Perennials pulls out all the stops to create that certain garden ambiance.

“Our feature area is going to be great,” Ms. Taylor Smith adds. “Jack's Landscaping and Janice from Clements Interiors are putting it together and it is going to be really great, like always.”

Ms. Taylor Smith credits the continuing quality of the feature areas as one of the things that draws people back year after year to this venerable Aurora tradition.

The new space has allowed for an expanded feature area, as well as a 'family' area for the first time this year which will feature activities to keep kids busy.

'We're hoping to have a lot of different things going on to entice families and part of the idea is if someone is coming in and they're seriously looking at things at the Home Show, but their kids are driving them crazy, maybe someone can take them to the family area to keep them occupied.'

But with all that is new comes a touch of tradition, she adds.

'We're keeping the same old ticket booth we have always used to keep that sense of familiarity. It makes it easier for people to identify this as the grand old Home Show. I thought it was important to keep some of the elements from the old arena and bring them into this one. People are probably going to be able to find everything they need at this show. We have everything from landscaping, to windows and doors, to financial services, draperies and roofing. All the bases will be covered.'

The Aurora Home Show runs at the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex from Friday, April 10 to Sunday, April 12. Admission is \$3 and children under 6 are free. For more information, visit www.aurorachamber.on.ca.