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THE AURORAN



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Mayor Tom Mrakas is pictured with Grade 12 artist Sydney Stewart at the opening reception for the Mayor's Celebration of Youth Arts, held at Town Hall on February 15.

Auroran photo by Brock Weir

MCOYA gives students a chance to express selves through art

BY BROCK WEIR
EDITOR
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

As a young person of colour in what they describe as a "predominantly White area," Sydney Stewart, a Grade 12 student at St. Maximilian Kolbe Catholic High School wanted to give a voice to "Black students like me," particularly given today's political climate.

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MCOYA gives students a chance to express selves through art



(Clockwise from Top Left) Kristen Donoghue-Stanford, Gallery Assistant for the Aurora Cultural Centre, speaks at the MCOYA opening reception. Student Amelija Le Moine is pictured with her work. Cheryl Shindruk of event sponsor Geranium Homes speaks. **Auroran photo by Brock Weir**

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Putting her artistic talents in action, she created an evocative image of a young Black boy, standing before the American flag with his fist in the air as a sign of resistance.

"I think there's a lot of blood on Americans' hands regarding race...

and I felt like everyone has seen what's been going on in America, especially since 2020, and I want this piece to be a conversation."

The conversation starter is entitled "AmeriKKKA" and is now on display at Town Hall as part of the Aurora Cultural Centre's

Mayor's Celebration of Youth Arts (MCOYA), which formally opened last Wednesday, February 15, at the Centre's temporary gallery space at the seat of government.

Sponsored by Geranium Homes, this year's MCOYA is the first show open for in-person viewing since the start of the global pandemic, bringing together the work of 53 Grade 12 students from across the community.

"I knew this exhibition would be brilliant and you have all far exceeded my expectations," said Kristen Donoghue-Stanford, Gallery Assistant for the Aurora Cultural Centre, addressing the artists at the opening reception. "It takes a lot of trust in others with your work and you all did it so wholeheartedly. We were blown away as your submissions came in and then once again when we got to see the beautiful works in person. It was an absolute delight to install these works and see it come together..."

"You have all come together here to showcase your work but more importantly yourselves and what you value, what you wish to be seen and heard. Seeing this exhibition come together and seeing all of you here tonight, I hold great hopes for the future of arts in Aurora."

What she values and what she wants to be seen and heard is certainly reflected in Stewart's work.

She says she wants her work to prove that "not everyone looks the same, some people don't have as much privilege as other people, and the same perspectives, and even though not everyone has the same perspective or the same opinions on what's happening, I think when you look at the piece and you see the statement of the fist in the air, the American flag – and I did the stars wonky because everyone in America is so different – just to show that historically there is a lot happening within not only America, but within North America."

"I wanted my piece to be controversial and that's why I gave it the name. I think it's important to have this conversation because growing up here we never had this talk about race and discrimination and I think with the climate we're currently in it's a statement piece and it lets people talk about it. The message is so clear, it allows a space for people to converse about what's occurring and that's all I really wanted."

Beyond North America, Aurora High School Grade 12 artist Amelija

Le Moine used her art to express anger over the death of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian woman who was arrested for not wearing a hijab.

"I think women are really limited by what they can wear and I think society has put a lot of pressure on women for what they can show, what they can't show, and I think this is just a painting to show the liberty women should have with their coverage and it's kind of their choice," said Le Moine.

Le Moine has always had a passion for hair.

She's had her own hairstyling business since she was in Grade 5 and regularly books gigs for proms and weddings – and amassing a steady following with her hair tutorial videos on TikTok.

"The Mayor's Celebration of Youth Arts is an event that gives young artists a chance to show their creativity, interpretation of life events, powerful themes, or just the simplicity of everyday emotions," said Mayor Tom Mrakas. "Visual arts and for that matter all forms of arts and culture are truly one of the bedrocks of our community. The arts bring people together, help us better understand our society, gives people an important outlet for self-expression, while also providing young people with opportunities to build new skills that can eventually lead to exciting and meaningful careers."

"You should be very proud of the brilliant pieces you have created. Keep up the amazing work. Thank you to the parents of these young artists who have given them tools, foundation, encouragement and time to explore their artistic abilities."

Added Cheryl Shindruk, Executive Vice President of Geranium Homes, "On behalf of our entire team, congratulations to the Grade 12 students whose art is included in this year's exhibition. As a land developer and home builder, Geranium believes it is important and it is our responsibility to make a positive and lasting impact on the communities in which we have the honour of building. Your creativity never ceases to astound us. The variety of work and extraordinary talent on display here is remarkable. We hope you are all proud of your accomplishments."

The Mayor's Celebration of Youth Arts runs in-person and virtually through March 18. For more, see, auroraculturalcentre.ca/mcoya2023.

Advertorial



LIVE WELL EXERCISE CLINIC

is thrilled to open in Aurora!!

There couldn't be a more important time for a medical fitness centre to open than now, and LIVE WELL Exercise Clinic, Canada's Ultra-Private Gym for People with a Health Focus, is thrilled to be open to serve the people of Aurora and surrounding areas.

"We are so excited to announce that the most recent LIVE WELL Exercise Clinic is open to serve Aurora and the surrounding area," said LIVE WELL CEO Sara Hodson, President of Fitness Industry Council of Canada. "LIVE WELL works to improve the physical and mental health of its members, many who have a health concern or 'wake-up call' that leads them to choosing to begin an exercise program. LIVE WELL welcomes members who want the support and accountability to be successful, so they can change their lives and live life to the fullest - and have fun doing it!"

LIVE WELL was founded in White Rock, BC in 2011, expanding the concept of cardiac rehabilitation to include all health concerns and community wellness. It now has 16 locations across Canada. Its founders have created a fun, engaging and personal approach that will equip members to take control of their health and make lasting changes. The Aurora location joins Oakville, Mississauga and Bowmanville in Ontario.

Our members work with trained and regulated Registered Kinesiologists, who create a safe and effective customized program for each member, based on their health history, medications, injuries and any other individual needs and / or concerns.

One of the most common reasons for coming to the clinic is the desire for accountability, support and a non-intimidating environment. Saying that, most of our members have conditions such as high blood pressure, arthritis, diabetes, heart issues and mobility concerns. Members are supervised in a supportive group setting,

It has been proven that 150 minutes of exercise helps reduce chronic health conditions, improves longevity and can significantly improve mental health. Exercise has been tied to reduce rates of anxiety and depression. People who exercise have a more positive

life outlook.

In addition to exercise sessions, LIVE WELL offers members a wealth of online modules available to cover a host of health topics such as nutrition, blood pressure management, healthy habit changes and evidence-based information on a variety of health topics.

Our members are not only inspired but are provided with education, resources and continuous support to achieve their goals, in their time.

We find that many members are women who are approaching retirement or have retired and they are finally taking time to prioritize their own health. LIVE WELL is often their first experience with an exercise program. Our members sign up for two sessions per week, one hour per session. This goes a long way towards the recommended 150 minutes of exercise outlined by Health Canada.

Throughout the challenges of the last few years, Canadians have become more sedentary – with one-third reporting weight gain and moving less than they have previously. There are many health complications that come with a sedentary lifestyle, including Type 2 diabetes, depression, loss of mobility and joint pain. Physical inactivity has also been tied with more severe COVID outcomes.

The New Year is one of the best times to make a change. Let LIVE WELL help with your journey back to health! If you are looking for the support of health care professionals and an inspiring community of members so that you can be more active and improve your overall health, then we invite you to BE OUR GUEST – LIVE WELL Clinic
LiveWellClinic.ca
or phone us at 289 984 4354
we are located at 302 Wellington St E, beside the Street directly East of St. Maximilian Kolbe High School.