

## ?Love is in the Air? theme set for 2nd pride, diversity fundraiser



By Mike Baker

?Love is in the Air? as a special fundraiser designed to support Dufferin County's second annual pride and diversity event prepares to take centre stage at the Orangeville Opera House.

With the event scheduled to take place on Feb. 9, organizers of the popular Celebrate Your Awesome (CYA) showcase will welcome TroyBoy Entertainment to town for a ?high energy? two-hour drag show. This will be a first-of-its-kind event in Dufferin County and is one that Jim Waddington, one of the individuals behind CYA, is really looking forward to.

?This event is a fundraiser, will all proceeds going towards supporting our second Celebrate Your Awesome event. What I can confirm at this point is we will have seven drag kings and queens in town next month for a special show that will be highly entertaining. These people are very theatrical and have spent a lot of time perfecting their craft ? I'm expecting a phenomenal show,? Mr. Waddington said.

Based in Guelph, Troy Boy Entertainment is one of Ontario's premiere drag troupes. Having been introduced to the local community last year through his participation in the first Celebrate Your Awesome event, Troy Caplan, ringleader at TroyBoy Entertainment, was ?thrilled? to take on a more significant role in the lead up to this year's event, says Mr. Waddington.

?Troy is great. He is a master at what he does and has a lot of contacts with drag queens and kings in southern Ontario. After their involvement last year, they're really pumped to be returning for this show,? Mr. Waddington said. ?It's a class act, a very good show. The costumes are fabulous and the entertainment is really good.?

An age restriction has been placed on the fundraiser, with only those 19 are older able to attend. That has less to do with the show ? which Mr. Waddington confirmed will likely involve risqué content but no nudity ? and more to do with the fact that Lavender Blue Catering, which will sponsor the intermission, will be serving alcoholic beverages on site.

Tickets for the show are selling well, with only a few \$50 VIP tickets remaining. A VIP ticket secures a seat in the first two rows at the Orangeville Opera House, and complimentary beer or wine at the intermission. General admission is \$30 and will include refreshments at the intermission, although alcoholic beverages will come at an additional cost. Tickets are available at the Opera House box office Monday to Friday between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. and at Lion's Den Yoga Studio on Broadway.

The CYA organizing committee is hoping for some additional good news on Monday (Jan. 14), when the application to host a second Celebrate Your Awesome event in town will be considered by Town Council. With approval almost a formality at this point,

the tentative date for the big event will be June 22, with organizers once again planning to take over Mill Street from dusk to dawn.

Mr. Waddington offered a sneak peek into what the public could expect at Dufferin's second pride and diversity event.

“There will be lots of live entertainment – we have already booked our act for the main stage in the evening, Itchy N Scratchy. The drag show component will be increased to five performers this year, so that will be interesting. A lot of the other performers from last year have expressed an interest in returning too, so we're looking into that,” Mr. Waddington said. “Outside of that, we will have more variety in our vendors and a pop-up store this year featuring a lot of rainbow products.”

With more than 2,000 people having braved the elements on a wet and miserable day to attend the show, Mr. Waddington is hoping for even more this time around.

When asked why he felt it was important to host a pride and diversity day in Dufferin County, Mr. Waddington opened up, stating this was an event where any person could, and should, feel like they belong.

“I'd like to emphasize the fact that this is an event that celebrates the fact that everyone is awesome. When we have a diversity day where we're inviting all of our community out, we want to make sure we're expressing the fact that they are awesome and they need to realize they are awesome,” Mr. Waddington said.

He added, “When I look at Dufferin County, I see a community that is becoming more and more diverse. We come from a farming community, a very blue collar community. There are generations of old-school thoughts and ideals and I had this thought that we need to move a little bit forward. Baby steps are important here. I'm not talking about holding a pride march down Broadway, we simply want to have a pride and diversity day, acknowledge our whole community and highlight the LGBTQ community. To give them status and recognition.

“At the same time, we want to make it inclusive and make sure the community embraces it. We want to see our residents out engaging with people of all different backgrounds on the day, whether that be nationality, gender or colour, it doesn't matter. Simply come out and celebrate being awesome – Celebrate Your Awesome.”