

Multicultural Day goes online in virtual format to celebrate Shelburne's diversity

Written By PAULA BROWN

After being cancelled months earlier due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Multicultural Day, a local event that highlights the different cultures within Dufferin County, is going virtual.

"It's to get back that community involvement, and get that celebration of the different cultures, promote diversity, inclusion and hopefully help in the form of racism because knowledge is power," said Althea Casamento, the founder, on the virtual event.

Organized and founded by Shelburne resident Althea Casamento, the third annual Multicultural Day was originally set to take place on May 4, but was cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic. Casamento in an email to the Free Press, said she had hoped to reschedule the event to be in-person after it was cancelled but has decided to have it virtually, as well as run throughout the month of August.

"I've posted on all social media that community members can submit their art pieces, their art performances, recipes, food and cultural wear - anything that depicts their heritage," said Casamento. "They're to be submitted along with a description of it."

Multicultural Day is a growing event that looks to bring together the number of diverse cultures in the community through arts, crafts, and food.

"It was started to celebrate the different culture around Shelburne," said Casamento. "It was a way to help with diversity and inclusion and to bring awareness to different cultures within Shelburne."

The event was originally started in 2018 and was held in the Shelburne Public Library. In its first year, Casamento says she made it a point to have students involved in the event as a way to explore their culture and families. The following year, 2019, Multicultural Day had grown larger and a location change to the Centre Dufferin High School cafeteria was needed. The 2020 event was expected to be even larger with a number of businesses and organization as sponsors said Casamento.

Despite the cancellation of the in-person event Casamento spoke about why, even during COVID-19, multiculturalism needs to be celebrated in the community.

"It's incredibly important because it breaks down the barriers for communication," said Casamento. "It helps all community members to learn about each other, it builds and connect the community and make those within the community proud to be a part of the community, to feel that they're included."

With 10 submissions at the time of the interview Casamento says she's seen submissions of art pieces, dance performances, and recipes and that the response has been positive. Submissions are still being collected.

Multicultural Day will take place from Aug. 1 to Aug. 31.