

BizBaz: Free to all and coming to Osprey in July

By Tabitha Wells

Summer has always been the best time for venturing out to fairs and festivals, taking the family on adventures and more.

Events like the CNE (Canadian National Exhibition, or as it's more commonly referred to, The Ex), become staple events for many families. A trip to the city to see exhibitions, enjoy rides, play carnival games and shopping around; a place where there is something for all members of the family to enjoy.

But what if something like this was available closer to home, and at no cost? This year could see the start of that very thing locally, in an event called Bizarre Bazaar, or as its creators has fondly dubbed it, BizBaz.

The event, which will be hosted at the Osprey Valley Golf Course, south of Alton, will be free to attend, and will have more than 70 unique vendors confirmed, including local artists and businesses like DAREarts, Ray's Bakery, Citrus City Tattoo and more.

Where else would you have the opportunity to get a tattoo, eat crickets, see a drone, enjoy a taco and so much more, all in one place?? said Vandi Hill, one of the masterminds behind the event. Even though it's not here yet, we are working hard to get people excited and mark it down on the calendar.?

Although they had hoped it would become a large event, Hill and the event's co-creator Heidi Von Der Gathen didn't expect to be able to see it grow to the lengths that it has before its first year even occurred.

We just keep meeting all these great exhibitors with all these great products,? Von Der Gathen said. We've met people like a gentleman who creates chairs out of old bottles, and a business that uses crickets for food.?

A big part of the event's theme is the environment, which makes businesses like the two above fit in perfectly with BizBaz. While many of the exhibitors may not be brand new, like the gentleman with the chairs, many have never been involved in the type of publicity that will come from an event like BizBaz. The artists, businesses and vendors are mainly local ? some actually with shops and studios, others who sell their work on Etsy, an online arts and business community that has exploded in popularity over the last few years.

BizBaz is more than a great opportunity for the people who will be attending, it's also a great opportunity for the vendors,? Von Der Gathen said. They get to branch out and meet new people, and do it in an event that celebrates the environment and promotes local economy.?

Recently, the two announced another demonstration that will be held at the event, a sport that, although it has been around since 1987, is only now beginning to explode in popularity. That sport, covered this season on the Rick Mercer Report, is Kin-Ball, and is the only sport to see three teams on the court at once, playing around with a ball that is almost as big as the players.

It's an incredible sport, and it's so much fun,? said Hill. The Canadian team has been world champions seven times. This will be a great opportunity for people to not only learn about what Kin-Ball is, but see demonstrations and try it out themselves.?

And when they say the event is for the whole family, they mean the whole family, including your four-legged children.

This is an event where you can come and spend three or four hours, and bring your kids, your spouse, your friends, and even your dog,? Von Der Gathen said. We are going to have vendors there with products specifically for pets, like the edible dog-house. It's the perfect event for a family that wants a day out together, but doesn't want to travel, and doesn't want to spend a lot of money just to go.?

The two describe the event as a social hub, the kind of place where you can do more than just wander around at different shops.

There will be food vendors, sitting areas, activities, all coming together to create the kind of place where people can enjoy themselves, experience what local artists and businesses have to offer, and do it all outdoors, across a beautiful, grassy landscape.

We want BizBaz to be the kind of event that friends plan to meet at each year, where families look forward to going,? explained Hill. We want people to say Hey, that weekend, let's meet up and spend the day at BizBaz.?

BizBaz will be held July 25 and 26, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the Osprey Valley Golf Course. Admission and parking are free.

For more information, a list of vendors and artists, or to inquire about becoming involved visit www.labpartners.ca/bizarre-bazaar.html or follow them on Twitter at @bizbaz2015