

Buzzfest taking over Terra Cotta County Store this weekend

Written By KIRA WRONSKA DORWARD

To celebrate the official end of summer and transition into fall in Caledon, Terra Cotta Country Store is holding its seventh annual Buzzfest on location at 119 King Street in Terra Cotta on September 21 and 22, from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m..

“Seven years ago,” says store co-owner Judy Vella, “we thought how fun it would be to have a little gathering of people, maybe two tents or so next to the store” then it just sort of took on a life of its own. So we named it Buzzfest in honour of the bee and its importance to the ecosystem.”

She added, “The idea was, we were going to invite people who were using integrity and people [who made their products] on an environmentally friendly basis, and people who were local. There was just this vision of an artisan community, and so we were striving for a high-calibre show with lots of variety. So, some art, fine craft, and of course food. The idea was just to have a beautiful show with a variety of artisans.”

Some of the unusual and exotic vendors to be featured include; Just1, a fair trade/wage organization that helps artisans in Africa, an artisan who makes totes, bags, and purses from new upholstery scrapes (which would otherwise be thrown out), the June and Rose Candle Company, ceramics by Jolanta Jung, premium Mexican chocolate (Mexican cacao, stone ground, vegan), local Rebel Honey by Collette Mesher (with cotton wraps to prevent plastic waste), The Northern Goddess (bath and body works), Soup Girl, The Urban Lumberjack Mellissa DeCiantis (who makes spectacular wood works from reclaimed wood found during her work as an arborist), wood-turner Hugh Woodup, glass artist Skytree Smith, Gigi's Foods salad dressing by Lee Vukson (made in micro-batches for ultimate freshness and quality), The Olivar Corp couple Delores and Eric Smith featuring fine olive oils and vinegars, and much more. For more information on vendors, please visit terracottacountrystore.ca.

“We try not to have an overlap of products and vendors. Because Bob [Judy's husband and store co-owner] is an artist, and we see [the festival] from that point of view, giving honour to the work. Everything has to fit with the calibre and quality of [the other] artists coming [to the show]. We're looking for handmade, and producers being on site, except in the case of our fair trade/fair wage products.”

Only artisans who develop their products with integrity are invited to partake in the festival. “We're in a climate crisis,” says Vella, “so we're trying to honour the environment. If [these vendors] didn't do that, I wouldn't feel comfortable inviting them, because there's definitely a shared spirit [at Buzzfest]. We really want to honour people who are cognizant of what's going into their product.”

In the past, Buzzfest has sponsored Golden Rescue, but this year, due to a scheduling conflict, they will instead be promoting a charity close to their hearts (don't worry, Golden Rescue will be back next year!). During the season, the Terra Cotta Country Store sells products from the Choose2BeResilient local charity, in honour of a young couple (Judy and Bob's neighbour and his girlfriend) that died in a kayaking accident on the river close to the store. Choose2BeResilient manufactures and sells pewter necklaces, keychains, and this year is debuting their Christmas ornaments, all featuring the Celtic tree, the ancient symbol for resilience in Celtic culture. All proceeds from the sale of the jewellery and ornaments goes to a scholarship fund run by this recognized Canadian charity.

According to the website, choose2beresilient.com, the purpose of the organization is “rewarding resilience” by:

“ To provide awards for the advancement of post-secondary education for youth who have experienced significant loss or adversity and have shown resiliency despite these losses.

“ To provide resources to help youth and others gain resiliency after significant loss or adversity.

? To promote in families who have experienced significant loss or adversity the importance of choosing resiliency.

? To foster the awareness of more compassionate societal support for youth experiencing grief.

?They're just a beautiful family who pays it forward all the time,? Vella says of the surviving parents and siblings of Zach and Kaya.

A lot of people are paying it forward at Buzzfest. Vella's daughter Isabella, like her sister Margaret before her, organizes the 15-20 volunteer high-school students who use the opportunity to work off their community service hours necessary for graduation. This year, art students are also donating their time and talent by taking photos at a cornucopia set designed for Buzzfest, where couples, friends, and families can have their portraits done by these young professionals. Donations for these photos are put towards Choose2BeResilient.

Buzzfest will also be featuring a caterer, Naina's Big Eats, with a spectacular luncheon menu of traditional family favourites, as well as a complimentary henna artist and face painting by art students. Also featured is zaatar from Radouan Abou-Faysal (Thyme after Time). Zaatar is a Middle Eastern specialty made from a blend of thyme, sumac and toasted sesame seeds, and is extremely popular at the annual festival.

Live entertainment will also be provided. Each day will feature two performances. Saturday from 12-2, singer/songwriter Rob Mitchell from Guelph will be performing, followed by Highway 50 (Matthew and Andrew Olivera, brothers from Caledon) from 2:30-4:30. Sunday from 12-1 will have a performance by Chord Progressions, followed by Erins Malore, a Celtic trio.

Entry fees are \$5 for adults, and free to children 12 and under for one day of in and out privileges.

?I think the momentum's really grown,? concludes Vella. ?The community we work with is really lovely. We've got a group of great artisans who form the backbone [of Buzzfest], and we have new people coming every year.?