

Caledon Home and Lifestyle Show set for September 10-12 with Meals on Wheels as charitable recipient

By Rob Paul

After nearly a year and a half of delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Caledon Home and Lifestyle Show is set to take place from September 10 to 12 at the Albion Bolton Community Centre.

The show will open September 10 at 4 p.m. with the opening ceremonies taking place at 6 p.m. and run until 9 p.m. with it open from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. on the Saturday and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on the Sunday.

Admission to the show is free and there will be experts from the home and lifestyle sector, keynote speakers, and beverages for patrons in attendance.

The event will also have a special promotion to help raise funds for Caledon Meals on Wheels.

‘The show made the decision from the outset to support a local charity called Caledon Meals on Wheels,’ said Show Director Liz Shaughnessy. ‘Caledon Meals on Wheels does so much, and it looks after surrounding communities too. It’s a vital force and has been even more vital throughout COVID because sometimes the volunteers who go into homes became these people’s [company] during this extended lockdown. The decision pre-COVID was Caledon Meals on Wheels and given everything they’ve done, we’re even more committed to them as the charitable recipient of the show. The way we’re doing it is by the generosity of our visitors because show admission is free, we will have Caledon Meals on Wheels on-site and we’ll be asking people to make a donation.’

Not only will the show be prioritizing donations to Caledon Meals on Wheels, but Shaughnessy and her team will also be promoting local breweries through an initiative that will have revenue being donated to Caledon Meals on Wheels.

‘On opening night, we’re actually going to be putting a bit of a twist on things,’ she said. ‘People will have the opportunity to buy a \$15 wristband so they can sip and savour local beverages at the show. That \$15 goes directly back to Caledon Meals on Wheels. There will be a special sip and savour area created within the show for people to enjoy their beverages with their masks off. It’s been totally approved by Peel Public Health and it’s all for a good cause. We’re so excited about it promoting local. The less dark side of COVID is that people are really thinking about buying local and supporting local.’

The show itself is focused on the crucial aspects of home and lifestyle and Shaughnessy will have plenty of suppliers and experts at the event for people to ready early for renovations, landscaping, and home designs.

‘There’s really four pillars to the show,’ she said. ‘Obviously renovating is a hot item with so many people working remotely, and landscaping? there’s no better time to plan it than now for next year. Those are two very important tenets; another one is design. Design is a major feature. Whether indoor or outdoor, it takes a lot of time. The number one pillar of the show though is Celebrate, because we have so many important seasons coming up. It’s an opportunity to shop for seasonal gifts and I think that’s important, especially for our smaller businesses that were paralyzed during the lockdown period. We call it, ‘ask the experts,’ because when you come to the Home and Lifestyle Show, you’ll meet the experts in design, renovation, landscape, and you’ll get that opportunity to shop for seasonal items.’

The big reason the Caledon Home and Lifestyle event is able to move forward is because its designation and detailed health and safety protocol allows for far more people to attend the event in a COVID safe manner. A ‘special package’ was made for consumers and businesses to ensure safety, including ‘impeccable contact tracing.’

‘The thing that makes an event like this viable is your ability to contact trace visitors and we were fortunate to sign a top contact tracing company in GuestLog. According to the government, if a building can hold 1,000 people, you’re allowed 500 in that building

as long as you can contact trace. That made it feasible for event organizers to step up and do this because a year ago we would have been looking at only 25 people, which isn't feasible. Basically, we've secured this as much as possible.?

The show has been rescheduled numerous times throughout the uncertainty of COVID, but the circumstances of the last 18 months have made people even more hungry to dive into the home and lifestyle upgrades.

?The predecessor to the event that's taking place September 10 to 12, was called the 2020 Home and Lifestyle show and it was in early April of 2020,? she said. ?We literally found out two and half weeks before the show was supposed to happen that it couldn't happen. From that point, none of us knew what was really going to happen and so we rescheduled it several times. You start thinking, ?my goodness what am I doing,' but it's been invigorating and there's so much consumer interest in anything related to the home now?indoors, outdoors, etc. So, there's a lot of anticipation and a lot of enthusiasm for anything home related right now and it was sparked by COVID.?

Though it has been a turbulent time for Shaughnessy with the constant rescheduling, she thinks it actually worked out for the show in the end.

?The way everything has played out has given the event a special pedestal,? she said. ?To date, we are the only consumer event of its kind taking place in Ontario this fall. What we've done because of that, acknowledging a very ambitious consumer market, we've done a much broader footprint in terms of advertisement. Normally it would be focused on just the Dufferin-Caledon area, but because right now we're the only game in town, we've increased the footprint five times the number of homeowners we're reaching. It just makes sense because there aren't any other shows happening in the GTA right now. It couldn't have worked out better despite my deepest fears about the show not going forward.?

Normally the show would be held in the spring, but due to the pandemic pushing it into the fall, Shaughnessy sees it as an opportunity to set consumers up to be ready for 2022.

?The idea of having a show in the fall, and typically outside of Toronto most of these shows are spring events, and this was going to be a spring event but the actual date for this one is almost more valuable than I initially realized,? she said. ?It gives renovators, home maintenance companies, landscapers, and designers the opportunity to get business on the book now as opposed to next spring when everyone gets jam-packed. Many consumers were bothered because they'd order their swimming pool in April and it wouldn't arrive until September, so the fall show gives landscapers and renovators the time to get in front of consumers who want these things done?it allows them to get them on the books now for something that will roll out later this year or early next year. It's almost putting these people at the front of the line and it's adding a lot of value to it.?

With the show happening right before people get into holiday season mode, Shaughnessy also sees an opportunity to get people ready for a much more traditional holiday year given how COVID impacted last year.

?Another positive with it is that we're heading into a season where there are a number of celebrations, Christmas being the preemptive one, but we've got Thanksgiving with families getting together and Halloween with parties,? she said.

With just over four weeks to prep and plan for the show, Shaughnessy says it hasn't been easy, but she's happy it's finally moving forward in a safe manner.

?It's been fun,? she said. ?I come from a background of event marketing and event production, and I've worked with the largest home and lifestyle shows in Toronto for decades, and we normally have a year of planning time. COVID has changed a lot of things and the fact that we got the green light to do it is a major opportunity despite its challenges?you just have to be very nimble and move fast. We're just so excited it's finally here.?