

Celebrate the holidays and support a good cause at Spencer Avenue's Winter Fest in Orangeville

By Paula Brown

Dufferin residents will soon have the opportunity to find unique hand-crafted gifts for the holiday season while helping an elementary school's holiday market.

Spencer Avenue Elementary School is hosting their annual Winter Fest from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, December 2.

"We want to extend an invitation to the community for our holiday festival. This is for our students, but we recognize that Spencer School is a part of the bigger community at large. There is lots for everybody, so we're looking forward to hopefully seeing a great turnout this year," said Stephanie Kilday, vendor market coordinator.

The Spencer Avenue Winter Fest was started by the elementary school's parent council in 2018 to raise funds for various projects at the school. In previous years, the holiday festival has raised funds for playground equipment, and last year, they were able to use the money to purchase new nets and balls, and have the foursquare lines repainted.

This year, money raised through the winter event will fund a home literacy program for the school's primary grades, including lesson materials and books.

"We ask the school for a wish list of what they could use and then our parent council picks and chooses from that list. [The home literacy program] was identified by the school as a need," explained Kilday.

The Spencer Avenue Winter Fest will feature a market with over 20 vendors selling a variety of items such as candles, bath bombs, skincare, knitting, collectibles, food, and jewelry.

The vendors market will also include 13 "junior" vendors consisting of students from the local elementary school.

"We wanted a way to include the students on the day of the event, because we're doing this at their school and the money is being raised for them," said Kilday. "We also recognize that we have a lot of creative and talented students in our school, and we wanted to showcase that as well."

Kilday noted that participating in the vendors market has become an opportunity for the students to learn about running a small business as they were required to fill out an application, provide samples of their creations, and pay a \$5 fee for their table.

New to the Spencer Avenue Winter Fest this year is their café, where visitors can purchase a hot beverage or baked treat and sit down to enjoy the event.

"Because this is our fifth year, we're trying to find new ways to bring people out. Instead of offering the same thing each year, we want to offer something that is a little different," said Kilday.

The holiday-themed festival will include a bake sale, silent auction and raffle. Parents will be able to purchase a wristband for their children for \$5, which will give them access to crafts, games, raffle tickets, a scavenger hunt, and other activities.

The Spencer Avenue Winter Fest will be held from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, December 2. There is no admission fee.