

# Celebrate Your Awesome returns to downtown Orangeville for annual Pride celebration

**By Joshua Drakes**

Celebrate Your Awesome will return to downtown Orangeville on June 20, transforming Alexander Park and Second Street into a full-day Pride and diversity celebration.

June is Pride Month in Canada, a time to show support and acceptance for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, and to come together to celebrate diversity, inclusion, and mutual support. In Dufferin County, Celebrate Your Awesome in Orangeville will be the centrepiece.

Jim Waddington, one of the founders of Celebrate Your Awesome, said that the free, family-friendly festival centres on welcoming residents of all ages, backgrounds, and identities to share in a safe, inclusive space.

‘The idea behind our event is to promote diversity, inclusion, and to highlight Pride Month and Pride in Dufferin County,’ he said. ‘Specifically, we want to allow people the opportunity to show their colors, be who they are, feel comfortable in their own space, as well as provide a safe space for people to come out and have a good time.’

Organizers stage the annual event to promote visibility, understanding, and connection. By bringing together local agencies, businesses, performers and residents, the festival aims to normalize queer presence in the community, encourage allyship, and highlight that everyone deserves acceptance and a place to belong.

Waddington said that everyone is welcome, no matter what community they come from. He said that, as a community, it is critically important to listen to the diverse groups that call Dufferin County home and hear what they have to say.

‘Within Dufferin County, there is a queer community, and there is our Black community and Portuguese community and Filipino and Italian and Jewish, and on and on and on,’ he said. ‘Everyone is important, and everyone needs to be heard. Everyone needs to have a seat at the table. Everyone needs to be embraced.’

Running from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. this Saturday, Celebrate Your Awesome features live music and entertainment throughout the day, two drag shows in the afternoon and evening, food trucks, and a retro theme that invites participants to dress in disco, neon, or other colourful outfits.

A dedicated children's area will also be on site, offering storytelling, games and face painting, while the Orangeville Fire Department is expected to attend with a fire truck and giveaways.

The festival also includes a community zone, where organizations such as public health, family services, housing and victim support agencies share information and resources.

Around 25 vendors are set to participate, selling a range of products alongside festival merchandise. A dedicated merch table and on-site custom printing will give attendees the chance to purchase shirts, pins and other items themed around the celebration.

What began on Mill Street with a few hundred people and modest infrastructure has grown into a major local event that now attracts thousands, supported by multiple levels of government, community organizations and local banks.

Organizers hope attendees leave with a sense of belonging, positivity and pride in the diversity of Dufferin County, an energy Waddington says everyone can use more of.

?We need positive energy, and that's what we are going to promote,? Waddington said. ?That's what we're going to stick with, it's a full-on feel-good safe space. Express yourself, be happy, be kind, and remember to smile.?

Volunteers, sponsors, donors, and vendors are still welcome.

Those interested in supporting the festival are encouraged to visit the Celebrate Your Awesome website at [celebrateyourawesome.ca/get-involved/](https://celebrateyourawesome.ca/get-involved/) for information on volunteering, sponsorships and online donations.