

Arts festival planned for Guild Inn

August event will feature artists, food, storytellers

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A one-day arts and storytelling festival that combines the best of former exhibitions will be held this summer at Scarborough's Guild Inn.

The Aug. 17 Guild Alive with Culture event will be a blend of the longtime popular Arts Naturally festival, which was killed amid much controversy a year ago, and last year's Voices of the Guild: A Storytelling Festival.

"The Guild Renaissance Group is looking to organize storytellers," said author Carole Lidgold, who sits on a new organizing committee to bring the festival together. "There will be community groups. There will be an artists' market and they will try to get food vendors."

It's an ambitious lineup, especially since there had been a chance until last week that the summer would come and go without an arts festival at the Guild.

That's when Ward 43 (Scarborough East) Councillor Paul Ainslie stepped in to ensure an event takes place.

His executive assistant, Antonette Dinovo, said a number of community representatives met with Ainslie last week.

"When we found out this (a festival) might not happen, we stepped in and said 'Let's step in and form a partnership'," she said.

"We're going to work in partnership with the Guild Renaissance Group, with the Guildwood Village Community Association, the City of Toronto parks, and the Scarborough Arts Council is also at the table and also some private citizens like Carole Lidgold."

The goal is to create an event that everyone will enjoy, Dinovo said.

"We want it to be very family oriented. We want families to come out and enjoy," she said. "The councillor wants the grounds used as much as possible. The grounds in there are beautiful and the more people we have there, the more visited the park is, you won't have people coming and doing things the shouldn't be doing."

Last year, many Scarborough artists and residents were disappointed when the Scarborough Arts Council quietly cancelled the 22-year-old Arts Naturally festival traditionally held in August.

The Guild Renaissance Group then agreed to host a storytelling festival the same weekend, working with artists to incorporate some elements of Art Naturally into the event.

Lidgold said she is pleased this year's festival is bringing together different groups.

"I think it is great because it is a community group, it's not just one group," she said. "I'm very pleased we're having something. This year, it will be one day because it is too late to organize two days. Next year, we hope to have two days."