

STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL

Just business, no hard feelings as event co-ordinator moves on

BY SANDRA BOLAN
sbolan@yrmg.com

Business plan or event co-ordinator?

That was the choice Strawberry Festival organizers had to make last year.

As a result, Kristina Toomey, hired in 2009 as the festival's event co-ordinator, was let go.

"They needed to put the funding elsewhere," Ms Toomey said.

In March 2009, the festival received \$155,000 over three years from the Ontario Trillium Foundation to support its expansion and create long-term sustainability by building its infrastructure, hiring more professional entertainers and purchasing equipment.

"The amount of sponsorship you need to support a full-time (person) is not possible. It was worth a try," festival chairperson Catherine McCowan said.

The Trillium grant was also to be used to create a business plan.

A consultant was hired to do just that.

"I'm not qualified to do a business plan," Ms Toomey told The Sun-Tri-



bune in an interview.

As part of the business plan, Enigma Research will interview this year's festival visitors to find out where they live, which events are most popular, what people like about the festival and what could be improved upon.

Annual festival's economic impact will be evaluated.

The festival's economic impact on Stouffville will also be evaluated.

Ms McCowan said she expects to receive the survey data sometime over the summer so they can utilize it when planning the 2012

► Look for your official festival guide in Saturday's Sun-Tribune.

Strawberry Festival.

Despite being let go last July, Ms Toomey remained with the festival as a volunteer until just a few weeks ago, when a personal matter impacted her ability to continue.

"They did not negate me completely," she said. "As hurtful as it was, I understood. It was for the good of the organization. I don't harbour any ill-will."

"We loved having her and it certainly made things easier. But at the end of the day, you have to look at the costs you have in a festival and it just wasn't there," Ms McCowan said.

Ms Toomey's release will have no impact on festival attendees, according to Ms McCowan.

"For years, the festival didn't have an administrator, so we're pretty used to working as a tight team," she said.

For more information, go to strawberryfestival.ca

Kids entertainers, OPP bikes precede July 1 fireworks

Lenny and Rob from children's entertainers Alistair Ant along with the Monkey Bunch and the OPP's Golden Helmet Performance Motorcycle Team will all perform under the Strawberry Festival's marquee tent on Canada Day.

During intermission, there will be Canada Day cake served up.

"I'm really excited about how Canada Day is coming together," said Catherine McCowan, chairperson of this year's Strawberry Festival.

The day will also be filled with old-fashioned games, such as plank walkers and grace sticks, bingo, euchre, a scavenger hunt, geocaching adventure and manhunt.

There will also be the carnival and inflatable playground, along with a dunk tank.

The dog contest returns, as does a canine agility demonstration.

If that we're enough, in the evening The Blackdog Blues band takes to the stage.

During intermission, Canada Day cake will be served.



ROB JOY: Children's entertainer of Alistair Ant fame will be at the Strawberry Festival on Canada Day.

The festivities wrap up with the popular fireworks display.

Thousands attend annually in Memorial Park.

For more information, go to strawberryfestival.ca

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