


New show gives Gathering on the Green an early start

London Community News

By  Sean Meyer

After 31 years, Gathering on the Green has established itself as the premier event in Wortley Village.

Put on by the Old South Community Organization (OSCO) on the grounds of the former Normal School, the Gathering returns on Saturday (June 7) with more than 80 local craft vendors, around 30 community groups, 20 more in Kid's Corner where everything is free, a community barbecue, a tea garden, and two stages of live music.

One thing the Gathering didn't have is live theatre. With that in mind, organizers decided to kick the Gathering off a day early with the inaugural edition of Family Theatre on the Green.

"We've always wanted to do some live theatre outside in Old South," said OSCO vice-president Gary Brown. "The showmobile (a mobile performance stage) always arrives early for Gathering on the Green, so rather than spend the money to rent the showmobile again we figured we would piggyback the two events on top of one another."

More than 200 people turned out Friday evening for a trio of theatre performances. Family Theatre on the Green included *Within and Without*, *The Flood* by Caity Quinn and students from Lester B. Pearson School for the Arts; selections from *Songs for a New World* by Musical Theatre Productions; and *Piper* written by Kim Sterk.

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Family Theatre on the Green

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The first ever Family Theatre on the Green took place on Friday (June 6) on the grounds of the Normal School. The evening included a trio of productions, including one by students from Lester B. Pearson School of Arts, including (from left) Sofi, Sophia and Claire, who performed in Within and Without, The Flood. The story spoke to man's treatment of the environment and was written and directed by Caity Quinn.

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Brown said he hoped everyone enjoyed the theatre show, calling it "a nice, inexpensive night out and helps build community." Brown said he believes events like the family theatre show and the Gathering are why Wortley Village captured the title of Canada's Great Neighbourhood.

While excited for this year's Gathering, which he predicts will draw 10,000 people (based on rare positive weather forecasts for the day), Brown said he is also thrilled to be having the event on city property for the first time.

Earlier this year, council approved purchase of the Normal School, and its surrounding green space, at a price of \$1,685,000. The building (165 Elmwood Ave. E.) will in turn be leased to the YMCA of Western Ontario for the creation of the YMCA Youth Centre of Excellence.

Brown praised city staff coming out, cutting the grass, and getting the green space ready for the day's festivities. The change in ownership marks something of a new beginning for Gathering on the Green.

"For seven years the Normal School sat empty, but now the YMCA is going to be moving in," Brown said. "They have fantastic partnerships with the community; we are partnering with them too. We are looking forward, when the green gets split off, we are going to have to have a contest to name the park, which should be a lot of fun. Even bigger days are ahead."