



Media Release

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Stratford, ON

Stratford Destination Animation Fund Selects 10 Unique Cultural Experiences

Stratford, Ontario - The 2016 Stratford Destination Animation Fund has awarded \$29,997 to 10 fund applications, with a total partner contribution value of over \$100,000, in response to proposals submitted by festivals and events, tourism enterprises and local businesses. This is the Fund's first year, with 17 applications requesting \$58,802 of funding.

The Fund partners - Regional Tourism Organization 4 (RTO4), Stratford City Centre (SCC) and Stratford Tourism Alliance (STA) - are thrilled with the enthusiastic and creative response by the Stratford community - ranging from an individual bed & breakfast owner to a retail manager to a major festival.

The winning applications selected for co-funding include:

DigiWriting for the creation of a two-day **Stratford Writers Festival**, celebrating the literary arts by bringing together writers and readers to interact, discuss and share through author readings, panel discussions, Q&As, book signings and writers workshops to Stratford's cultural downtown core.

Stratford Summer Music for the new **Bach Walks** experience, a guided walk offered on three Sundays through T.J. Dolan natural area by Stratford field naturalist volunteers, where participants will be delighted along the way by performances from the Canadian flute ensemble, Charm of Finches.

Covet - The Community Closet on behalf of a consortium of businesses downtown for the **Rainy Days with Shakespeare** project, where hidden quotes from Shakespeare will magically appear on sidewalks and walls, but only when it rains.

Stratford City Centre for the **Spread a Little Music!** project, surprising and delighting visitors and residents alike with professional musicians playing on the Heritage Carriage Rides while riding through the streets of Stratford.

Stratford Festival Shop for the **After the Curtain Call** project, an exhibition at Agora Gallery peering into the creative world that exists for the artists outside of their daily duties at the Stratford Festival.

Stratford Symphony Orchestra for a **Musical Flash Mob**, and three musical pop-ups. Watch for clues about time and location of these surprise events.

Birmingham Manor Bed and Breakfast for the **ARTful Walk** experience, a guided walk by a local artist to downtown art galleries, followed by an afternoon of tea and sweets and a hands on art lesson led by the same artist, offered eight times this year.

Pamela Coneybeare and Kaleigh Slade for the **Perth Pop-Up Series**, a series of “pop-up” markets/events that take place once a month from July to September in different settings in and around Stratford that will feature local artisans, artists, performers, musicians and an interactive workshop.

Stratford City Centre for the enhancement of the **Christmas Market** with a musical flash mob to kickoff the event and entertain attendees as they visit Santa, and sip on a glass of mulled wine.

Gallery Stratford for the **Share Stratford Art Buttons** project, where local artists and celebrities will be invited to create small one inch works of art which will be made into collectible buttons available in vending machines placed around town.

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On January 22nd, 2016 a group of over 60 local stakeholders met to brainstorm hundreds of ideas to animate Stratford and promote the City's destination DNA as a high calibre 'Cultural Resort Town'. The next step of the process is to collaboratively

implement some of these projects in order to set Stratford as the stage, and surprise and delight visitors and residents alike with share-worthy cultural experiences.

Stratford City Centre Business Improvement Area and Regional Tourism Organization 4 Inc. have come together to launch the Destination Animation Partnership Fund to create opportunities for Stratford businesses, organizations and tourism stakeholders to realize the vision of Stratford as a Cultural Resort Town.

The Fund's partners have also paired up with Stratford Tourism Alliance for their support in amplifying and sharing the stories of the co-funded projects.

“Creating shareworthy, high quality cultural moments throughout Stratford helps uncork visitor stories through word-of-mouth, and more importantly through social media” said Zac Gribble from RTO4. Rob Russell, chair of Stratford City Centre added that, “we’ve received an exciting amount of creative fund applications that will showcase Stratford’s unique position as a cultural resort destination.”

The cultural experiences and events will be launched throughout this year.

For more information visit animationfund.ca or contact Andrea Gardi at 519-271-7000 ext 205 or via email: andrea@rto4.ca.