

## Doors Open Simcoe County Participant Guide

Between April and October each year, many of Ontario's culturally curious sites are opened to the public with free events across the province. Participating sites change annually and showcase a wide range of modern and heritage buildings, natural spaces, infrastructure and cultural landscapes.

The basic premise of this program is to provide **free** access, to encourage people to visit sites that are not normally open to the public, or that are hosting something special for Doors Open.

This is the third year that the municipalities within Simcoe County will be coming together to offer a county-wide event. Doors Open Simcoe County is organized in partnership with Tourism Simcoe County, municipalities and heritage committees from across our County. This cooperative format allows for increased advertising reach. Events will be cross-promoted by the province, county and neighboring municipalities, resulting in regional reach and visibility.

This event will give county residents the opportunity to discover new and interesting places in their own backyard while also encouraging visitors from other municipalities to get a glimpse of what makes us such a special place to live, work and play.

### The Basics

- All sites must be open from at least 10am to 4pm on Saturday, September 26, 2020
- Admission must be free, but add-ons such as tours, merchandise, or refreshments may be sold at a cost. Donation boxes are also appropriate.
- Doors Open signage will be provided to each site
- High school students can log community volunteer hours by assisting with this event
- Attendance numbers should be tracked at each site

### Project Coordinator

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### Health, Safety and Security

Each participating site must ensure that security, insurance, liability and health and safety issues are addressed in accordance with legal requirements. Sites should be equipped to provide the following:

- Barrier-free access wherever possible (full or partial access)
- Information about nearby parking
- Information about washroom availability

- Security against theft/destruction of property
- Adequate public liability and property insurance
- Health and safety provisions (first aid kits, fire exits, etc.)

Note: Neither Ontario Heritage Trust nor Tourism Simcoe County will assume responsibility for any accidents, injuries, loss or theft of items that occur during community Doors Open Ontario events.

## Public Liability and Property Insurance

Each participating site must ensure that they have adequate public liability and property insurance to open their site to the public.

The onus is on the site owner to verify whether their existing insurance coverage is adequate, or whether they will require additional coverage. As circumstances may vary from carrier to carrier, it is important that each site works directly with their insurance provider to determine whether adequate coverage is in place.

## Promotion and Publicity

The County of Simcoe will handle the overall marketing and promotion of the event. As a participating site, however, you should take pride in your participation and add to the promotions.

- Distribute copies of marketing materials prior to the event
- Promote your involvement through social media, e-newsletters, your website, etc.
- On the day of the event, ensure that the signs provided are visible– this should be done a minimum of one hour before your site is scheduled to open

## Interpreting Properties

Visitors should receive information about the historical, cultural, natural or architectural significance of your site. Information may be provided by any convenient means – e.g., flyers, brochures, interpretive panels, multimedia shows, lectures, exhibitions, informal tours or through direct discussions with the onsite volunteers. Interpretive materials do not have to be extravagant or expensive.

## Recording Attendance

The number of visitors to properties varies greatly; it is difficult to predict how many visitors any property/event will attract. Attendance figures will need to be recorded for submission to the County of Simcoe as part of the post-event evaluation report that is submitted to the Ontario Heritage Trust. Each site will be provided with tracking sheets prior to the event.

## Developing Events and Activities

General admission at each participating site **must be free**. Sites that are normally open to the public might want to consider opening a part of the property that is normally not accessible by the public, or arranging a special exclusive activity. It is acceptable to charge a fee for special activities or events. Placing a donation box near the exit to your site is acceptable.

Be sure to discuss plans for any special event or activity with Brianne at Tourism Simcoe County, so that we can promote it in our marketing materials.

## Recruiting and managing volunteers

The number of volunteers required at each property depends entirely on the size of the site and how the interpretation of the property is managed. Each site will need to be open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on the day of the event (at least).

### *Tips for Recruiting Volunteers*

- Your Doors Open event should be fun and exciting.
- Volunteers do not need to be historians! Volunteers are needed in many capacities to make the event a success.
- There is an [area](#) on the Doors Open Simcoe County event page where you can advertise volunteer opportunities.
  - Contact local high schools to encourage students to participate, to accumulate the 40 hours of volunteer service they require to obtain their high school diploma.
  - Contact your local service clubs
- Be patient and flexible with your volunteers - offer full day or partial day shifts.
- Volunteer recognition is important. Volunteers who feel that their time was well spent and that their efforts were appreciated will return to help in future years.

### *Tips for Preparing Staff and Volunteers*

- Assign roles that are appropriate for each volunteer, based on strengths and interests.
- Hold an information session to ensure that everyone understands his or her role. This can even be done on the morning of the event.
- Provide information packages to your volunteers with key messages and information about the site and the Doors Open event.
- Provide answers to frequently asked questions. Most visitors will just want the highlights.
- Be sure that volunteers know who to direct visitors to for questions that they may not know the answer to.
- Be sure that volunteers know where the washrooms and exits are located, as well as the locations of, and directions to, other participating sites in your community.
- Be sure that volunteers know basic procedures in case of an emergency.
- Be sure that volunteers know where to direct visitors should they wish to purchase merchandise, food, or other items you may have available.