

Living in the city of love

Barrie ranked high for romance

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Are Barrie residents feeling the love?

You'd think by living in one of the most romantic cities, they would be.

Just in time for Valentine's Day, Amazon.ca released a list on Feb. 7 naming Barrie one of the top 20 most romantic cities in Canada.

The list is based on sales of romance novels, romantic comedies DVDs and Michael Buble CDs.

Barrie ranked 17th.

Mayor Jeff Lehman said he believes Barrie definitely belongs on that list.

"It's no surprise to me that Barrie is one of Canada's most romantic cities," he said. "Think about this: You can have a fantastic meal out, watch a movie under the stars, take long walks by the water at sunset, and all within a few blocks.

"I think we're an active, diverse, young-at-heart city, and also, we get a lot of snow, so we have to spend more time indoors," he added. "And, just for the record, our family probably helped the rankings. I'm pretty sure my wife has every one of Michael Buble's albums on her iPod."

The list was compiled by comparing sales data of books, DVDs and CDs since Jan. 1, 2012, on a per capita basis in cities with more than 80,000 residents.

Kingston took the top spot, and Guelph was second.

Barrie managed to beat out Brantford, London, Ont., and Burnaby, B.C., which took the last three spots. Toronto didn't even get an honorable mention.

Jennifer Matthews, owner of Fendley's Flowers in Barrie, said she sees the evidence of how romantic Barrie is through her customers every day.

Her shop is definitely gearing up for Valentine's Day, but that's not the only time customers are feeling the love.

"We like the 'romance just because' days the best, when we ask what the occasion is and the customer says 'Just because,'" Matthews said. "Romance shouldn't just be about something on the calendar. We notice a lot more men, and women, are doing a lot more gift giving for no reason at all."

Richard Spellman was happy to hear that Barrie's a realm of romance.

"I'm not sure if it'll up our business, but it's a nice little bragging right to tell our customers," said Spellman, owner of Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory in the Georgian Mall, adding that his business feels the love more around holidays.

"We're very much a seasonal business. And we're a little unique because we make so much of what we sell."

With the day of love fast approaching, Spellman said sales are starting to pick up.

"Feb. 13 and 14 are big days for us. A big seller is our chocolate covered strawberries," he said.

Matchmaker Linda Miller, of Misty River Introductions, gets to play cupid in Barrie all year, not just on Valentine's Day.

She said our city is full of people who aren't feeling the love, but want to be.

“Barrie’s really unique and a great place for this business. We have about 3,000 clients in the Barrie area,” said Miller, who’s been joining lonely hearts locally for 17 years. “With Barrie, the people are all new in town, it seems — transplants from other cities — and they don’t know anyone.

“It takes a few years to make a group of friends and get comfortable meeting people, and a lot of people don’t want to go to bars to try and find someone.”

Miller said the older you get the harder it can become to find that someone or have the time to. “It’s harder for those in their 40s and 50s to make those connections because they’re so busy and they don’t have the time, or sometimes the confidence, to go out and meet someone,” she said.

Miller said one way residents can keep love in the air in Barrie is to make every Valentine’s Day.

“If you have someone in your life, the way you treat them on Valentine’s Day is how you treat them all the time,” Miller said. “And the reality is, it doesn’t matter how you meet someone as long as you have chemistry,” she added. “They have to make your heart go thump-thump, because without chemistry, it won’t last.”

Tops at romance

The Top 20 romantic Canadian cities according to Amazon.ca

1. Kingston
2. Guelph
3. Kelowna
4. Oakville
5. Victoria
6. Saskatoon
7. Regina
8. Calgary
9. Kamloops
10. St. John’s
11. Richmond Hill
12. Red Deer
13. Langley
14. Winnipeg
15. Burlington
16. Thunder Bay
17. Barrie
18. Brantford
19. London, Ont.
20. Burnaby