

## STEM Destination to Consider



 December 8, 2019  Kool Kat Science  STEM events, STEM locations, technology  by Paula The Teacher

This year, as Dave and I contemplated destinations for planning our 2019-2020 STEM season, we decided to get our passports renewed and head north to Canada. Our destination was Stratford, Ontario. This turned out to be a fabulous location for a STEM planning getaway! The small city has multiple parks, art venues, and coffee shops nestled in an environment rich with culture. For us, the main draw was five theatres offering everything from classical plays to rollicking comedies. What we found, though, was a buzzing community where artisan creativity and entrepreneurial ideas floated in the air like the smell of morning coffee. With stimulating locations such as Edison's Inn & Cafe, the HUB, Alley Kat, and the Livery Yard we found nourishment for our body as well as our mind. The town is very bike-friendly, and our bicycles were our principal mode of transportation for the entire week. Whether at 8 am or 11 pm, we were able to experience the quaint community up close.



One location that we came to love was the local library. Stratford Public Library is truly a hub of activity for learning and sharing ideas, and we spent at least 3 or 4 hours there every day. On our first day, we sat near the information desk and quickly discovered how important the library is to the Stratford community. In addition to welcoming us, they fielded tech questions and countless other inquiries throughout the day. In addition to standard library topics, the men and women at the information desk were a ready resource for people curious about community services and events.

For us, the treasure of the Stratford Library was the MakerSpace with Eric as its genius concierge. When Dave and I peeked in, we expected this space to be like most we have seen in other library systems. We were greatly mistaken! With a background in technical theatre, Eric is adept at using the large variety of resources, software, and equipment that is located here. During our visit, Eric answered all of our questions on 3D modeling while simultaneously assisting people with various fabricating devices, i.e. 3D printer, computerized die cutting machine, and sewing machine. In our conversations with him, it was clear that Eric's goal is to assist people in expressing their creativity across an amazingly broad spectrum of media. Whether patrons come in with a solid idea for a project or a general

idea of something they'd like to do, the Stratford Library MakerSpace is the place to go. Eric and the visionary staff at SPL have created a place where aspiring STEMists can take first steps to become engineers or daring inventors.



*The Maker Space is a valued part of the library*



*Eric is committed to providing resources and tools that will help patrons experience STEM.*

Unlike the typical Stratford tourist who uses the theatre calendar to plan their visit, the Kats from KoolKat Science will be using the library event calendar to plan our next visit! Here's just a sample of what's happening in December:

- Puppet Palooza!
- Stocking stuffer Saturdays
- Ugly holiday sweater cat bed
- Post-it pixel art

Other events on the calendar

- Kindness Club activities
- 3D printing using laptops with 3D software – with access to Thingiverse and Tinkercad
- Pints and Pages reading club
- Holiday concerts

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