**Discover an Emerald Jewel in the City of Kitchener**

**“Hidden Valley Revealed”**

Come discover a piece of Eden that can be found right here in the heart of the City of Kitchener. The Homer Watson Art Gallery is hosting a juried art exhibit of Hidden Valley, an unspoiled gem of spectacular diversity that has been hiked and enjoyed by enthusiastic naturalists for generations. This exhibition is to honour the late Daphne Nicholls, an artist, active environmentalist, and a founding member of Friends of Hidden Valley. She had requested this exhibition of family and friends.

The City of Kitchener, the Region of Waterloo, and the Province of Ontario have all recognized the uniqueness of this exceptional area by imposing special designations onto this privately-owned property. It includes three Provincially Significant Wetlands within an Environmental Significant Policy Area.

This natural heritage area has a rich biodiversity of habitat including a variety of mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles, and vascular plants. Specifically:

* 59 species of birds that are considered “priority species” according to the Region of Waterloo
* Finest and most intact esker (long narrow ridge) system in the Region believed to have been formed about 15,000 years ago
* Interior forest component, Old growth forest and Carolinian forest
* Greater than 20 ha of contiguous woodland habitat
* Habitat of Milk Snake (COSEWIC Species of Special Concern)
* Habitat of Jefferson salamander (Endangered)
* Provincially and Regionally rare plant species

Imagine walking through aromatic maple, beech, and oak leaves or wild ginger that stirs up wonderful fragrances. Listen to the churr of a red-bellied woodpecker, the rapid crescendo of an ovenbird, the witchity-witchity of a common yellowthroat, or the yipping of coyotes. Pause to savour wild strawberries in season. Dare to put a finger to the seed pod of pale touch-me-not.

The woodlands read like poetry: eastern hemlock, sugar maple, tamarack, trembling aspen, basswood, balsam fir, balsam poplar, highbush cranberry, staghorn sumac, American beech, wild sarsaparilla, jack-in-the-pulpit, spinulose wood fern, thicket creeper, swamp aster, sensitive fern, marsh fern, bulblet fern, side-flowering aster, and long-stalked sedge

Other species offer a colourful palette: eastern white cedar, white pine, yellow birch, white ash, white elm, green ash, black ash, blue beech, red-osier dogwood, red-berried elder, white trillium, yellow trout lily, blue cohosh, tall goldenrod, Canada goldenrod, swamp goldenrod, and white snakeroot.

Envision all of this within a few hectares and only a 7-iron shot from Fairview Mall.

Please come and discover the riches of this treasure that Daphne Nicholls cared for so much, by visiting the Homer Watson Gallery September 16 – October 22, 2017.