

Local Sri Lankan couple aid Asian relief efforts

By **FRANCES NIBLOCK**
The New Tanner

For two long sleepless-nights and nights, Acton's Kulenthiran Thuraiyasa did not know if his mother in Sri Lanka survived the earthquake and tsunami that decimated Southeast Asia.

Thuraiyasa, who with wife Keruja Kulenthiran owns The Town Friar on Mill Street, quickly contacted his in-laws in the interior of Sri Lanka and learned they were all safe, but he could not reach his mother.

Keruja Kulenthiran said her family lives in the interior and all were spared the devastation of the coastal regions.

"Some of our relatives are in the capital and they were okay as well, but my husband couldn't get in touch with his mom."

"He didn't sleep - when he called the lines were all engaged, but after two days we got her on the phone," she said on Friday, adding another son in England was flying to Sri Lanka to help.

Kulenthiran said relatives in Sri Lanka told her many of the dead are children

who were "sleeping when the ocean took them."

The Kulenthirans met and married in Sri Lanka and came to Canada 13 years ago. They purchased The Town Friar six years ago, and moved to Acton four years ago.

Kulenthiran said many people she's spoken with are relying on the Red Cross to get relief aid to where it is needed.

Red Cross offices across the province stayed open on the weekend to accept disaster relief donations, including the office in Milton that covers Acton as part of North Halton.

"We've actually had a pretty good response in this area," said Red Cross official Judith Dobbs on Sunday, as she and two volunteers handled phone calls and visits to the Milton office.

"Just this branch has raised over \$25,000 since Wednesday (December 29)," Dobbs said, adding they hope that level of giving continues this week.

The donations have included large and small amounts with everyone giving from their hearts.

"The youngest donor was a little three-year-old Milton boy who

came in with \$5 of his Christmas money, and the largest pledged donation is \$3,000," Dobbs said, adding several companies have also agreed to donate to the Red Cross relief efforts.

Financial donations to the Red Cross can be made on-line at www.redcross.ca, or by calling 1-800-418-1111. The 24-hour toll-free line accepts MasterCard and VISA donations.

The North Halton Red Cross office is at 100 Nipissing Road, Unit Five, Milton. The phone number is 905-875-1459.

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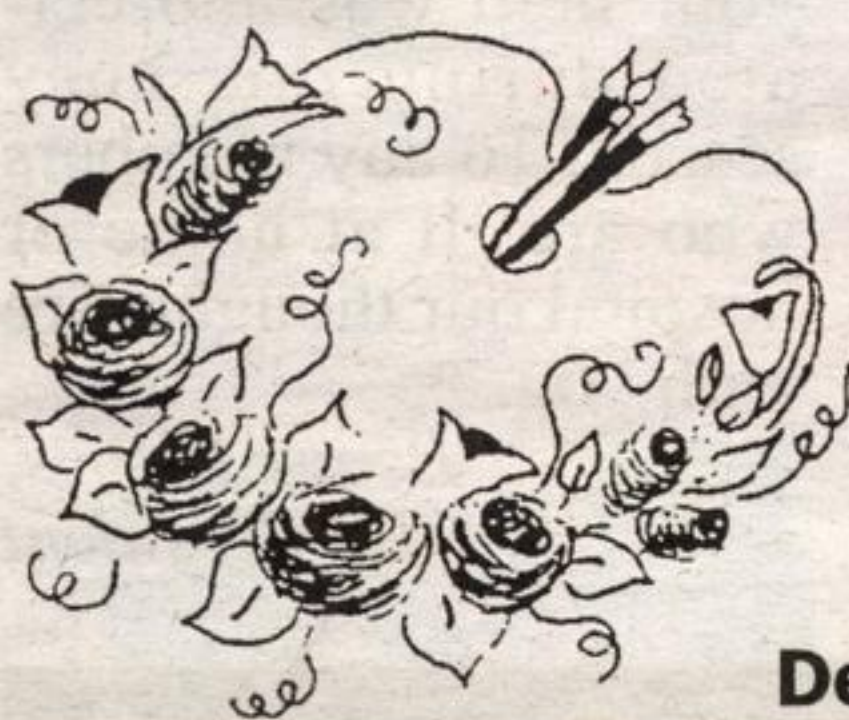
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