

Baby place welcome

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Photo: JIM THOMAS

Mothers with babies welcomed The Baby Place at the Markham Fair. The trailer is set up with items donated by local businesses and is equipped for changing and feeding infants.



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Mrs. Gailya Maguire
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**39 Main Street N., Markham
294-6865**

By KATE GILDERDALE
"Business is booming," smiled Donna Jarvis, one of six tireless volunteers who helped to keep Markham Fair's Baby Place running like clockwork.

Open from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. throughout the Fair, this haven for parents of babies and toddlers offers change tables, a microwave oven to warm bottles and a private area for breastfeeding mothers. Over a hundred visitors had clocked in by Friday lunch time, and that was just the beginning.

"Tomorrow is the big day," stressed Donna. "That's when we have the baby contest. Last year our total number was about 600, and we had a lot of babies coming in to get primped for the event." The trailer, which is supplied by the Fair organizers, has offered this service for the past four years.

The suggestion that a place was needed for young families came from Donna's mother, Lorraine Taberner, another volunteer at the Fair.

"She saw moms changing babies on counters, in washrooms and anywhere they could find a bit of space," Donna noted. "She thought we needed a place where they could take care of their babies in comfort."

At the time it was felt that not many people would use the facility, but it soon became obvious that not only was it a necessary service, it also helped to draw young families to the Fair.

"A lot of parents have said they will come more often and spend more time here, because they don't have to go home to feed or change their babies," observed Donna.

She praised the generosity of the many sponsors who supply items like the microwave oven, spare diapers and other necessary items. There are colorful posters on the walls, mobiles hanging from the ceiling and despite the endless stream of babies, the mood was calm and cheerful.

"Sometimes we have parents lining up outside," commented Heather Elliot, another helper. What makes it all worthwhile, said Donna, is the attitude of the parents who come in. "They're so grateful," she declared. "Some of them write to us telling us how much they appreciate what we do here."

Fair organizers ensured that the baby place got all the help it needed. "They're very supportive," said Donna. "Each year they give us a trailer and provide us with anything we need to keep it running."

Business in the trailer was brisk on Friday afternoon. Outside, groups of parents chatted together, while their contented, comfortable babies drifted off to sleep in the drowsy warmth of the afternoon sun. There's no doubt about one thing: The Baby Place will never need to advertise for customers.

Unionville girl wins spelling contest

Sunday's Spelling Bee at Markham Fair attracted a total of 25 area students, mostly from Grades 5 and 6. The winner was Colleen Daily, 10, from Parkview School in Unionville. Colleen has just moved into the area after a year in Australia. She and her family are originally from Pittsburg.

Runners up were Ifat Azeem, Grade 5 student from Franklin Street, and Dominic Chu, in Grade 5 at E.T. Crowle Public School in Markham. The Judge was Brian Murphy, chairman of special education at Don Valley Junior High.

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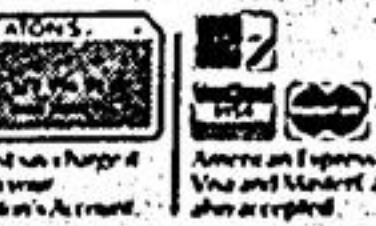
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