

This newcomer itching to get involved



KATHI PHILLIPS
Likes newcomers

KATE GILDERDALE
Correspondent
Newcomer's Club president Kathi Phillips first got involved with the organization when she and her family moved to Stouffville from Don Mills almost two years ago.

"We decided to move to this area because we had family here and wanted more space," says Kathi. "It's such a nice community, it seemed just like home the minute we arrived."

When Welcome Wagon's Diane Darling mentioned the club to her, she felt it would be an ideal way to meet other people and become involved in community life.

Initially rather shy, Kathi soon felt at ease. "Everyone was so nice and friendly and I really enjoyed the meetings."

Describing herself as "the sort

of person who has to sit on my hands to stop myself volunteering for everything," she nevertheless found herself elected president in May.

"The girls who had done the job before me had been super energetic and I thought it would be difficult to follow in their footsteps; but I enjoyed being a member and wanted to do what I could to help out," she said in an interview.

"The club has a good base," she notes, "but because the population growth is slowing right now, we have to encourage new residents to come out and see what a lot of fun it is."

One of her immediate goals is to make the Newcomers better known in the community. "We had a float in the Christmas parade last year and we're sponsoring a softball team and a soccer team this summer."

The club also hosted the Strawberry Festival's information booth again this year.

Club rules limit memberships to three years, and for the first time this year an alumni of former members has been set up, Kathi said.

"There were a lot of people who had to leave, but didn't want to lose out on the friendships they made, so they started a separate group. Some activities and meetings will include both clubs," she states.

"We had approximately 90 members before they left; 40 of those will be eligible for the alumni." The club is eager to welcome new members, she stresses. "We love to have new people coming in, to replace those who are no longer eligible, and because they bring fresh

ideas to any organization."

Last May, the Newcomers held a car rally. "Teams of cars followed a route which took them through Stouffville to Uxbridge, Mount Albert and Musselman's Lake. Drivers got information from signs, watched for things on the side of the road and got out of the car to look various things up," explain Kathi. The event was so popular they're holding another this fall.

Although she agrees that things are quieter in the summer, the club is still hosting various activities, including a weekend barbecue which took place last Saturday, and a couples' euchre on Aug. 11.

"We're also starting a gourmet club on Aug. 12," she said. "It's a couples' activity and everyone is in charge of bringing one course to a planned meal. Different

couples take turns hosting it."

Regular monthly meetings resume on the last Thursday of September, with individual interest groups meeting at different times during the month.

"We have our annual dance in October at the recreation centre, which is a big event for us," she added. Another highly popular activity is the Newcomer's bowling league.

As well as being involved in the club, Kathi is enjoying family life with her two children, Matthew, 6 and Jessica, 3. She misses her regular aerobics workout at the recreation centre during the summer, but she rarely finds time to relax. "I competed in the (Strawberry Festival) triathlon and I finished it," she grins.

Once she started it was fun, she says, "but I was awake all night before it." As she came to the finish line, she was surprised to see her friend, cheering madly.

"I didn't know why she was making such a fuss, because I wasn't one of the winners; but it turned out I'd won the pie baking contest, and that's why she was so excited," laughs Kathi.

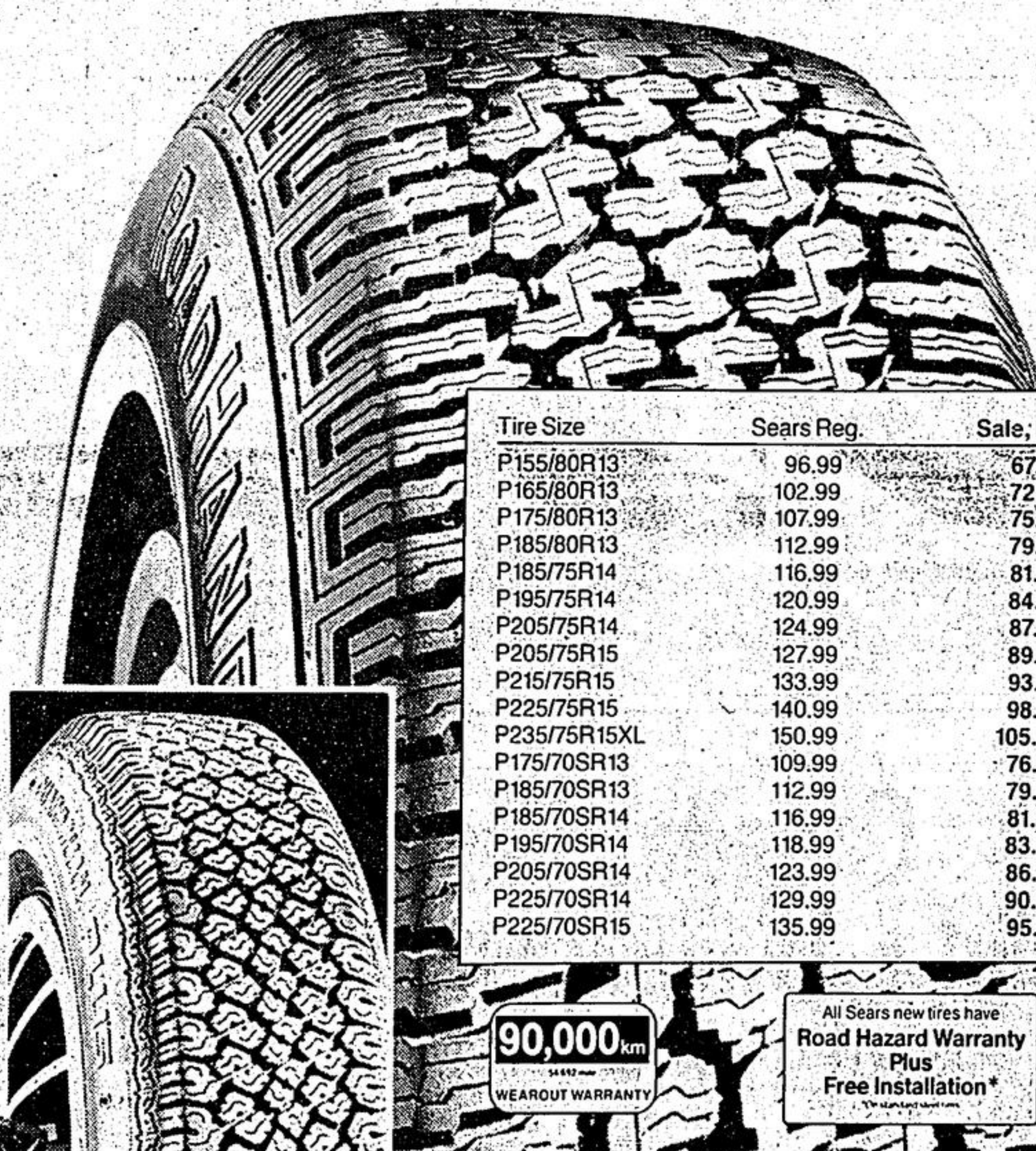
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KATE'S CORNER



Kate Gilderdale

My how granny changed

When I was growing up, I had a real granny. She had grey hair done up in a bun and wore long, modest skirts and she looked well old.

Grannies today just don't measure up. Some of them are as well-proportioned as Jane Fonda and about as well-preserved. Others play endless games of tennis effortlessly, drink Harvey Wallbangers, and toot around town in convertible sports cars. A lot have fewer grey hairs than Ronald Reagan.

Some even object to being called granny or grandma or anything traditional, because it makes them feel old, so everyone gets to call them by their Christian names.

They rarely take care of their grandchildren because they can't take time from their busy careers. Somewhere along the way, I can't help feeling the role of grandma has lost a certain old-world charm.

My granny always looked the picture of genteel respectability, but in fact she was quite a tearaway, and used to buy us day passes for the bus, pay half fare for us (for which we had to be under 14) and then let us sneak a puff on her cigarette.

When it was sternly pointed out by the ticket collector that we were either too young to smoke or too old to go half-fare, she would become increasingly indignant and no one, not even the staunchest official, could withstand granny in full cry.

Sometimes she would claim that a piece of roast beef she'd bought from the local butcher was tough, and force him to eat it while she watched; and then demand, and get, her money back (no one dared thwart granny).

She knitted truck-loads of sweaters for the family while she watched television, usually with a cat on her lap and a nice, hot cup of tea beside her.

Old-fashioned grannies couldn't care less whether or not you cleaned your room and didn't harbor a secret desire to be mistaken for your mother's sister.

When they came to stay because your parents were away, they showed deep concern when you didn't feel well enough to go to school, but accepted with equanimity your miraculous recovery, allowing you to spend the rest of the day playing in the park and eating ice cream.

Instead of giving you healthy, sensible snacks, they would buy bags of gob stoppers and sugar-filled gum and bake calorie-laden desserts and cakes.

Of course, that was in the far off days when families usually lived close together and marriages, however unsatisfactory, were rarely abandoned.

If I ever get to be a granny, I hope I can continue the family tradition. After years of attempting to be a fair, but firm parent, I'll be ready to spoil my grandchildren shamelessly and let their parents suffer the consequences.

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