

Club offers variety and friendship

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Correspondent

Leaving familiar surroundings for somewhere new can be a traumatic experience. With organizations like the Newcomers' Club, however, help and friendship are just a phone call away.

No one knows this better than Sheila Rambeau, president of the Markham club, who moved to the area from Ottawa just over a year ago. "Markham is a lovely location and there are a lot of things to do. The Newcomers' was great for letting me know what was going on here and for giving me the chance to meet other people who were also new in town."

One of its major strengths, she points out, is that it offers a choice of activities to appeal to every interest, including a gourmet lunch club, a couples' supper club and a wide variety of

sporting activities and special events, as well as a moms and tots program for people with young children. The organization also holds regular monthly meetings, and welcomes members' suggestions for specific activities.

For those who are out during the day, amateur chef evenings are a popular way of meeting new friends. "There are different teams which cook every month, and each member makes part of the meal and takes it to the host's house," explains Rambeau.

The gourmet lunch club operates on the same principal, with people exchanging the recipes of the dishes they contribute.

Sports include skiing, bowling and golf, some events are during the day and some in the evenings or on weekends.

Bridge is a popular pastime for many, "some people who join on-

ly want to play bridge and don't want to be involved in anything else, which is fine with us," she observes. "The whole idea is to allow people to do whatever appeals to them and to meet other people with the same interest."

Despite the shift towards two-income families, "there are still a lot of people who are looking for things to do during the day," advises Rambeau.

"Many come from other countries with their spouses and may not be in a position where they're able to work. We have people from America, England, Ireland and Africa among our members. They're often looking for daytime activities where they can get to know each other."

Recent events include an evening at the Champagne Dinner Theatre, a Halloween party and a scavenger hunt, with a Christmas party coming up this month.

At the next regular meeting, members will be invited to try court whist, a rotating card game, you don't have to know how to play. There will also be a bake exchange, where members will have the opportunity to sample each other's baked goods.

Speakers are invited to address the meetings on a regular basis, particularly those who can provide specific community information, notes Rambeau. "When you're new you can feel somewhat lost, it helps to meet people who can give you advice about programs and events in the area."

With so much going on, she says, "you could be busy six days a week if you wanted to." Activities are carefully coordinated to avoid overlapping, "so that people can belong to as many things as they like." Every group has a leader and one ex-

ecutive member involved. Members who want to start their own group can communicate with others through the monthly newsletter.

"Anyone who has been in the community for less than three years is eligible for membership," explains Rambeau. "After that, there's an alumni; you can graduate to."

Annual dues are a modest \$12, "to cover the cost of postage and printing the newsletter." Although it's an independent, non-profit group, there is a national Newcomers' Council.

For those who are leaving the area, the club can provide information on similar organizations throughout the country.

To register, or to learn more about the Newcomers' Club, you can call Chris Wright in Markham at 471-8253 or Loretta Spence in Unionville at 475-2824.

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