

Education

Technical courses gain new respect at schools

By **BRUCE STAPLEY**
Correspondent

Wally Currie can be forgiven for wearing the look of a man vindicated as he walks through the hallways of Stouffville District Secondary School (SDSS) these days.

Currie has been the school's technical director for the past 10 years. After decades of being per-

ceived by many as the last hope of low achievers and academic misfits, his program is finally getting the recognition it deserves.

In recent years, the Ontario Ministry of Education has moved to expand technical education to help equip students with the skills needed to survive in a world relying more and

more on technology. A program once limited to auto shop, home wiring and woodworking now incorporates the principles of space travel, computer technology, and video editing.

Students taking advanced OAC courses are signing up for tech courses both as a means of allowing them access to the practical application of concepts studied in geometry and physics, and as a way of avoiding academic stress.

"The Pythagorean theorem is the geometric principle used in building stairs and rafters," said Currie, who was a private contractor before coming to SDSS 16 years ago.

"The kids are learning to apply materials learned in one class to other classes. Also, tech courses are a stress-free alternative to OAC courses for senior students. They serve the same purpose as a person coming home to tinker with his car after a tough day at the office."

With the ministry's emphasis on problem solving as the basis of education today, Currie said the tech program offers an ideal opportunity for students to master this principle.

"Problem solving is what tech courses are all about, figuring out how to fit this piece into that piece, or how to use a computer to solve a problem."

He said the program also places much emphasis on being a team player and utilizing communications skills, both of which have assumed unprecedented importance in today's work place.

Currie said he's had many university engineering students come back to tell him that what they learned in the SDSS tech program gave them a foundation for what they studied in university.

One of five full time tech instructors at SDSS, Currie presides over a roster of courses which include transportation, electrical, wood working,

cabinet making, and building construction, drafting, computer graphics, and communications.

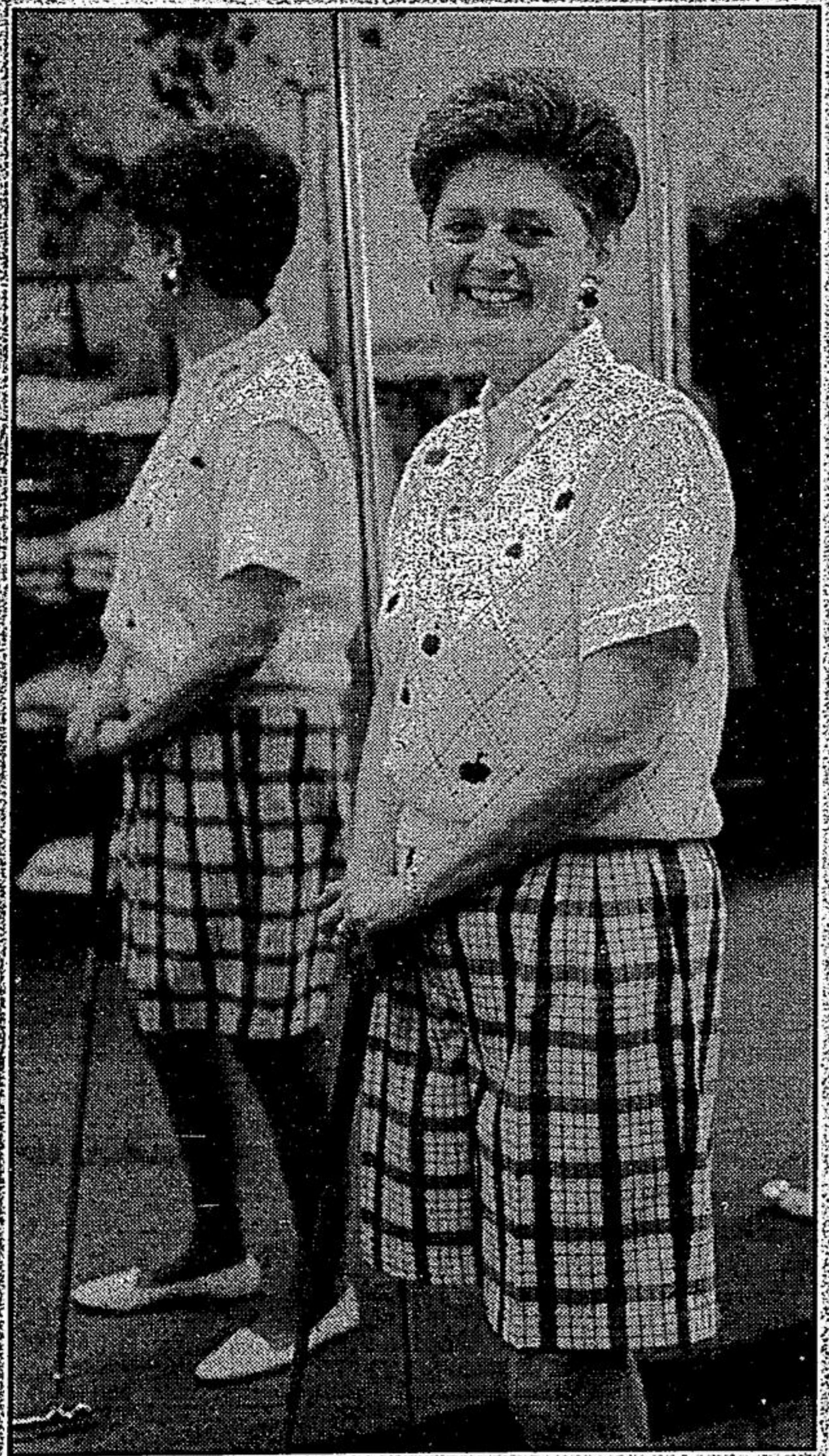
Some of the courses are offered in conjunction with English, business, physics and art classes.

Students of the tech program also make up a large percentage of SDSS students taking part in the co-op program, said Currie.

"Local businesses like A & S Construction, Green Line For-

est Products, and Schell Lumber have given co-op placements to many of the students in the program.

The bottom line, Currie suggested, is that a high school technical program is now considered a vital component not only in equipping students with everyday skills, but in preparing them for the work world. "These kids need marketable skills, and that's what the program offers."



Fashion show for heart

Model Jan Bartlett shows off some Leon Levine Golfwear to promote Sunday's spring fashion show at Sleepy Hollow Golf Course in Stouffville. The show benefits the Whitchurch-Stouffville Chapter of the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario. Sunday's fashion show starts at 1 p.m. and includes a luncheon. Tickets are available from Heart and Stroke Foundation members. Fashions for the show have been provided by Peppertree Classics of Main St., Markham.

Photo: SJOERD WITTEVEEN



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