

# Volunteers can help aphasia clients communicate

Communication — having a conversation with our children, writing a letter to a friend, calling our grandparents on the telephone — is something most of us can do automatically. We never stop to think about how our brain sends messages to our speech muscles to make conversation possible, or even which side of the brain controls our ability to use language. We just take our communication abilities for granted.

For people with aphasia — a communication disorder caused by stroke or head injury; speaking, reading, writing, understanding and initiating conversation becomes a challenge.

Not only do people with aphasia need to find new and creative ways of communicating with their family and friends, but they need to develop new activities and skills that do not require intact verbal communication.

The York-Durham Aphasia Centre, located at Parkview

Village in Stouffville, provides practical help to people with aphasia and their families with the assistance of trained community volunteers.

The centre is a Ministry of Health funded community agency specializing in group communications and family support programs after stroke or head injury.

It offers weekly sessions in group conversation, learning alternative modes of communication, developing communication aids, improving reading and writing, improving problem solving and planning skills, and self expression through music, art and drama.

Groups of four to five people with aphasia are assisted by two volunteer facilitators to communicate with each other about topics ranging from sports to politics to family life, using a variety of different communication methods.

"Our volunteers help promote social links and friendships between clients through facilitating conversation and by

assisting in the planning and running of our varied program activities," said communication program co-ordinator Ruth Patterson. "Our social work and speech-language staff provides an initial orientation for volunteers, training in communication skills and group dynamics, as well as ongoing learning opportunities in adult communication disorders."

The centre has an active volunteer and student training program at both its main location in Stouffville and its branch locations in Newmarket and Richmond Hill.

There are a number of volunteer positions available: facilitating communication groups, greeting clients and assisting with refreshments, helping clients to write their life stories, teaching computer skills and enabling clients to express themselves through music, art or movement.

"We are actively seeking new volunteers aged 18 or older. Those interested would learn new skills in the field of human communication through promoting social interaction, in a dynamic partnership with our clients, families and staff," said Patterson, who together with speech-language staff members Mylene Bergeron and Bonnie Morrison continue developing the program.

The Aphasia Centre's Stouffville fall communication program begins Thurs., Sept. 11. The centre is hosting an evening open house for new volunteers and interested community members on Thurs., Aug. 21 from 4 to 7 p.m. at Parkview Village, which is located at 12184 Ninth Line, Stouffville.

There will also be a full-day fall volunteer orientation session on Thurs., Sept. 4 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the auditorium of Parkview Village.

For information, please call Mylene Bergeron at 642-2053.

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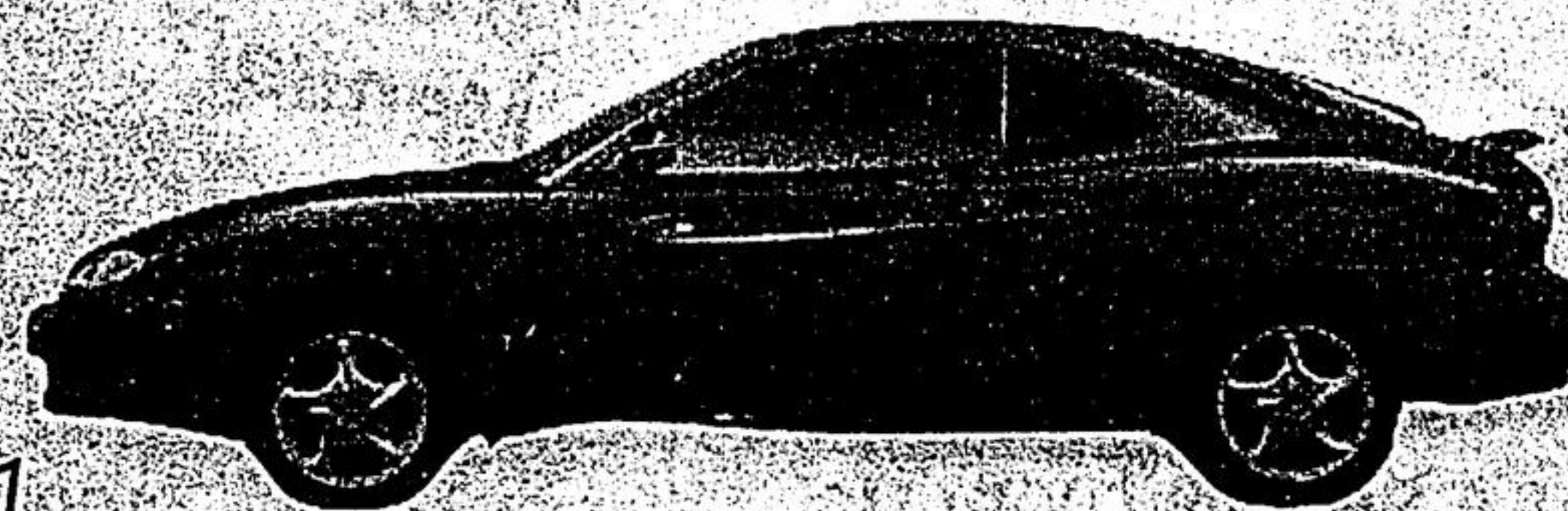
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## Stouffville golf tourney benefits spinal research

The Canadian Spinal Research Organization (CSRO) will tee off its first Annual Charity Golf Tournament on July 31.

The tournament is to be held at the Sleepy Hollow Golf Club in Stouffville.

Kicking off the tournament for the early birds is the mini tournament. Later in the day, there will be a putting competition, a hole-in-one contest, a sports auction, a raffle, and a guest speaker. The tournament will host 144 golfers.

The entry price is \$175 per person. Guests are welcome to join the dinner reception for \$50 per person.

"Increasing awareness and raising necessary funding is critical as we strive to find a cure for people with spinal cord injuries," said Ray Wickson, president of the CSRO. "This is our first Annual Charity Golf Tournament, and we look forward to yet another successful event to raise the necessary funds needed to continue our search into curing paralysis."

Based in Richmond Hill, CSRO has been a leader in scientific and medical research into spinal injury since 1984.

For more information, contact Ryan Durham at CSRO's Special Events line at (905) 508-4000.

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