

Arthritis drive in high gear

JORDAN GREEN
Staff Reporter

September isn't only back to school month — it's also Arthritis month across Canada.

Last year, the Arthritis Society raised more than \$75,000 through the residential door-to-door campaign in York Region — Stouffville residents gave \$5,000 last year.

"Our goal in York Region as a whole from the residential campaign is to raise at least \$70,000," said Mary Tucci, the area co-ordinator for York Region's Arthritis Society.

York Region's society needs to raise a total of \$110,000 in donations from businesses and area residents to keep the regional offices open.

"We're hoping to raise \$110,000 overall for this particular office," said Tucci.

To kick off the annual month of campaigning, a special flag-raising ceremony took place Friday at the town offices.

The mayor and local dignitaries participated to raise awareness of the national campaign.

Along with the canvassing campaign, the society will be holding a buffet celebrity business breakfast

Sept. 26 at the Sheraton Parkway hotel in Richmond Hill.

"Jean Beliveau of the Montreal Canadians will be there," said Tucci. "We're inviting the mayors and we've invited Elvis Stojko; we don't know if he'll show but we invited him."

This will be the second annual celebrity breakfast, where York Region businesses can dine with some local celebrities and support the Arthritis Society.

Tickets to the breakfast are \$50 per person and it will be held Sept. 26 from 7:30 a.m. to 9 a.m.

Arthritis is the number one chronic disease in Canada — one in seven Canadians will be affected by it, according to Tucci.

"People of all ages suffer from it," said Tucci. "Children have it, middle aged people have it and there's over 100 different types."

Arthritis rates in Canada are increasing — currently four million Canadians have the disease, yet that number is estimated to increase to 8.3 million by the year 2031, according to Tucci.

Arthritis affects the auto immune system, causing pain and in some cases restricted movement for the person affected.

Although there is no

known cure, researchers are working hard to reduce the symptoms.

"The research they're doing is fantastic," said Tucci. "We have a support line, an emotional support and referral to community services line," he added.

The toll-free national helpline for arthritis sufferers is 1-800-321-1433. The York Region office can be reached at 1-800-848-8384.

CAMPAIGN KICK-OFF: Mayor Wayne Emmerson and Gale Harris, a volunteer with the Arthritis Society, raised the flag for the annual fundraising campaign, recently.

Photo by STEVE SOMERVILLE



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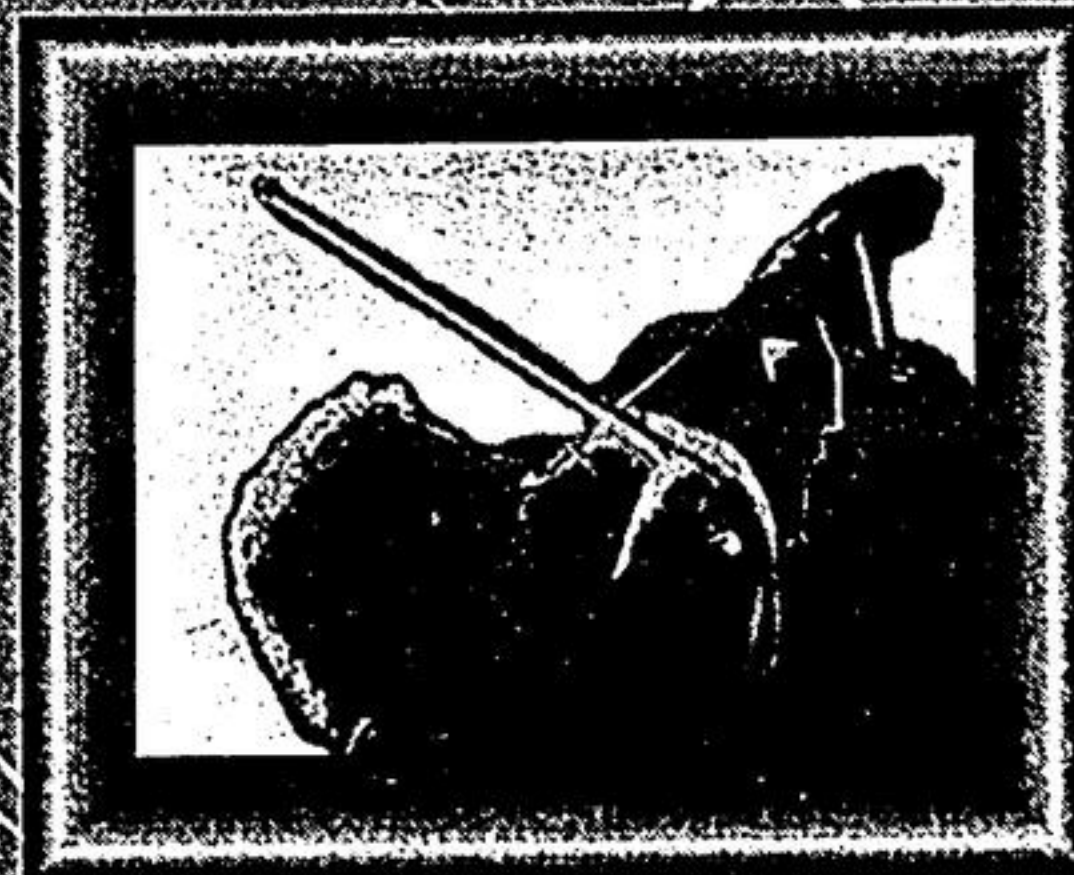
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