

# For Pratt, it's Mission Possible

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Correspondent

With his boyish good looks, winning smile, and laid back attitude, Mark Pratt puts people at ease immediately. At age 34, and dressed casually in faded jeans and blue and white striped shirt, he exudes equal amounts of confidence and charm. And when Pratt says he's "on a mission," he truly means it.

As youth pastor of Stouffville's Missionary Church, he faces varied but rewarding challenges working with teens — often from broken homes or otherwise troubled backgrounds.

Despite his Toronto upbringing in a Christian home, Mark was not always a likely candidate for the ministry. "I was a rebel — wild and crazy," he said, grinning. "I got kicked out of every youth group I attended, and used to make fun of kids who went to bible study."

In his mid-teens, Pratt was influenced by a youth group leader who took a personal interest in helping him get back on track. He soon became involved in youth group activities and became an example to younger teens searching for direction.

Although he'd always dreamed of becoming a race car driver, Pratt enrolled in a Minnesota Bible College, helping to pay his tuition by working part-time at a Volkswagen-Porsche dealership.

In 1988, after obtaining his BA in Ministry and Pastoral work, it was back to Toronto, where he worked for two years as a jail guard. A Master's Degree in Theology from O.T.S. in the early nineties led to a position as youth pastor in a large non-denominational church in Toronto, working with a youth group of well over 200 teens.

In 1996, Pratt came to Stouffville. Married and the father of a two-and-a-half-year-old daughter, he said his days are "fun, exciting, and challenging."

Pratt feels the biggest challenge in working with young people is helping them and their families deal with painful issues such as divorce, physical and sexual abuse, and incest — "all of which," he contends, "happens just as frequently in Christian families as in non-Christian families."

Hoping to attend McMaster University next year to earn his PhD, Pratt would like

## Museum hosts Candlelight Christmas

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas at the Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum.

Museum staff and volunteers are busy decking the halls and trimming the tree with traditional flare, in the hopes that you and your family will soon be here to enjoy A Candlelight Christmas on Wednesday, Dec. 10.

The evening will include a horse-drawn sleigh ride through the grounds, and a tour of our pioneer log cabin and victorian farmhouse under the magical glow of candles and kerosene lamps.

Costumed interpreters will demonstrate 19th century festive traditions and decorations. After, warm up at our reception with hot apple cider and traditional desserts.

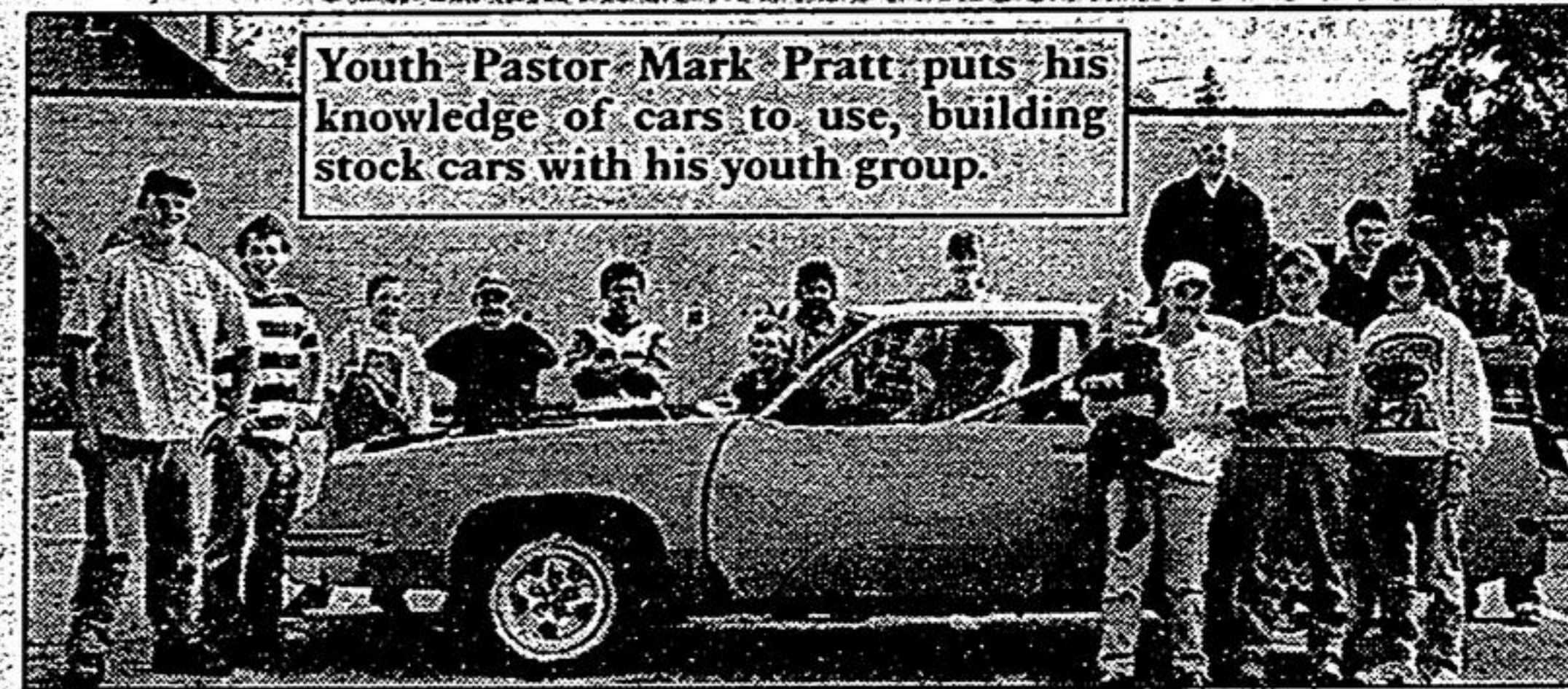
Tours start at 6:30 or 7:45 p.m. Space is limited so please register early to avoid disappointment. Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$5 for children.

For further information, please call the museum at 727-8954. For toll free calling in York Region, please dial (416) 213-0900, then at the tone (905) 727-8954.

to settle in a small church as a family pastor.

Monetary rewards may not be great, but Pratt feels the personal rewards and satisfaction that come from making a difference in a young person's life makes it all worthwhile.

Recently, a young woman, now a youth sponsor in a church whom he'd counselled as a troubled teen, called to say, "I owe it all to you," he said. "When I get calls like that it's all the thanks I need. I know then, I've done my job. Mission accomplished!"



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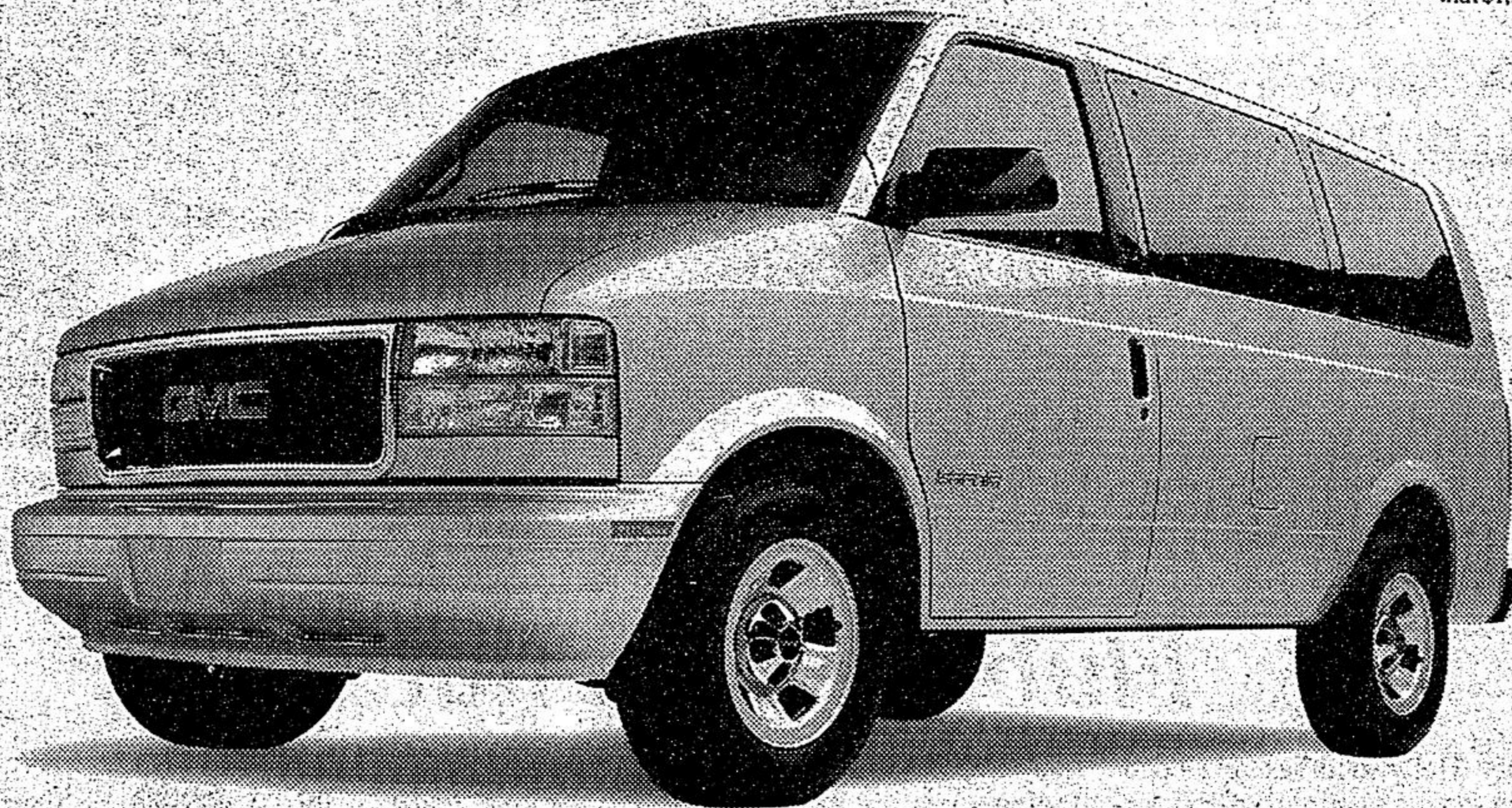
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