

Minister accepts award

KATE GILDERDALE
Correspondent

The ninth annual Sacred Music Festival, sponsored by the Music Town Ontario committee, will be held June 25 at 8 p.m. at Stouffville Missionary Church on Main St.

Kathi Phillips will receive the 1998 Music Town Ontario award, presented by Julia Topping. Performers at the event, which is part of the Whitchurch-Stouffville Strawberry Festival, include solo singers Ann Gage, Clara Jordan and April Yakeley; violinist Adam Rochacewich and pianist Laura Rochacewich; duet vocalists Janice Fox and Wendy Pickles; vocal trio Kristin and Ashleigh Duggan and Sarah Blenkhorn, and a student trio from Stouffville Christian School.

A free will offering will be collected and guests are asked to donate non-perishable food items for the Whitchurch-Stouffville Food Bank.

Rotary raffles Timex watches

The Rotary Club will be front and centre at the 1998 Whitchurch-Stouffville Strawberry Festival.

"Our booth will be near the clock tower," said John Pollard. "To raise money for community services, we will raffle six Timex watches, with tickets selling for only one dollar each." The club will also sell unique Canadian mementos in the form of maple leaf pins, which are made out of copper from the parliament buildings in Ottawa.

The Rotary Club meets every Tuesday at Angie's Eatery for breakfast and hosts an interesting variety of guest speakers. Upcoming speakers include senator Consiglio Dinno and Rotary scholarship recipient Do Euski. Anyone who is interested in joining is welcome to attend the meetings, which start at 7 a.m.

For more information call John Pollard at 642-0363.

— Kate Gilderdale

Land, air ambulances needed

■ From page 1 ■

stopped at the intersection and struck were also unhurt. Whitchurch-Stouffville deputy fire chief Murray Emmerson said with 12 people involved there was some concern having enough equipment.

"With so many in the accident, (crews) didn't know if we had enough to transport everyone (but) it worked out; there was enough," said Emmerson.

In addition to rendering medical aid, firefighters used metal cutters to free victims while the air ambulance made its way to the scene.

MacDonald said charges are pending the completion of the investigation. Anyone who may have witnessed the fatal accident is asked to call the York Regional Police Traffic Unit at 881-1221 ext. 7703.

with files from Joan Ransberry



Connor Miller and his dad Chris tempt each other with fresh-picked strawberries at Applewood Farm on McCowan Rd.

Photo by STEVE SOMERVILLE

Berries ripe for the pickin'

MIKE ADLER
Staff Reporter

Mary Lusk's basket is full 20 minutes after she steps into the fresh field of strawberries, a sure sign of a great crop.

These were two-bite berries, the shiny red "kings" of the patch that pickers notice first — and so sweet you wouldn't need cream.

"I've never seen them this big and I've never done it this fast," said Lusk, an experienced picker who came from Scarborough to Applewood Farm in Stouffville a week earlier to get six quarts of berries for jam.

On Thursday, wanting to make a strawberry-rhubarb pie, she was back at the McCowan Road farm. "I want them mashed up and on my toast," she added.

Trying one between rows of plants in a newly opened field, Lusk had to wipe her face. "Delicious. Beautiful," she declared. "It's dripping down my chin, it's so juicy!"

Last week was the time for easy strawberry-picking, local farmers say, though the crop, weeks early, will last another week or so, according to the Ontario Berry Growers Association.

At Trapper Bob on Warden Avenue in Newmarket, the mid-season and late-season berries were just coming up. "The sizes are just right and the tastes are just gorgeous," said co-owner Rhoda Nebitko.

And while the first berries on a plant, the "kings" will fill your basket faster, the next berries, the "honeyeyes," are smaller but also more firm.

"The small, they say, it is more sweet, but for lazy people they say the big ones are better. Lazy ones, like me," said Moschoula Kyritsis of East York, who picked a basketful for her grandchildren. "They love them with sugar or cut into small pieces."

The colour of berries in his basket — bright red, with a shine growers say shows freshness — impressed James O'Donnell of Oak Ridges. "Sometimes they're dull, and they're not as good," he said.

A few farms in the region offer extra activities for children. Chyenne McKinnon of Richmond Hill took son Dylan, 3, berry-picking for the first time at Forsythe Farms on Kennedy Road in Markham, where there were farm animals and space to run free. "We're wearing strawberries on our faces, on our shoes and on our clothes. Hopefully, we'll have enough to eat," she said.

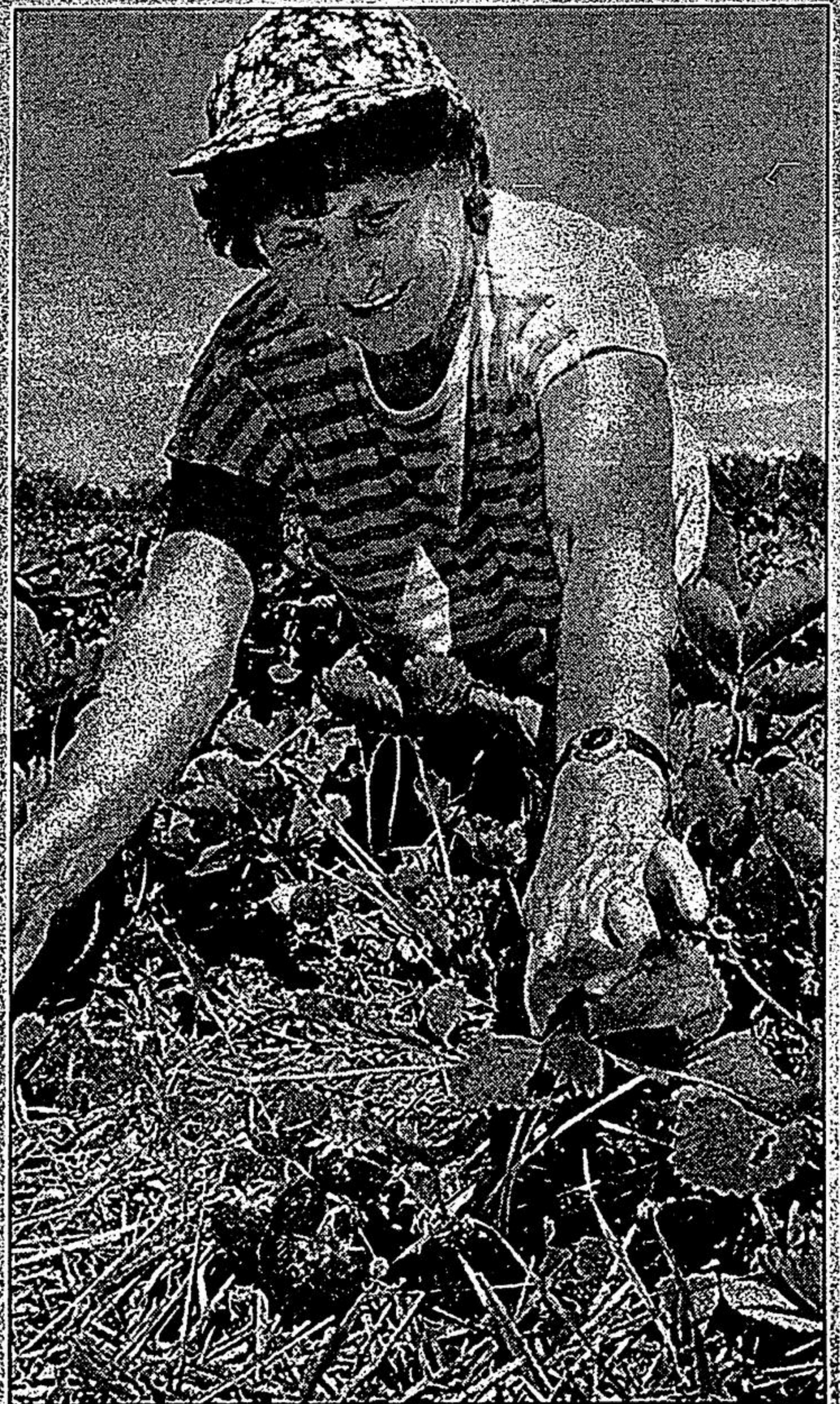
McKinnon also had daughter Taryn, five weeks old, strapped to her chest but Dylan helped her get berries. "I point them out and he picks them."

In a barn nearby, children from Scarborough's McCowan Road Public School were putting tiny strawberry plants in soil. They were told to put them in a sunny garden or balcony spot, where they would blossom in a few weeks and then grow little berries.

"They're raring to go, so the sooner we get them into the soil, the better," advised Rosemary Breschuk-Chiu, a seasonal farm hand and educator.

Farmers must plow up their strawberry fields every few years and start over in a new field.

Blossoms are plucked off during the first year, so the plants spend more time getting a good root. The plants grow outwards, like a spider, so the branches must be trained back into the rows, said Chris Miller, son-in-law of Applewood owner Frank Passafiume.



Mary Lusk finds a bunch of 'kings' to her liking.

Photo by STEVE SOMERVILLE