

Stouffville Tribune

A Metroland community newspaper
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EDITORIAL

Safety key for parents and children

Now that summer has officially started, school might be the last thing on the mind of many youngsters.

However, a safety program being tested next September as a pilot project for York Region is well worth taking some time to think about. It's an injury prevention program for elementary school children, and keeping kids safe is a year-round job.

Called Risk Watch, the program is aimed specifically at reducing preventable injuries and deaths among children.

Risk Watch has identified the eight leading causes of children's injuries and they fall into the following categories:

- Motor vehicle accidents
- Fires and burns
- Choking, suffocation and strangulation
- Poisoning
- Falls
- Firearm accidents
- Bicycle and pedestrian hazards
- Water hazards

Knowing what the dangers are is the first step to prevention.

While it's great that Risk Watch, supported by a coalition of public and corporate groups including police, municipal fire departments, the board of education and the York Region health department, is making the move to educate kids, the greatest burden of responsibility still rests with parents.

Since parents can't be with their children all the time, they must teach safety at a young age.

However, having those safety lessons constantly reinforced in school will help the message hit home.

The key to Risk Watch is stopping the injuries and deaths that can be avoided.

Sadly, in some situations all the safety precautions in the world wouldn't have made a difference. Those situations, though, are rare.

By far, most injuries can be avoided.

If your child knows basic water safety rules, the chances of them drowning decrease.

The same is true of how to escape a fire.

When Risk Watch was launched, school children were encouraged to practice their stop, drop and roll technique.

It was all good fun on a sunny afternoon as uniformed police officers and firefighters watched the youngsters go through their paces. The fun and games, though, may help save the lives of those very children if they are ever caught in a fire.

The other great thing about Risk Watch is that the children who participate can take what they've learned home to encourage their parents to think about safety.

Making an escape plan for a fire is something the whole family should do together.

We should be thinking safety at all times.

As we head into the busy summer season, many families will be travelling, hiking and spending time near water.

A discussion with the children about basic safety procedures will go a long way to making the holidays memorable, and avoiding tragedy.

CHEERS & JEERS

■ **CHEERS:** To all those who worked so hard in our communities last week to help us celebrate Canada Day in style. Stouffville's Strawberry Festival brought out huge crowds over the weekend, and was a great success as always. In Markham, the Canada Day committee did an outstanding job organizing the picnic and fireworks display for residents in Milne Park.

OPINION

BEST OF NEASE



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Paper needs comics and crossword puzzle

My name is Denise Garneau and I am 11 years old.

I have a suggestion for your newspaper that might make it better (not that there is anything wrong with it now).

To make it appeal to kids, even though kids already read it, you could add some comics and maybe a crossword puzzle.

These additions would make it appeal to more people, kids and adults. I hope you will take my suggestions into consideration.

Thank you.

DENISE GARNEAU

Pesticides ruining mankind and no one seems to care

Here's a little riddle for you: What does celebrated rock drummer Jeff Porcaro and this average mother of two, who was just trying to take her children for a walk on a lovely June day, have in common?

Our lives have been dramatically altered by the harmful effects of airborne pesticides.

In Porcaro's case, he died at the age of 38 from cardiac arrest after an allergic reaction to a pesticide he was spraying in his garden.

He left behind a wife, children, and an amazing career playing with such musical talents as Bruce Springsteen, Dire Straits, Boz Scaggs, Michael Jackson and a host of others.

What a senseless waste.

That was 1992, the same year that I had three miscarriages.

I have a malformation of my reproductive system that occurred during the first trimester of development.

This type of birth defect is strongly linked to the hormone (estrogen) mimicking qualities of selective broad leaf herbicides.

You know, the kind you might have just sprayed on to your own lawn (and the children, pets, porches, toys and lungs of your neighbourhood) in an attempt to force it into some kind of false standard.

I have to admit that, before I began looking into this issue, I was a proponent of weed killers. I thought that it was really amazing that homeowners could have a lawn that looked like a golf course.

Sometimes ignorance is bliss. I would walk over lawns oblivious to the little signs that dot our landscape.

I didn't care, I was in my mid-20s, no responsibilities, nothing phased me.

How things have changed. Today, the familiar feeling of my throat beginning to swell up alerted me that there was a problem.

I took one look at my children sitting innocently in their wagon, trusting me to protect them, and I bolted for home.

We were the victims of yet another chemical assault on our neighbourhood.

After I rushed my children inside, stripped them down and scrubbed them off in the shower, I just sat and cried. I can't believe how few rights we have to keep our children safe and healthy.

I'm afraid to take my children outside, and I only open my windows when it is

LETTERS, continued

raining, because I've known too many people and animals who have become sick as a result of pesticide exposure.

Something has got to change.

All my children wanted was to get some bubble blowing liquid at the store so they could have some fun in their back yard.

If you've ever watched a bubble blow through the air, you will know that the wind carries it over property lines and wherever it pleases.

If you feel the risk of pesticides is worth it to your family, fine.

Bathe in it if you wish. But don't ruin my children's health as it drifts into their little bodies.

Find another method of applying them, if you must.

It will eventually get to us through our ground water and its effects on the environment, but at least we'll be able to open our windows.

I challenge all home and business owners in the Aurora/Newmarket area to start caring about our community and to stop spraying pesticides into our air.

I also challenge anyone who has become sick as a result of pesticide exposure to speak up.

If your child began to vomit or developed diarrhea after playing outside, let it be known.

If you or your child's asthma was triggered after exposure to spraying, don't keep it quiet.

If your pet began to wheeze or cough up blood after the friendly neighbourhood spray truck paid a visit, bark it loud and clear.

I also challenge the doctors and vets of our community to learn more about the known health concerns associated with pesticides and to take a stand against this pervasive public health problem.

Enough is enough. It is time that we cared enough to make our community enjoyable and safe for everyone. I think Porcaro would agree.

M. MACDONALD

Equestrian facilities should be responsible for safety

I am glad to see that an equestrian facility has been held responsible for the safety of its clients.

As a parent and horse owner, I feel strongly that it is the responsibility of both the owners/operators of a riding facility, and the employees, to ensure that every possible safety precaution is taken and that the risks relating to this sport be made known.

I have ridden since I was six years old, so when my child asked to learn to ride I was well equipped to select a good school.

It was not an easy task and even though the school that we finally selected was an excellent facility with a good reputation, the helmets supplied for new students were not approved.

As a parent, horse owner and competitor, I would strongly support random inspections of these facilities by an independent body.

DAVID HUTTON
FOX FARM STABLES

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