

Stouffville Tribune

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EDITORIAL

We must all share the blame for teen violence

"Just to be people. That's all. It's a very short answer. But that's all."

That was Olga Baranovski's simple, yet thought-provoking answer when asked how we can put an end to the kind of teen violence that killed her 15-year-old son, Matty.

She and her husband, Elliott Korczak, were guest speakers at a forum Monday in Vaughan.

Her simple plea for people to just be people reflects the struggle many parents face while trying to comprehend the senseless and inhuman actions of her son's killers, who viciously kicked him in the head simply because he refused their demands for cigarettes.

Unfortunately, what her plea fails to recognize is that the teens who attacked her son were people just being people — a sad reflection of a society increasingly besieged by violence, intolerance and insensitivity.

Not surprisingly, Monday's forum touched on many of the traditional lightning rods for people concerned about teen violence — the Young Offenders Act, the media, movies, television and video games. Although all are valid concerns to varying degrees, none are relevant in the Baranovski murder.

All of these lightning rods are nothing but easy targets and scapegoats for a much more troubling reality — our society is increasingly failing to instill a sense of values, respect and responsibility in our children.

That was the not-too-subtle message from two experts on teen violence at Monday night's forum, both of whom work with children in New York City.

Their message was clear: teen violence and other anti-social behaviour almost always begins at home.

But parents aren't alone in this. When a teenager kills, we all share the blame, as Matty's father pointed out.

"More police aren't going to solve the problem. It's just a stop-gap measure," he said. "We need to think about the things we can do individually to make things better. Everybody's got to get involved."

That may not be as simple as banning video games, censoring movies, or rewriting the Young Offenders Act. But it is the only real solution if we truly want to stop teens from spinning out of control.

OPINION



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Leadership to make changes lacking in 905 area

Re: Eye-opening report should spur mayors, Editorial, Jan. 20.

The kind of leadership required to make changes necessary in the 905 area has been sadly lacking.

If other mayors are unhappy with the recent report by the mayors we've heard from, they should come up with something better and soon.

Until very recently, the government has said that the dithering and infighting in our area must come to a close by the end of 1999 or an adviser from the provincial government would step in and make the decision for us.

I believe Tony Clement is now prepared to give us a few months' grace, certainly not the four years Aurora Mayor Tim Jones claims he will wait.

Heaven help us if they do. As far as the disabled, elderly, homeless and public transit-reliant are concerned, the mess they find themselves in has been caused by government cutbacks in the first place, just at a time when the population in Markham, Vaughan and Richmond Hill has increased alarmingly.

Accessibility buses and taxis are requiring longer booking reservation waiting periods, bookings must be reconfirmed and one still can't count on getting to appointments on time or back home before scheduled atten-

dant appointments. There simply aren't enough vehicles.

There has been an uproar about the York Region situation not only in local papers, but as far afield as major Toronto dailies and television stations.

Some of the politicians are blatantly indulging in name-calling. I hope they remember that we voters are making notes for the upcoming municipal and the next provincial elections.

MARTHA SHULTZ
THORNHILL

Greed breeds faster than coyotes

Re: The Hungry Season, Dec. 16

I am returning the photo from this article and I have circled the paw from this dead coyote that was killed. If I am correct, this coyote was caught and killed by a leg hold trap, which is inhumane. What if someone walks through that exact area and loses their foot?

This is upsetting to me because all of nature is being killed. Does this mean anything to some people out there?

I read that the coyotes are breeding fast. To tell you the truth, I think that developers and people's greed are breeding faster. As for me, I would like to have a lot of nature left by the time I hit 40.

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Dave Teetzel

Travelling farther for health care is best way to cut costs

The real challenge in reforming the health-care system is to take into account that the clients are real people who are in a vulnerable, frightened position.

That's the lesson we ought to learn from Newmarket resident Gerry Lebel.

He was taken to York County Hospital with an apparent stroke, which turned out to be a neurological condition called Miller-Fisher syndrome.

This required him to attend an outpatient program, but this service had been cancelled at York County long ago. Instead, he has to go to Markham Stouffville Hospital regularly to receive care.

That story is likely to become more and more familiar as time goes by, as hospitals start to specialize and become regional health centres.

York Central Hospital, for example, has the regional dialysis program. York County is the cardiac care centre.

It's a good strategy, even if it means people have to travel a bit for help.

Given that the financial crush in health care means it's impossible to provide outstanding facilities for every condition in every hospital, you have a choice — do you want the best care or do you want it in your back yard?

If I'm having cardiac problems, I'm willing to travel quite a way to get the best care.

And the distance from Newmarket to Markham is not a long way to go for medical care in this country. By the standards of Northern Ontario, for example, it's downright convenient.

In York Region, it's becoming less and less necessary to travel even as far as Toronto for specialized care.

It's a good news story. But sometimes the human element is falling through the cracks.

Lebel discovered he had to go to Markham Stouffville, but became frustrated because there was no mechanism in place to follow up on his condition in Newmarket. He had to find the program at Markham Stouffville on his own.

If health care is to be provided on a regional basis, the hospitals or the region's Community Care Access Centre should be helping people get those services — whether it's answering questions, or providing transportation — call it bedside manner on a large scale.

Sure, this would cost money, and money is in short supply. But public confidence in health care is at stake.

You can say the system is efficient and providing a higher standard of care, but when someone you care about is waiting what seems like forever for surgery, or being pushed to take medication by a doctor who is too busy to answer questions, all those good news stories are hard to believe.

LETTERS-POLICY

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