

Stouffville Tribune

A Metroland community newspaper
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OPINION

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Debora Kelly

*Donate directly
to organizations
you wish to help*

I open my front door to see a teen standing there, cap on his head and clipboard in hand. "Hi, how are you today, ma'am?" begins his prattle. (Jeez, I hate it when they call me 'ma'am'.) As he asks me if I'd like to help abused children by giving generously to the National Something or Other Foundation, I notice the idling van just down the street. Sure enough, there is a crew at work here.

He shifts his feet uncomfortably when I ask if the group is a registered charity. "Oh, yeah," he assures me, but shakes his head when I ask if he has a copy of the licence. "Maybe I could get you one," he mumbles, looking over his shoulder.

Thanks, but no thanks, kid. He shrugs his shoulders and moves on.

The next day, it's a man at the door, asking my husband to send some deprived children to the circus on behalf of a retired police officers' association. He did. "How do you know it was for real?" I asked him.

There was a time — actually, not that long ago — when I, too, would simply reach for my wallet. Now, a decent human being can't make a sincere gesture at the doorstep without first ensuring he's not handing hard-earned dough over to the wrong cause, or a non-cause.

A case in point is the National Society for Abused Women and Children, which has been canvassing across York Region. The group, which is a registered charity, claims on its pamphlet it provides services, such as shelter and counselling, to abused women. Yet co-chairperson Heather Dobbs readily admits those services aren't provided. She insists any misinformation provided by canvassers was simply "human error."

The Rose of Sharon, an agency providing help to young mothers, called us weeks ago requesting we warn readers canvassers were claiming to be collecting on its behalf, despite never contacting the agency.

The Yellow Brick House, a shelter for abused women, also asserts it hasn't seen a penny from this group, according to spokesperson Suzy McGee.

Yet thousands of people have given under these conditions. Federal charities officials have received complaints about the group, but prefer to give it leeway during its start-up year.

Unfortunately, legitimate organizations lose out because people stop making donations for fear of the money going to the wrong people.

Ultimately, as stories like this come out, rather than be made a mockery of, kind people who instinctively, if not routinely, give to others will join me in second-guessing those instincts. And, obviously, given the governments' indifference, so they should.

My advice: Donate directly to the organizations you wish to help.



LETTERS

Smoke-free environments should be seen as good business

Re: *Business may blow smoke ban into court*, March 11.

It's sad to read The Markham Board of Trade, as represented by Ruth Burkholder, is so regressive it fails to recognize the business opportunity of providing a smoke-free environment to patrons in restaurants and bars.

Why do they want to cater to a shrinking number of smokers who insist on poisoning themselves and others, while the majority of their business opportunity stays home or coughs and gags in the smoky "non-smoking" area of the restaurant?

If Markham is to grow and prosper, I hope these same business people show more insight in the rest of their business decisions.

WAYNE ALEXANDER
MARKHAM

School turmoil predicted for fall unless parents speak out now

I was nearing the end of a serious newspaper article on educational issues when I burst into spontaneous laughter.

A local Conservative cabinet member said his government had no control over contracts between the school boards and their employees. This couldn't be further from the truth and massive amounts of money have been cut from education, often due to the sacrifices of the employees working in our schools.

The school-bashing season is upon us once again. The Ontario government seems to enjoy nothing more, whether in education or in health care, than to see local boards and employee groups play "let's you and him fight".

It is a horrible situation that destroys so much of the morale and working environment locally, and the government sits by and seems to benefit from such spectacles.

Local school boards have no meaningful flexibility and teachers haven't had a pay raise in about nine years. If we can't give raises when we are enjoying such good economic times, then what about when there's a downturn?

I'm concerned recent government announcements may poison local contract negotiations. Beating up on and smearing the good name of the teaching profession, as with

other professions, is totally unacceptable.

There is a fine veneer of normalcy in our schools and there's a lot of anxiety, exhaustion and stress.

My fear is there will be a lot of turmoil and pain by the fall, due to the actions of the Ontario government and its cash-strapped boards. My hope is that parents will find their voice and speak up for the issues that greatly affect our communities.

TONY CONTANT
YORK CATHOLIC TEACHER

Players, fans and helpers gave Spirit a successful year

On behalf of the Spirit of Stouffville hockey staff, I would like to express our appreciation to a number of people.

First, the players. This year, we had an exceptional group of young men from all over the province playing for this team. From as far away as Thunder Bay and Hearst and as near as Markham and Stouffville, this group of talented individuals played hard all year. The scoring was pretty even throughout the team, the goaltending and defence solid, and when the playoffs came around, this team showed more heart than many of the well-established teams within the league. Some of the players will return and some will go on to higher education and higher levels of the sport. I am proud to be associated with such a fine group of young people.

Next, the volunteers, sponsors and executive. Beyond the hockey staff, there are many people needed to make a team like this work

and every week there were people who made the time to help make things happen. From the people at the front entrance selling tickets to the arena staff, especially through the times when we were short staffed, every effort was appreciated.

Without them, we would not have the chance to make this year the success that it was. Our sponsors helped us financially and we hope that we have given them good value. We hope that everyone supports the sponsors as much as they helped us.

The executive team worked hard with us and gave us the go-ahead to build this team and we hope that it was as much fun for them as it was for us. All of the executive team should be proud of what they helped accomplish.

Last but not least, the fans. All year, this team provided a competitive spirit and played some pretty entertaining hockey. The support shown at community events and in the schools that the players visited helped draw this team together. In the playoffs, the crowds and enthusiastic cheering helped drive us and generate interest in the team throughout the community.

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for helping us make this a season to remember.

We are looking forward to next season, and with a few new faces and hopefully a few more volunteers, we hope it will be more successful than this year. Hockey season is only a few short months away. We look forward to seeing you then.

GARY TOBIN
STOUFFVILLE

LETTERS POLICY

Stouffville Tribune welcomes your letters. All submissions must be less than 400 words and must include a daytime telephone number, name and address. The newspaper reserves the right to publish or not publish and to edit for clarity and space.

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