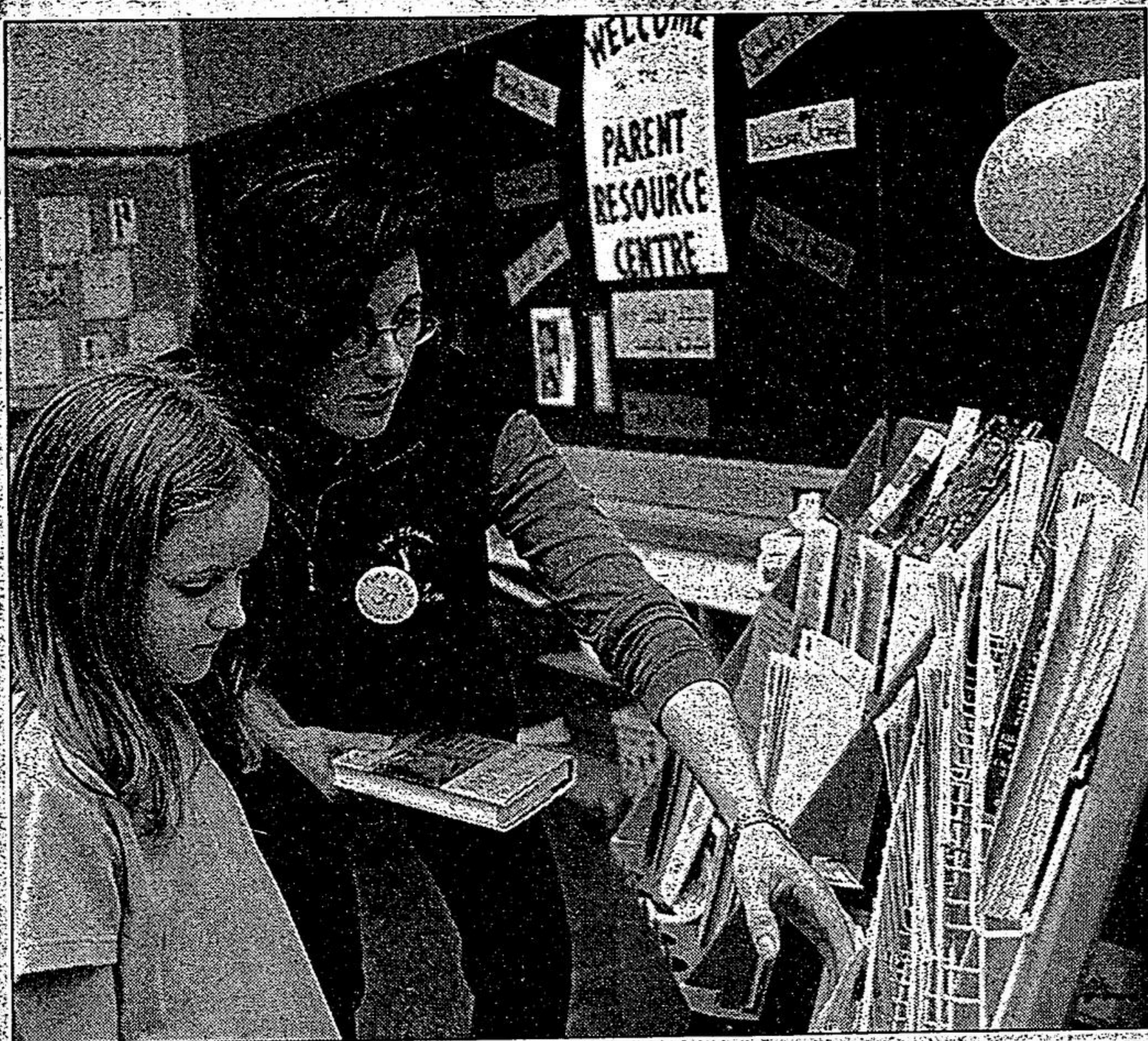


SUMMITVIEW PARENTS REACH OUT TO SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Parent volunteer Lauren Mangotich helps Summitview Public School Grade 2 student Sarah May, 7, find a book at the school's parent resource centre.

Resource centre a parents' oasis

BY BRUCE STAPLEY
Correspondent

Thanks to the initiative of five volunteers, a parent resource centre has been created at Summitview Public School to help parents stay connected with the school, the learning process and the community.

The centre, which had its grand opening Feb. 10, is intended to provide essential educational, community and parenting information to parents of Summitview students.

Resources on hand include a lending library and school council bulletin board listing upcoming school events and activities. There is also a list of web addresses directing parents to parenting magazines, Summitview and York Region Board of Education sites and sites relating to areas of concern such as street proofing and media awareness.

'The whole idea is to tie the school with the parents and the community.'

Open Tuesday mornings from 8:45 to 11:30 a.m. and Thursday afternoons from 12:45 to 3:30 p.m., the centre offers a drop-in environment for parents. Coffee is provided, and there is a small play area for pre-schoolers.

The focus of the centre will be on special monthly features such as learning styles, violence awareness and prevention, personal safety and summer activities. Qualified speakers will be brought in to address particular issues, with handouts available.

"We're looking to get people from the community in to talk about school issues and anything that pertains to children," said Laurianne Valteau, one of five parent volunteers responsible for opening the centre.

"The whole idea is to tie the school with the parents and the community," Valteau said.

Lori Harley, another founder, said the opening was well attended.

"The response from parents was all positive, and the teachers were impressed with what they

saw," she said.

Nine Stouffville area businesses showed their support by donating snacks and drinks for the opening.

The first topic was learning styles and learning differences. Speakers were Valteau and Pam May, who also helped create the centre.

The two shared their experiences in dealing with the variety of approaches needed to ensure the needs of all students are met in today's schools.

Valteau is a former pediatric nurse who is president of the Tourette's Syndrome Association of York Region. May has a background in adult education. Both have children attending Summitview.

It is hoped other York Region schools start up similar centres to create a communication hub between schools.

Summitview parents Jackie Vesh and Kelly Rae round out the founding five. The quintet has also offered to staff the centre.

"We came up with the idea, and we said we would do it all," May said.

Summitview is the second Stouffville area to open a resource centre. Whitchurch Highlands offers a similar facility. As well, there are more than 30 parent resource centres in the Toronto area.

It is hoped other York Region schools start up similar centres to create a communication hub between the schools.

Valteau, whose three children have Tourette's Syndrome, feels the Summitview centre offers a place for parents to go for information and support for children with a variety of learning disabilities.

"We want to be an advocate for parents with kids with special needs. Parents need to know what is available to them, what their rights are. I know because I've had to look into it."

The centre welcomes donations of parenting books and videos. Volunteers are also being sought to help run the centre.



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