

NOTABLE NEIGHBOURS

Meet the man behind the wheel

BY JANET RICHARDS
Correspondent

For nearly seven years, Wilf Morley has been helping Stouffville residents get where they're going. Morley, 67, is the president of the Whitchurch-Stouffville Mobility Transit, which started operating in February 1993.

His volunteer involvement with the mobility transit is a natural fit.

Years ago, he used the service provided by Home Support Services (now CHATS) to help his father get back and forth to medical appointments. He felt he would like to give something back.

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He also has a background in busing. After teaching for 13 years, Morley worked in administration for the York Region District School Board.

One of his responsibilities was the development of school buses for wheelchair and special needs students.

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Mobility Transit is an appointed body of the town that operates "at an arm's length".

There are now two wheelchair accessible vans operating and more than 800 riders.

About a third of the riders are in wheelchairs, but Morley points out the mobility transit is not just for wheelchair riders.

"It is open to any resident of Whitchurch-Stouffville who cannot climb stairs or get into a vehicle without assistance, or cannot walk 175 metres in seven minutes," Morley says.

This may include people with breathing difficulties or arthritis.

To be eligible for the service, residents must apply with a note from their doctor explaining pertinent medical information. Each case is reviewed by an eligibility committee consisting of therapists, residents and board members.

Once a resident is approved as eligible, he or she is issued a number. When they need to use the mobility transit they call, giving as much notice as possible, using their number to identify themselves.

Residents can also apply through the same process for short term use if they have an injury that prevents them from getting around.

The cost for users is \$3 one way anywhere in town and \$4 for medical appointments anywhere in the region.

Riders aren't limited to using the service for medical appointments; any outings are allowed, be it social, shopping or to church.

The mobility transit is an \$80,000 operation this year. It is funded through a subsidy from the town, fundraising and private donations.

The annual fundraising golf tournament takes place June 13 at The Maples of Ballantrae. The other fundraising effort is through the selling of Go train tickets at the local station on weekday mornings. The transit receives a percentage of the daily sales.

The mobility transit operates under taxi licences, which are given out by the town. This year, the town increased the number of licences so there would be a third one available to the mobility transit.

Initially, the transit used taxis for its service. The two modified vans the service now uses cost about \$55,000 each. If the transit expands to use the third licence, Morley says a regular van could be used to accommodate users who are not in wheelchairs.

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"Just seeing the smiles on their faces is my reward," Morley says.

"You don't need money when you've got a situation like that."

He adds that if he is ever in a similar position to the Parkview residents, he hopes someone would do the same for him.

One place that Morley drives the Parkview bus is to take residents to the dress rehearsal of Music Mania each year. Like many Stouffville residents, Morley who has lived in town since 1956, is a former Music Mania member himself and he is involved in this year's reunion show.

Morley has also been involved in minor hockey and softball in the past and has campaigned for the Heart and Stroke Foundation.

He and his wife Nelda have lived in their North Street home since 1960.



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Lesley O'Connor and Josie Robinson display a Block Parents sign in the front window to make a safer community for children such as Jake, 8, Emily, 9, and Michael, 6.

Volunteers commit to make Stouffville safer

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upon to offer their homes as a place of safety when a child is in a dangerous or frightening situation, they're critical to the well being of a community, MacBride pointed out.

A Block Parent home can become a shelter when children are bullied, lost, hurt or ill, caught in severe weather or frightened by a stranger.

Today there are several Block Parent homes on every block in every community in Canada. Thanks to community response, Stouffville is no exception.

Started in 1963, today there are 500,000 police-screened community members.

"The Block Parent program is the largest, volunteer-operated, child safety crime prevention program in Canada," MacBride said.

People who work during the day can still be a Block Parent, O'Connor pointed out.

"Displaying the sign for only a few hours a week is still a help," she said.

The Block Parent window sign is shown only when someone over the age of 18 is available to answer the door.

"Your Block Parent sign is only displayed in your window when you are available to help. You are free to take a bath, nap, or vacuum without concern as long as you remove the sign. If the sign is not displayed, this does not mean that no one is home. It just means the Block Parent is not available to offer help," said O'Connor.

A Block Parent offers his or her home as refuge in an emergency, stressed O'Connor.

"It's not a restroom or snack bar. You are not required to admit anyone into your home, although you may do so."

Anyone interested in becoming a Block Parent can call local association president Barb Rogina at 640-4403.

Lack of landscaping at industrial site angers neighbours

BY JOAN RANSBERRY
Staff Writer

Seven Whitchurch-Stouffville homeowners are reaching deep into their pockets in a quest to make a proposed metal fabrication factory easier to live with.

Worried the 90-employee plant, designed for the manufacturing of large steel drums, will have a negative impact on their lives, the residents are prepared to spend about \$15,000 on lawyer's fees.

Some legal costs are linked to a two-day Ontario Municipal Board hearing, slated for

early May.

The proposed 76-square-foot plant is part of an industrial park located on the northeast corner of Regional Road 30 and Hwy. 47 in the Town of Uxbridge, across the road from the Stouffville residential properties.

The Stouffville residents aren't getting much sympathy from Uxbridge councillor Bev Northeast.

"The residents knew this was coming. It was established a number of years ago," Northeast said.

"I've supported it. Industry is the back-

bone of every community."

But homeowner Colleen Dalgleish said residents have lived in their homes for 12 to 20 years.

The residents now have a new-found ally in Whitchurch-Stouffville council, which has agreed to join their fight.

A meeting between industrial park property owner, the Town of Uxbridge, and the Stouffville residents has been set for May 2, just two days before the OMB hearing is to be held at the Uxbridge municipal building.

Meanwhile, Mayor Wayne Emmerson has

been negotiating with the mayor of Uxbridge.

One of Dalgleish's major concerns — an outdoor storage area — has already been addressed.

Outside storage won't be allowed under an agreement just reached between the industrial park owner and the Town of Uxbridge.

However, Uxbridge did agree to reduce an existing 50-per-cent landscaping demand to 15 per cent, and this proposed change has angered area neighbours.

"We don't want to see the landscape ruling relaxed," said Dalgleish.