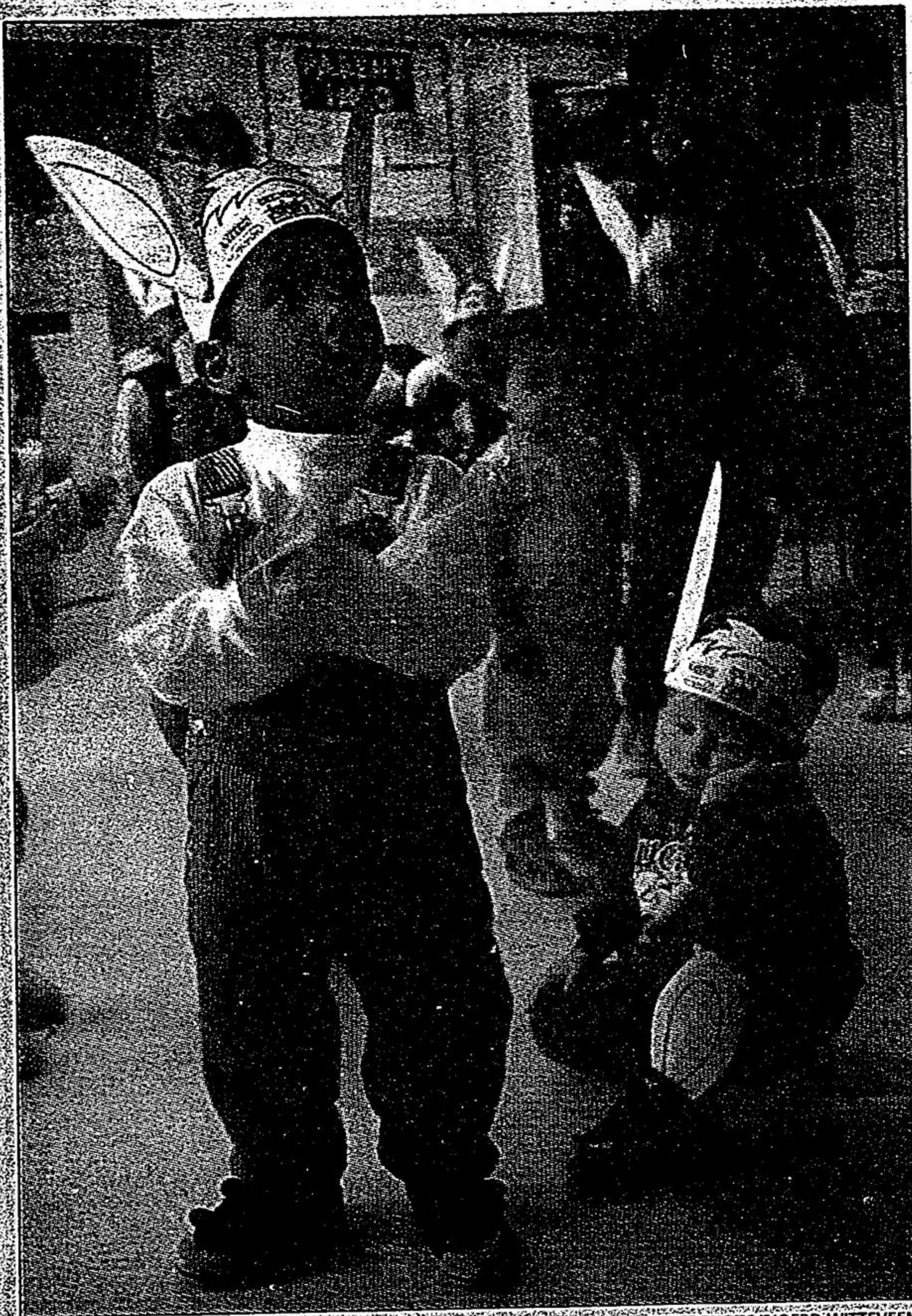


HOPPING UP AND DOWN



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEN

Benjamin Didone, 2, participated in a bunny hop dance, although Mitchell Pearce, 3, is less inclined to join in. The class at My First School Daycare Centre in Stouffville was raising funds for the Muscular Dystrophy Association of Canada last week.

Man reports swarming in Memorial Park

Police are searching for three male suspects after a 38-year-old man was beaten in Stouffville's Memorial Park.

Witnesses found the man bleeding at Main and Market streets about 2:30 a.m. Sunday after he dragged himself out of the park.

He was cut above his left eye, lost one tooth and chipped another and suffered a possible broken nose.

He told police three young men beat him up and took his pager and identification, most of which was found later scattered around the grandstand.

The suspects are white males between 20 and 23 years old. Anyone with information can call 881-1221, ext. 7500 or Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS.

— Kathleen Griffin

Compromise plan reached

From page 1.

objections.

Markham's alliance representative Randy Barber said the wording of the resolutions changed considerably.

But Save The Rouge Valley System president Glenn De Baeremaeker argued Markham officials simply accepted the plan as a compromise.

De Baeremaeker said his group, also an alliance partner, didn't get the minimum 30-metre buffers it sought against development. Instead, park boundaries will be determined at various points along the river by ecological criteria that could leave it with only the standard 10-metre setback or give it much more.

Even though the park plan will have no legal force, De Baeremaeker said its adoption is an important step for the river. "It's not a legal requirement (to protect the Rouge) but it is a moral requirement," he said.

"For the first time ever, the Town of Markham has promised to protect more of the environment than the old standard."

Rouge Park general manager Gord Weedon said alliance members agreed to return the plan with approvals before their summer breaks begin. The alliance could then give it final approval on Sept. 8, possibly sending it to provincial cabinet, he said.

"This is a major step to get it out here," said Frank Scarpitti, the alliance's York Region representative, adding he believes the October resolutions were only slightly modified. "I think they are a big win for anybody who cares about the environment."

Cousens predicted developers will seek to challenge the plan at the Ontario Municipal Board, but said he was looking forward to such a battle. "because I think I can win it."

The Urban Development Institute and its members believe the real intent of the October resolutions are excessive, unreasonable and, in fact, unenforceable, but its reaction may depend on how the plan is locally enforced, said Neil Rodgers, the UDI's policy director.

He added the industry has some problems with the ecological criteria. "We think they're a bit wishy-washy, they're not closely defined."

Regional Councillor Dave Barrow, who represents Richmond Hill on the alliance, said the plan is urgently needed. If an OMB decision stops development of the town's moraine lands, pressure will then be on lands in the Leslie North area (which includes headwaters of the river) to develop.



PHOTO/ROUGE PARK

An aerial view of the Rouge Park shows the route of the Little Rouge River.

REGIONAL News Digest



WHAT'S HAPPENING

Studio tour and sale
May 12 and 13 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Call 889-1165 for information

Thornhill Visual Artists hosts its fourth annual studio tour and sale, allowing the public to join 13 professional award-winning artists in their homes. A portion of the proceeds will go to York Central Hospital.

Murder hearing begins

A preliminary hearing began yesterday for four men charged with stabbing Markham's Maria Wong to death in her Raymerville Drive garage.

A preliminary hearing determines if there is enough evidence to send the case to trial.

James Pierce, 26, Andre Jones, 29, Christian Ortiz, 20, and Norman Figueroa, 19, are each charged with first degree murder and conspiracy to commit murder in the slaying.

Her husband, Shu Kwan "Johnny" Wong, who is accused of master-minding the plan, remains in Hong Kong.

He's appealing a court decision that he be extradited to stand trial on the murder charges, said lead investigator Det. Les Young. Whether the Hong Kong court will hear an appeal is still being decided.

Police allege Wong hired the four men to kill his wife and make it look like a robbery.

Young said the preliminary hearing will likely take up to 10 weeks since there are four accused, who each have two lawyers.

Wong, 44, was a well-known restaurateur in the Chinese community. Her blood-soaked body was discovered by a passer-by walking his dog Feb. 11, 1999.

The hearing will continue through the end of June and resume again for two weeks in July.



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