

# Stouffville set for weekend of fun

*Inline skate competition, Strawberry Garden and more merchandise are new for 2000*

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The 16th annual Strawberry Festival promises to be a family affair as upwards of 25,000 people come out to play in the park and stroll along Stouffville's Main Street this Canada Day weekend.

The four-day celebration gets underway Thursday afternoon with the Stouffville Lions beef barbecue, opening ceremonies and awards ceremony highlighting the list of events.

Things build to a crescendo Saturday for Canada Day as Main Street is closed to traffic to allow for a lineup of activities, including the Strawberry Festival Parade, a huge craft and collectibles sale and an assortment of entertainers, wandering minstrels and clowns.

Memorial Park is the site of an endless variety of events the same day. The Ballantrae Lions pancake breakfast, the continuation of the Buttermakers Ball Tournament, the Shoppers Drug Mart Kids Zone, carnival rides, a baby contest and Art in the Park at Latcham Hall are just a sampling of the activities planned.

The day ends with a dazzling Canada Day fireworks display at Memorial Park.

For the second year in a row, the fireworks are being put on by Concept Fiatlux, which is involved with Toronto's Benson and Hedges Symphony of Fire fireworks program.

The party winds down Sunday with events including a fun run at the Connell-Franklin Track, the outdoor ecumenical church service at the park and the Novopharm strawberry social.

According to Strawberry Festival committee chairperson Dolores Kroupis, the emphasis is on family fun.

"We're gearing things to children and family entertainment," said Kroupis, who served as festival co-chairperson along with Peter Arnott the past two years. "There are adult areas, but it's definitely family oriented."

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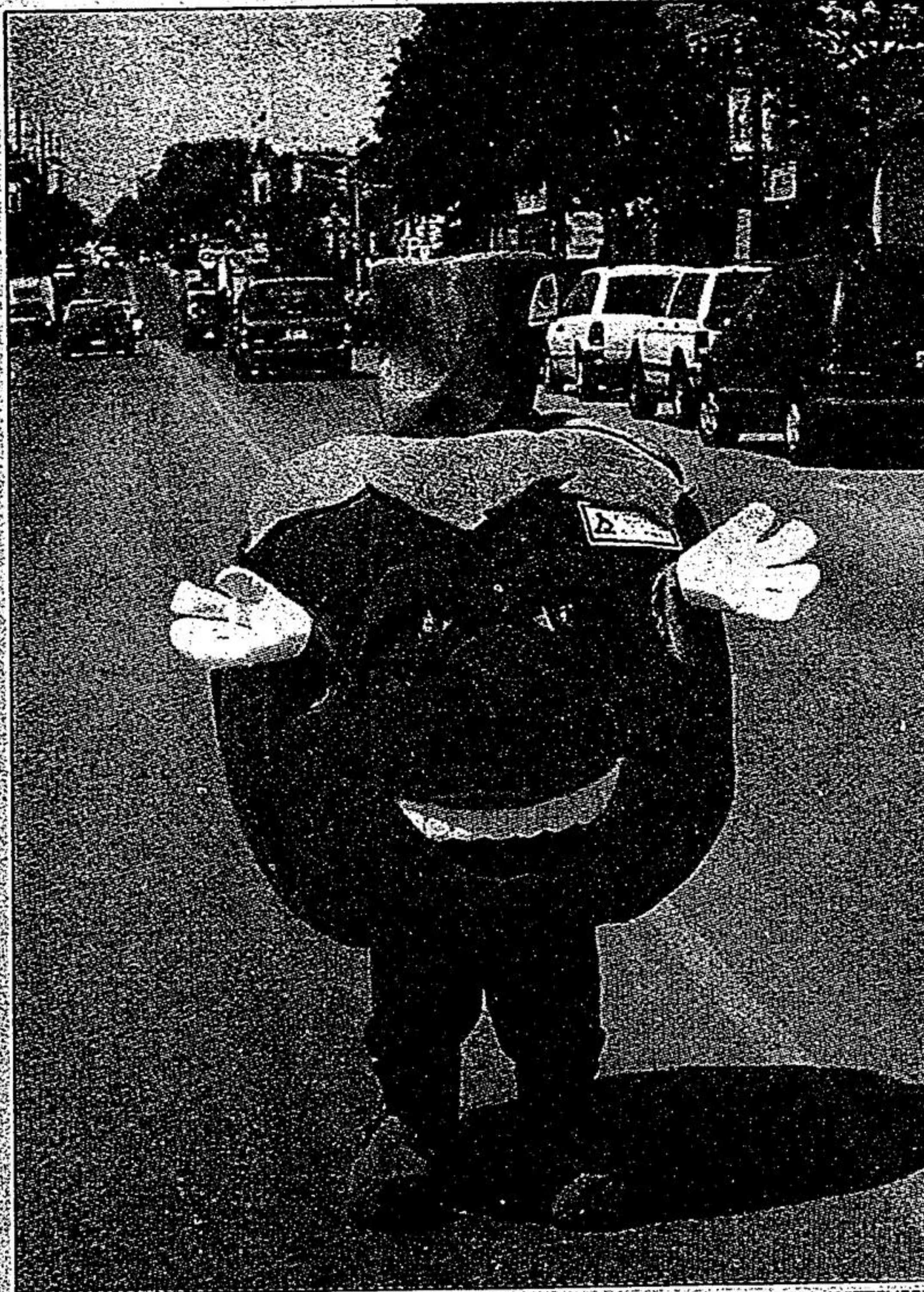
*'It will give people a chance sit down, have a break and enjoy wine and entertainment.'*

Kroupis points to the return of the highly popular Shoppers Drug Mart family variety shows, with the kids extravaganza scheduled for Friday afternoon and Friday evening at the park.

The OPP Bearhug Band and Doo Doo the Clown for Life were great last year. The kids loved them.

Parents with babies and infants will find a baby changing and nursing station a welcome temporary refuge from the hustle and bustle in the park.

But while the little ones are having their fun, adults will find the festival to their liking, as well.



Meet mascot Chuckle Berry at this year's Strawberry Festival.

New for 2000 is the Strawberry Garden Saturday at Civic Square by the Clock Tower, with beer and fruit wine available for those wanting to sit back and enjoy the entertainment provided courtesy of the

Stouffville B.I.A. merchants.

"We approached the wineries to see if they had a strawberry wine and we finally found one," said Kroupis.

"It will give people a chance sit down, have a break and enjoy wine and entertainment."

This year's festival will also mark the debut of new mascot Chuckle Berry.

The Over The Edge Skate Park is the site of the Berry Bash 2000, an inline and BMX freestyle competition making its debut this year.

The lineup of Strawberry Festival merchandise has been expanded to include Stouffville postcards, T-shirts, ball caps, travelling coffee mugs and a light-weight canvas bag.

With parking expected to be at a premium in the area of Memorial Park Saturday, an English Piccadilly bus will be available to shuttle people from the Recreation Complex to the park between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m.

Kroupis suggests the festival has grown to the point that it is now being marketed to people all across

the Greater Toronto Area.

"We're trying to compete with events like the Unionville Festival."

She said her committee has been promoting the festival via Toronto radio stations, the York Region Tourism Board and the Internet.

*'We're trying to reach out to everyone to show what a great town we have.'*

*'We've got everything here.'*

"We're trying to reach out to everyone to show what a great town we have. We've got everything here."

While out-of-towners are being courted, Whitchurch-Stouffville residents are the target of the committee's promotional campaign.

"With more attractions, variety and entertainment, families will want to stay in town," said Kroupis, a 15-year Stouffville resident.

"There's just so much for the kids. We're trying to get people to stay home for the long weekend, or at least for part of it."

Kroupis praises the sponsors of the festival for enabling the event to grow to its present size. With the committee responsible for raising more than half the money needed to fund the festival, she said it is essential to tap the local business community that is constantly being canvassed for handouts.

She also credits her 10 fellow committee members with making the festival a success.

"It's a hard-working committee. We started planning the festival last September."

She pointed to longtime committee members Gladys Clarkson, Sandy Stronach, Barb St. John, Harry Bowes and Carol Guinane for their many years of service, while commending more recent additions Francis Shepherd, Ann Pride, Liz Fraser, Sheila McLeod and Councillor Sue Sherban.

With everything in place as this year's festival gets under way, Kroupis is hoping the weather forecaster calls a halt to the rain that has marked this spring and summer so far.

"We don't really have a contingency plan for weather. Hopefully, it will be like in past years where we sometimes have rain that comes and goes."

## SLICE OF SUMMER



Amy Howitt and Brandi Hall celebrate the end of school with a pizza lunch as classes at Stouffville District Secondary School ended this week. The Grade 9 students plan to spend summer taking it easy until school resumes in September.

## Family escapes burning house

Faulty electrical wiring is suspected as the cause of a \$500,000 house fire in Gormley early Tuesday evening.

While the fire at the monster home took a heavy financial toll, no injuries were reported.

The family, including a dog,

managed to get out of the burning home without getting hurt, reported Whitchurch-Stouffville Fire Chief Bill Brown.

Firefighters from both Whitchurch-Stouffville and Aurora responded to the blaze, just north of Bethesda Road.