

Fire, police departments probing blaze

Abandoned house set on fire

Police are looking for suspects after an abandoned house was set afire, causing \$20,000 damage in Vaughan Thursday. Firefighters extinguished the

9 a.m. blaze, which burnt the Dufferin Street house to the ground. The structure sat on a 90-acre parcel of land, police said.

Both fire and police investigators are probing the incident. Anyone with information is asked to call 881-1221, ext. 7400 or Crime Stoppers at 222-TIPS.

Harvest helps feed the hungry around world

BY JOAN RANSBERRY
Staff Writer

The war against world hunger is being fought in the farm fields of York Region.

A combine rolled onto the first of the special planting fields in north Pickering on Thursday. Operated by Markham farmer Howard Burkholder, the combine is part of the mission to ease world hunger. The grain taken off Burkholder's eight acres will feed hundreds of people.

In York Region, a total of four planting fields were designated as part of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

It was touch and go all summer. Burkholder, Lawrence Smith of Sharon, the Mitchell Brothers Farm in Oak Ridges and project coordinator Dr. Terry O'Connor kept their fingers crossed hoping the humanitarian project would not be washed away by heavy rains.

Despite the wet weather and a difficult economy, Canadian Foodgrains Bank supporters donated 17 per cent more grain this year than in 1999.

Canada-wide, 20,322 tonnes of grains (valued at \$2.8 million) and about \$3 million in cash is being donated to the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. This year's giving marks the second highest level of grain donations in tonnage since the bank opened in 1983.

Despite some rain-saturated land, Burkholder remained optimistic that he'd be able to share his harvest with such famine-struck countries as Ethiopia.

Burkholder's optimism paid off. His plot in north Pickering has produced a sound crop.

More than seven million people die of starvation every year. About 33,000 children perish every day from hunger and preventable diseases, while famine claims 150,000 to 200,000 lives a year.

Malnutrition accounts for more deaths than any infectious diseases, war or natural disaster.

Besides Ethiopia, Canadian-grown crops go to 24 countries, including Bangladesh, Kenya, Niger, Rwanda, Guinea, Bulgaria, Uganda, Zambia and Madagascar.

In Ontario, more than 110 growing projects are under way.

On a national scale, the project involves growing wheat, beans, corn, barley, oats, soybeans, sunflowers and sweet corn.

The local Canadian National Grain drive is also accepting donations of money, time and labour as well as fertilizer, chemical spray and short-run trucking.

"We're getting some donations, but we need more"

- John Doner

John Doner of Stouffville planted eight acres of soybeans for the grain bank. As well, the Doner Farm is the collection depot. "Farmers can call here. We'll welcome them," said Doner. O'Connor mailed financial appeals to all York farmers. "We're getting some donations, but we need more," he said.

Last year York farmers collectively donated \$20,000 worth of grain. One tonne feeds 2,500 for a day. Food purchased by a \$100-donation feeds a family of five for three months, O'Connor stressed.

For more information on the local Canadian Foodgrains Bank, call 905-887-5027 or 640-1171.

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