

Stouffville Tribune

A Metroland community newspaper
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LETTERS

Community has been a big help in Franey family's medical crisis

On the 24th of November the Markham Junior A Waxers held a fundraiser for my son Joshua Franey.

Joshua is an energetic and lively young man who is an adept and enthusiastic sportsman. On July 29 he came into our bedroom at 7:45 a.m. and announced he had a headache and collapsed beside our bed. An ambulance took him to the local hospital where in the afternoon they discovered a brain bleed.

While being transferred to Sick Kids Hospital, Joshua, "fell off a cliff" as the neurosurgeon later described it. The ambulance crew maintained his vital signs until the emergency staff at Sick Kids was able to stabilize him.

Then he was moved to the operating room where he crashed again. Unable to stabilize him, the neurosurgeon went ahead with the procedure to remove a blood clot from Joshua's brain.

The surgeon spoke to us after the operation and told us Joshua would most likely not last the night.

Well, he spent two and a half weeks in a coma before starting out on the road to recovery.

The prognosis for his future at that time was, no one knows. We would have to wait and see.

Ultimately his own determination and willingness to work at it would govern his level of recovery.

He spent eight weeks in the Hospital for Sick Children and is now at Bloorview MacMillan rehab centre actively working at returning to a normal life.

On Oct. 26 my wife went into Markham Stouffville Hospital for surgery on a herniated disc. Her recovery is also slow but sure.

A short while ago someone said to me, "It has been a really bad year for you, I bet you will be glad when it's over." I thought about it in the evening and disagreed. The following day I told my friend he was wrong. It has been a very hard year to be sure but also a very good year.

Because of my son's event we have all, in my family, realized the importance of love. Its power too.

Obviously, my wife and I spent the first three weeks living at the hospital spending lots

OPINION



of time talking to Joshua, holding his hand and encouraging him as often as we could.

We found even when we crept into his room late at night trying not to disturb him, his blood pressure would jump 10 points. We believe that one reason he is alive today is because of the power of love and prayer.

We would likely never have learned this lesson if Joshua had not worried us so. I believe we are a stronger family today because of this experience.

As a family, we have been overwhelmed by the support that he, and we, have received from the community. I won't bore you with any stories but they are many, varied, and still continuing.

At the Waxers' fundraiser, Steve Thomas of the Maple Leafs was in attendance along with Jim Cooper of the Argonauts and Olympians Matt Turgeon, Karen Cockburn and their coach Dave Ross. Fellow Olympian Ken Pereira was also in attendance. As well, a host of local community leaders were there, not to mention various TV stations.

Joshua enjoyed the evening tremendously — meeting the stars, having the chance to hang out with some of his many friends who have encouraged him these past four months, and of course being on the ice at the same time as his hero Steve Thomas.

The rest of my family came away with their own 'special moment' story as well.

Towards the end of the evening I asked myself how I could possibly thank all the people in attendance for making it so memorable for my son (and us). After all, the people of this fine town have earned the right to consider themselves stakeholders in Joshua's road of

recovery.

Much later that night I figured it out. The evening of the 24th wasn't a fundraising event, but a celebration. And all our friends and all the people who had been so kind to us could come and see how well he was doing in his recovery.

And the star athletes were our way of saying thank you to the good people of Markham.

Of course, my family had absolutely nothing to do with organizing this celebration. That was done entirely by the Waxers Organization. But at least I figured it out! And that's something. Isn't it?

It would be easy to dwell on the things that might have been and say this was a bad year. However we choose to focus on the positives and say that it has been a hard year, but still good.

All I can see is the goodness and the community spirit in the heart of the people of Markham.

A strong community spirit where we live is all we could hope for. I am very pleased to announce to the people of Markham that it's here and alive and well.

Thank you Markham and thanks to the Waxers organization for making this celebration of community spirit possible. And what great timing, right at the start of the Christmas season.

The best of Christmas to all of you from all of us. From a proud family in the Markham community.

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Rick Vanderlinde

Could Sausage Fingers survive in today's world?

We called him Sausage Fingers. And for a Grade 8 kid, our school principal was an imposing figure. He must have weighed at least 350 pounds girth he didn't mind throwing around.

The year was 1972, and corporal punishment was still permitted by the Simcoe County Board of Education.

Being a bit of a brat in those days, I had my run ins with old Sausage Fingers, landing on the business end of the strap on one occasion.

My crime? Some buddies and I were caught jumping out of the window of school portable after sneaking in during lunch hour to visit some girlfriends who volunteered to clean blackboards.

The strap was a pinkish, leathery thing about one-inch thick. To this day, I swear sausage fingers left his feet as he brought it down on my hand. No doubt, it left an impression. But I'm not sure it altered my trouble-making ways.

Principals and teachers are caught in a politically correct world — the discipline they hand out is watched carefully.

Minutes after Sausage Fingers had meted out his punishment, my buddies and I were laughing uncontrollably, nervous giggles mixing with tears of pain.

Sausage Fingers walked in on us and boiled over. His bloated face burst into a red rage as he picked up a school desk with one hand and tossed it. We shut up instantly, our chuckles snuffed out by sheer shock.

Now, I wonder if Sausage Fingers ever reflected on his over-the-top treatment of three mischievous 12-year-olds.

One thing for certain, he didn't have to worry about the wrath of our parents, let alone a parent council. These days things are different. Principals and teachers are caught in a 'politically correct' world — the discipline they hand out is watched carefully. That may be positive, to a point. But sometimes this parental interference goes too far.

That was the case this week when a parent called to say she was outraged at a principal who made a child stand-up for 20 minutes to complete is overdue homework. Apparently, the principal also wagged his finger in the face of students as he scolded them.

Needless to say, we didn't stop the presses. I'm a little tainted after my experience with old Sausage Fingers, and numerous other physical disciplines.

The debate, of course, is whether this principal went too far. Or, are some parents just a wee-bit overzealous?

LETTERS POLICY

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