



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEN

John Benyik's fundraising work earned him the York Region paramedic of the year.

Paramedic with a soft spot for kids earns top honour in York Region

BY KATHLEEN GRIFFIN
Staff Writer

Admitting he has a soft spot for children, Sutton paramedic John Benyik helped raise more than \$10,000 to fund a camp for kids with cancer.

That's one reason Benyik was chosen as the 2000 York Region Paramedic of the Year, and he was honoured at a special ceremony at Markham Stouffville Hospital Friday.

"I was shocked, humbled, proud and embarrassed," said the 32-year-old, who works out of York's northern ambulance station.

It's the second year the award has been presented to a York Region paramedic who shows outstanding commitment to excellence in all aspects of the profession, said Jim Harris, manager of the York Region Base Hospital Program.

"John does many things that aren't rare exactly, but far above and beyond his normal duties as a paramedic,"

Harris said.

"He places a lot of importance on raising awareness of the profession through those initiatives and he spends a lot of his own time working for children's charities."

Besides helping raise thousands of dollars for Camp Trillium, Benyik has also organized the collection and distribution of toys and food for needy families at Christmas and is the president of the newly-formed York Region Paramedic Association.

"I do as much as time allows, mainly for children's charities because personally I have a soft spot for that," said Benyik, whose two daughters, 5 and 2, were on hand to see their dad accept the award.

"Children and their families go through a lot when there's an illness," he said.

"Camp Trillium is a wonderful charity and if I can use my profession and the people and resources to raise money

and awareness — and it's not hard finding people to help — it makes a difference."

He said he never expected to receive such an award and now he'll work even harder to promote the good work paramedics do on a day-to-day basis.

Nominations for the award came from the paramedics themselves, Harris explained.

The selection committee used four-page nomination forms to pick this year's winner, based on detailed criteria in all aspects of job performance.

Catholic board begins term strife-free

BY GIANNI COLAVECCHIA
Staff Writer

Like students at the start of the year, trustees with the York Region Catholic school board have kicked off another term with renewed optimism.

The inaugural meeting of the board was held at its Aurora headquarters this week and by all accounts it was a festive one, with trustees singing hymns during a mass and listening to the sweet sounds of an award-winning girls' choir.

Trustees elected Markham representative Carol Cotton, who served on the board from 1994 to 1997, as vice-chairperson. She beat out the previous vice-chairperson, Richmond Hill trustee Ann Stong.

Chairperson Elizabeth Crowe knows the road ahead will be tougher for many in the school's system, including special education students.

Funds for a growing number of special needs students have increased little in the past three years, Crowe said.

As a result, officials have cut the number of hours those students receive support. Students who once received up to 30 hours a week have been cut back to about 20 and other students have been cut off from help entirely. "That's been a hard hit area," Crowe said after the meeting. "If there is no more money, we are going to have to cut more hours to individual students."

In a tone that matched the mood of the night, director of education Susan LaRosa noted her board is free from the job action plaguing the region's public board and other boards in Ontario.

Earlier this year, teachers approved a collective agreement that gave many of them cash payments amounting to 2 per cent of their salaries. The board's 2,400 instructors make from \$28,000 to more than \$66,000 a year.

The thorny issue of teacher salaries crops up again next spring, when negotiators must reach a new collective agreement.

Crowe, who believes instructors will likely want more money, said board officials are already "starting to feel significant pressure" with their 2001-2002 budget.

Officials are feeling financial pressures in transportation. Soaring gas prices have severely whittled down the board's transportation budget, Crowe said.

Officials have long maintained the province hasn't given them incentives to find transportation savings or a funding increase to make up for rising fuel costs.

Finding your next vehicle just got...

- easier
- faster
- cheaper
- better
- all of the above



Introducing
www.yorkregionwheels.com
a completely new way to shop for used cars and trucks
in York Region...

easier... Search the inventory of more than 20 regional dealers from the comfort of your home.

faster... Narrow your search in minutes to the cars that best meet your criteria.

cheaper... No driving from lot to lot, no long distance calls and price comparisons are easy with more than 500 vehicles to choose from.

better... Shop 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

- 500 Used Cars
- Searchable
- Full Colour Photos
- Easy to Use
- All Makes
- All Models
- All Years
- All Price Ranges
- All Local
- More than 20 Dealers
- FREE TO BROWSE!



294-2200

www.yorkregionwheels.com

presented by
ECONOMIST & SUN Stouffville Tribune
Check us out today at www.yorkregionwheels.com