

Crossing guard watches the kids — and the traffic



Janet Richards

If you've ever driven near a school between 8 and 9 a.m., at lunch time or between three and four p.m. chances are you've seen a person in an orange vest with a stop sign ushering the students across the street.

Most people have probably never stopped to consider the crossing guard's role.

Sharon Norton has been at her job for 12 years. She works about 25 hours in two weeks as a crossing guard at Summitview Public School.

Norton is employed by the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville to get the students safely across the intersection of Main Street and Stouffer Street in Stouffville.

While the job may seem simple enough, it carries tremendous responsibility.

Norton says the traffic at the intersection has increased considerably in her years on the job. When she first started there was no traffic light and the children crossed Main Street just west of where the light is now.

"You have to be more cautious than you used to," she says. "People are in a big hurry to get where they're going these days."

Norton and her husband Larry have lived in Stouffville for 30 years. Larry has a plumbing business that he runs out of their Main Street home, which Sharon can see from her crossing guard post.

A former nursing assistant, Norton did day care in her home when her two children were younger. When the crossing guard position came up, she saw it as a great oppor-



STAFF FILE PHOTO/JIM MASON

Sharon Norton leads children and parents across Main Street in Stouffville earlier this year. "There's something different every day," the crossing guard says.

tunity to work part time, close to home. She still helps with the plumbing business also, mostly answering phone calls.

While she says she is used to the responsibility of her job, it does still have its challenges.

Even with the light, you still have to really watch the traffic, especially some of the big trucks that travel Main Street and people talking on cell phones, Norton says. "You can tell when someone is going to come through the light."

Norton also has to watch for volunteer firefighters heading to the station, an even more difficult task since the siren in the clock tower doesn't ring out a warning anymore.

Aside from the traffic, there is also

the challenge presented by the children themselves. Norton has to ask students to get off bikes and scooters before crossing the road and she adds that they have no fear. Other students try to cross the road while playing Game Boy or reading books.

The students do make Norton's job rewarding though.

"You have mornings when you don't want to go out there, says Norton, but then you get out and some of them are so cute. It perks you up."

"There's something different every day," she says.

Many of the children tell Norton about things they did in school or about their home life.

"Some of them just stand there and talk to me," Norton says.

Norton also gets to meet some of the parents. More kids are driven to the corner or walked to school now, than in the past.

People drive their kids for different reasons, according to Norton. More people work from home, many drive out of habit, some out of fear for safety and some because of their children being involved in different activities outside of school.

Although she says it sometimes makes her feel her age, Norton enjoys the relationship she has with the students at Summitview.

"There are a lot of kids I've taken right through."

Norton even hands out candy canes to the children at Christmas.

The relationship works both ways. Norton receives calls from people who know her if she misses a day of work. She believes that people, and especially the children, appreciate the consistency of having her there at the crosswalk every day.

"Kids don't like change," she says.

This type of concern is one of the things Norton enjoys about living in Stouffville.

"I love Stouffville," she says, "the people and the quaintness." Norton adds that through the plumbing business she and Larry got to know just about everybody in town.

The only drawback Norton sees about her job is the way her day is broken up having to go out four times a day. You have to be very organized if you have things to do during the day, she says. The rewards of the job obviously far exceed the downside for Norton.

Notable Neighbours is a column in the Tribune profiling interesting residents of Whitchurch-Stouffville. If you know of someone whose story would be of interest, please call Janet Richards at 642-3482.

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Contest Deadline December 18

Contest will be judged December 19th. Contest to encompass homes in old Stouffville: East of Hwy 48, South of Bloomington Sdr., West of the Uxbridge Line, and North of 19th Avenue.

Nominations by individual, friend, etc. may be made by phoning the Stouffville Sun at 640-2612, faxing your entries 24 hours a day to 640-8778 or dropping by our office at 34 Civic Avenue (third floor).

Good Luck to all of you from all of us!

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