

Stouffville Tribune

A Metroland community newspaper
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Tracy Kibble

Speech competitions a good way to learn about our world

It's amazing what you can learn in just one morning at a public school. For instance, as one of three junior speech judges Thursday at Armitage Public School in Newmarket, I learned there are a lot of traits I would like to adopt from animals.

Did you know a wolf cub can smell a porcupine eating grass a mile away? Boy, that would come in handy in case of a surprise visit by the in-laws or your geeky neighbour.

And apparently a monarch butterfly can eat its own body weight and has 12 eyes. Just point me in the direction of the nearest buffet table. These butterflies have the best of both worlds. They eat like pigs all day long and still look beautiful, graceful and colour-savvy in direct sunlight.

Most women I know have to sweat it out regularly at the gym, eat like a bird on a daily basis and prefer low light and lots of makeup to look their best. On the bright side, however, at least when I do get all dolled up, some four-year-old isn't running after me with a butterfly net. (Not yet, anyway.)

Furry, adorable koala bears have several enviable traits of their own. These crazy little marsupials sleep 18 to 20 hours a day and when the lazy beggars finally wake up, they spend the remaining four to six hours eating and socializing. Sounds a lot like my early 20s.

But seriously, that's a lifestyle to which I could certainly become accustomed.

And to make a koala bear's life seem even more tempting, the females give birth after only 35 days. Did you hear that women? Thirty-five days.

So, their offspring come out looking like pink jellybeans — it's only 35 days. I've had headaches longer than that.

The infamous Big Ben had quite the life. This \$1.5-million horse survived surgery and a car crash and is only one of two non-humans to be awarded the Order of Canada. Now that's a career.

I also learned people in the icy town of Inuvik actually drive on the Beaufort Sea, enjoy a spectacular view of the northern lights and pay \$6 for one egg.

Other interesting facts: most young people think of dads as "big kids" and agree homework ruins an otherwise great weekend.

Teachers would be horrified to learn their students, apparently, catch them "with their pinkie up their nose" and performing other bad habits.

Judging speeches of these talented grade 4, 5 and 6 students was a lot of fun and, yes, rather informative.

All the speeches were well researched and well delivered. It takes a lot of courage and nerve to get up in front of your peers and talk for three to five minutes and it was a difficult task to choose just three winners.



LETTERS

Appalling to read a column with so many generalizations about teens

Re: *What's going on in the mind of a vandal?*
A column by Joan Ransberry, April 5.

It appalls me to read such an article with so many generalizations about teenagers. It is people like Joan Ransberry who give the "good" teens a bad name.

Where does someone get off ranting and raving about how she cannot deal with teenagers and their misbehaviour?

Correct me if I am wrong, but Joan was once a teenager too. Whether she was an exemplary student or a "slob," she must know there are good teens as well as bad.

It puzzles me to no end that she has witnessed teenagers "who own the sidewalks," because I have never seen such behaviour.

If Joan has a realistic solution to her perception of rebellious teenagers, "borrowing a bulletproof vest, and carrying a bat," is certainly not it.

Rather than trying to prevent violence by using violence, why not create an awareness campaign about respectable behaviour and the success one can achieve by attending school and avoiding criminal activity? That seems a little more realistic to me.

J. DERASMO
Uxbridge

Lack of extra-curricular activities hurting students' future

The current climate of public education is jeopardizing the future of students across Ontario.

With a lack of school activity in the past few years, students have been unable to acquire leadership skills and, therefore, have been incapable of meeting the requirements for university.

When universities make demands for leadership through school activity, we need to question whether these activities are, in fact, extra-curricular or essential. Obviously, universities find no separation between the two.

Though many schools are no longer on a work-to-rule policy, the damage has been done. Students no longer have the same choices, or confidence, to join the few programs

available, nor do they have the same desire.

For scholarship money, leadership and school involvement is not recommended, but required.

Without schools offering the normal variety of leadership opportunities, only the brightest and the best suffer.

Similarly, athletes seeking enhancement of their skills and/or scholarship funds are left struggling against a system no longer promoting students' best interests.

Granted, there are a chosen few who have risen to the challenge and made school life more bearable.

Those individuals should be recognized, however, on the whole, school is no longer as fun as it was only five years ago.

Not only are students' attitudes suffering, but so is their future, because schools are not meeting university requirements.

ERIN SMITH
Newmarket

Why are Grade 10 student test results kept from parents?

I recently received from the EQAO (Education Quality and Accountability Office) my son's Grade 10 literacy test results.

It simply states that "This student has successfully completed the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test." I found these so-called results somewhat inconclusive.

I called the EQAO to request a photocopy of my son's test results and I was denied. Apparently, the Grade 10 test results reflect personal information that is protected under

the Freedom of Information and Protection of the Privacy Act.

I find this statement hard to swallow. If the results reflect personal information regarding each individual student, then why are those students being denied a copy of their own test results?

How are students to work on their areas of weakness if they are not informed as to what they are?

If these test results are so private, then why did the Harris government release the results to the media before the EQAO had a chance to inform parents?

These tests are apparently just another propaganda tool used by the Harris government to undermine teachers and the education system.

If you would like to express your concerns, call the EQAO at 1-888-327-7377.

JANE NELSON
Aurora

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