

Economist &amp; Sun • Stouffville Tribune

# FAMILIES

## A united front

Parents working together keep young children happy, York Region families find

BY ROY GREEN  
Staff Writer

Though she felt she and her husband Paul were good parents to their four children, Barbara-Jane Labonte's kids sometimes got on her nerves and things would get out of control.

"I would find myself yelling at them, losing it," says Labonte. "Now, that doesn't happen anymore. My husband Paul and I now work as a team, the children see we're a unified force and they're happier with that situation."

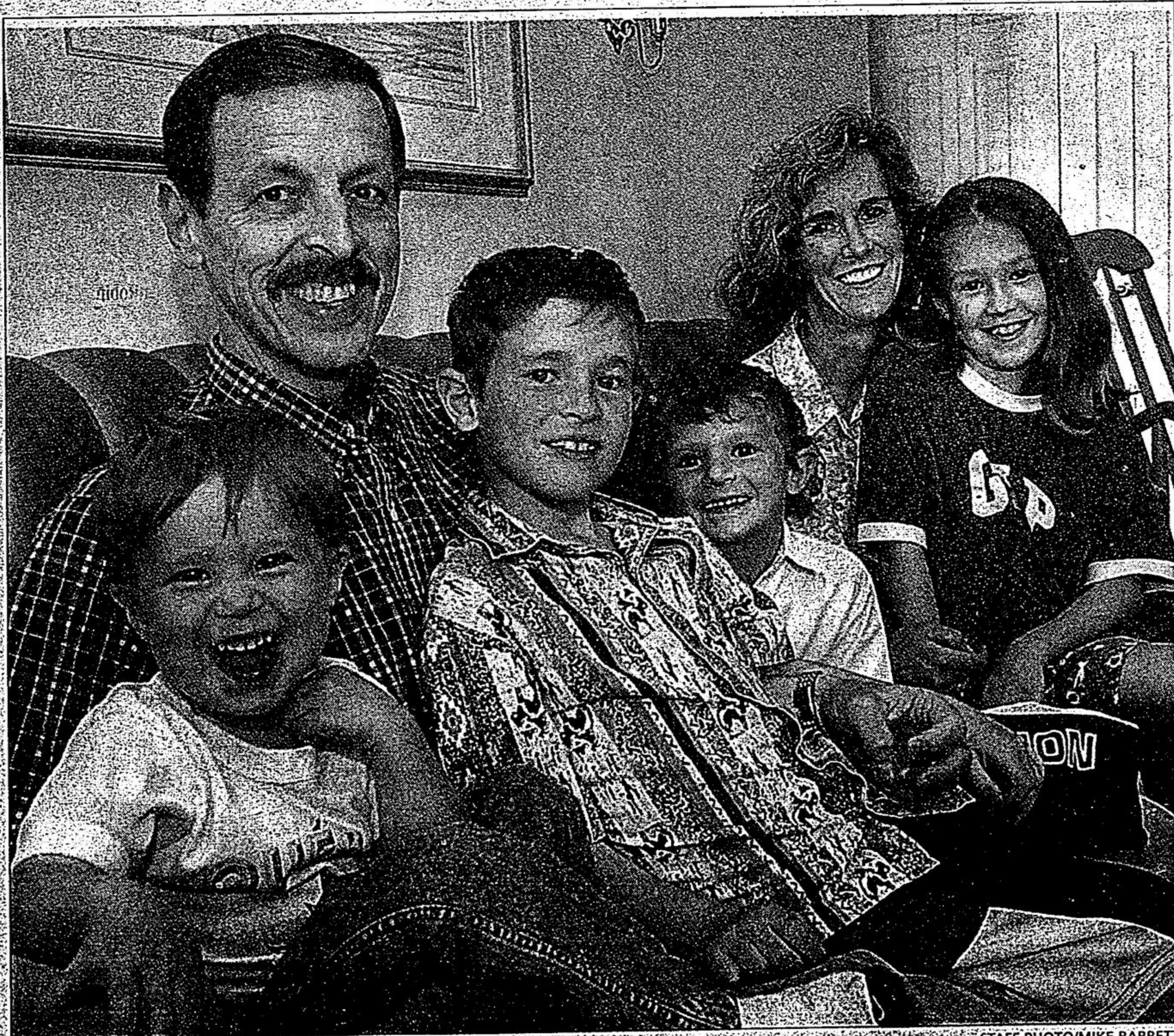
*If the heart is not working, the body fades away. In too many homes, children have become the centre of the family.*

The Aurora woman credits the turnaround to a parenting course. Growing Families International, the couple took two years ago. In fact, they took it twice.

"It's not that we failed it," she laughs, "but we went the second time to get to know it even better. And because we would like to be facilitators of the course."

What was the most important thing the Labontes learned about parenting?

"To put each other first instead of putting the kids first," says Labonte. "Parents



STAFF PHOTO/MIKE BARRETT

Barbara-Jane and Paul Labonte benefited from a parenting course that helped them better manage their children, Nathan, 3, Daniel, 7, John Mark, 5 and Rachelle, 9. "My husband Paul and I now work as a team, the children see we're a unified force and they're happier with that situation," says Barbara-Jane.

are the most important part of the family. We were together first and we're going to be together last, when the children leave."

Debbie Allen and her husband, Sil Giacomazzo, are among a dozen couples

teaching the 17-week course across York Region who believe parents are the heart of the family.

"Make sure the husband and wife are the centre of the family," says Allen. "If the heart is not working, the

body fades away. In too many homes, children have become the centre of the family."

Another key to successful parenting is teamwork between husband and wife. Both families believe a united

front is critical to successful parenting.

"My husband was lenient and I was very strict. The kids pick up on that, they know

### EVERYDAY PARENTING

*Parenting For Dummies*, by Sandra Hardin Gookin, lists 10 important things for parents to do every day:

- Give lots of hugs and kisses. Affectionate people live longer.
- Tell your family members you love them. It's important they hear those ever-important words.
- Tell your family they're special. Send notes to your children in their lunches. You make people feel special by special things you do.
- Feed your family nutritious food. Not only are you setting a good example by grabbing a banana for dessert instead of a piece of fudge, you're also teaching your children about making good food decisions.
- Read to your kids. It not only gives you a quiet time alone with them, but it also starts them on a good habit and a love for books.
- Talk to your kids. Every day you should know what your kids are doing, where they've been and who they've been with. It also starts a habit of open communication between you and your family.
- Have a special time with your kids. Each child should be made to feel special and important. By spending time alone with each child, he or she will not feel lost in a large group and will feel more like a member of a family.
- Practise good manners at every opportunity. If you make a habit of saying please and thank you, your kids will pick up on good manners.
- Be patient even when you don't want to be. Your patience may not be tested every day, so it's good to store it up for those days when you really need it.
- Be approachable at all times. If you act as a true friend to your children, you will naturally be approachable. You want your children to be able to talk to you about anything, ask you questions about things that are bothering them and never feel like you're too busy for them.

See LET, page 23.

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