

## Stouffville Tribune

A Metroland community newspaper  
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### EDITORIAL

## Grisly crimes part of everyday life

Does the front page of your community newspaper scare you?

The subject matter too often lately has been murder or sudden death:

- A 21-year-old Aurora man, whose body was found in a small grove of pine trees on an upscale Whitchurch-Stouffville cul-de-sac, died of gunshot wounds.

- A Toronto police officer has been charged with second-degree murder in the death of Richmond Hill bookkeeper Linda Mariani.

- A 24-year-old Musselman's Lake man was stabbed to death at a field party Friday night in Uxbridge Township. Jesse Owen Gray was buried yesterday.

- The trial of four people charged with killing Markham's Maria Wong continues in a Newmarket court, complete with grisly details.

The common, unsettling link?

All four deaths are murders and all four took place here in suburbia.

This isn't a high-crime area.

It's probably part of the reason you chose to move here or continue living here.

You didn't move here to have bodies dumped at the end of your cul-de-sac or to find out the woman down the street was killed.

According to statistics from 2001, in general terms, York Region appears to be a haven for law-abiding citizens, but it depends on which set of figures is reviewed.

Compared to other municipalities, for instance, York Region fared better in the national rankings than against southern Ontario.

In a comparison with cities such as Calgary, Edmonton, Montreal and Halifax, York Region had the lowest incidence of Criminal Code violations in both 1999 and 2000.

There were 38,180 criminal violations (not counting traffic charges) in 2001, compared to 35,576 in 2000. That represents a 7.3-per-cent increase. Taken on the basis of crimes per 100,000 population, however, the increase is only 1.5 per cent.

Such variances leave the average citizen wondering whether there's more or less chance of being a victim of crime.

But when they see police tape cordoning off areas of their neighbourhood, they know crime lives in our communities.

And that is a fact of life — and death — for many York Region residents.

# OPINION



### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### Schools can't be strong if students and teachers don't feel safe

Re: Opinion column by Debora Kelly, Liberal leader cheapens idea of character education, May 30.

I believe character education must be taught in all Ontario schools.

Character education means the teaching of values is woven into the curriculum. In an English class, students might be asked to write about their goals to teach perseverance.

A business class might include a case study where the employer demonstrated honesty. A history class might discuss the role of the Queen Mother during the Second World War to demonstrate courage.

The York Region District School Board, which has an excellent character education program, consulted with its school community — parents, students and the wider community — to come up with a list of 10 core values.

These include respect, responsibility, honesty, empathy, fairness, initiative, perseverance, integrity, courage, and optimism.

These are universal values everyone can agree on. Under my plan, this process would be followed in all school boards in Ontario.

The key goals of character education are higher academic achievement, enhanced employability and safer schools.

I believe schools must help instill discipline in our young people by teaching values and respect for others as a mandatory part

of the curriculum.

The benefits of character education are clear. Schools with character education produce students with better behaviour, better academic performance and better morale. They have less tardiness, less truancy and fewer discipline problems.

Reading, writing and mathematics are the most important things our schools teach. But schools can't be academically strong if our students and teachers don't feel safe.

That's why I have called for video surveillance cameras to help keep intruders out of our schools, school safety hotlines and mandatory anti-bullying programs. Character education is part of this Ontario Liberal plan to make our schools safer and stronger.

Some people are afraid to talk about character education and teaching values, but I am not. Martin Luther King Jr. once said: "We must remember that intelligence is not enough. Intelligence plus character — that is the goal of true education."

I want to ensure all our children are provided with "true education" as envisioned by Martin Luther King Jr.

The most important thing we can do for our families and for our future is to improve public education. We must work with educators to ensure our schools are both safe and strong.

DALTON MCGUINTY

LEADER OF THE ONTARIO LIBERAL PARTY  
MPP FOR OTTAWA SOUTH

### LETTERS POLICY

Stouffville Tribune welcomes your letters. All submissions must be less than 400 words and must include a daytime telephone number, name and address. The newspaper reserves the right to publish or not publish and to edit for clarity and space.

Write: Letters to the Editor,  
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## Stouffville Tribune

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Dave Teetzel

## 'Yogi Bear' helps high-risk kids, one sidewalk at a time

In a cloud of dry ice and a burst of lasers a Darth Maul-like character bursts on to the stage brandishing his light sabre to destroy "the code".

A hero clad in white storms in the back door. "You're forgetting one thing," he tells the villain, as he wades toward him through the children packed in the aisles, "You're messin' with Brooklyn!"

This is Sunday school.

I'm in the courtyard of a project in Queens, pitching to a lineup of eager boys, when a kid who looks like an eight-year-old Derek Jeter cranks my sissy lobball through the tree, over the playground equipment and into a fenced area. By the time I reach the ball, a little tyke is holding it up to me, a big grin on his face. "You Yogi Bear?" he asks.

Well, yes. For a few days last week, I and four other leaders at Keswick Kidz Club were honorary Yogi Bears.

Yogi Bear is what everyone in New York calls Metro Ministries Sidewalk Sunday school. Run from a couple of Brooklyn warehouses, Metro Ministries presents the gospel to children in every corner of the city.

Vans decorated with cartoon bears pull up in parks, housing projects and roadsides. The side panel opens out to form a stage and workers spill out to present music, games and teaching.

On Saturdays, a fleet of about 50 school buses pick up children around Brooklyn three times a day and bring them back to the warehouse for a louder, more elaborate version of the program (including the Star Wars skit).

More importantly, the workers visit every child involved, offering love and encouragement to the whole family.

Kidz Club leader Patty Lohnes, Terry Prebble, Pat O'Neill, Sara Webster and myself were in New York for training because our Georgina program is based on the Metro Ministries curriculum.

There's no question the physical environment in Georgina is a far cry from the roughest corners of New York.

But when the school boards try to explain Georgina's consistently low test scores, they talk about social factors — things like not getting breakfast, broken families or parents who aren't involved in their children's lives. Those factors were far more obvious in New York.

The folks kibitzing on trucks in New York let the children know they are loved, valued and capable of infinitely more than the ghetto has to offer.

Do they respond? Well, I had a five-year-old boy board my school bus from the foulest smelling street corner I've ever experienced, he attached himself to my arm, stayed with me throughout his pre-school class and never stopped smiling.

Just because someone cared.

If this simple idea can transform lives in New York, I can't wait to see what it will do here.