

Kids help town launch pesticide campaign

BY KATHLEEN GRIFFIN
Staff Writer

Markham Council was entertained by four Grade 7 students from Thornhill's St. René Goupil Catholic School Tuesday night, performing the Spice Girls' 'Stop Right Now' in a dance routine supporting Markham's launch of its pesticide-free education campaign.

"Stop Right Now/We don't need pesticides on our lawns/Hey you, always spraying stuff/the Town of Markham has had enough," crooned Morgan Lutens, Amy Bajurny, Johanna Moonan and Ashley Ostridge to the delight of councillors.

Many St. René students were involved in the official launch last week at Thornhill's Green Lane Park, which coincided with the school's monthly focus on a character trait — being a good citizen.

"Our students jumped at the challenge to participate in the celebration of pesticide-free parks," said principal Kerry Comiskey.

Pupils in Grades 4 and 5 also created a mural for the pesticide-free campaign, which is now hanging at the Markham Civic Centre.

Following a pilot project in Thornhill — where six parks in Ward 2 were deemed pesticide free for 2002 — the town and the York Region Health Department have developed a public education program to help residents learn how to keep a healthy, good-looking lawn using natural methods.

"We want to make it easy for residents to reduce pesticides on their lawns and maintain them using alternate methods," explained Councillor Erin Shapero.

Working with the region's existing materials, the town has produced two brochures — Healthy Lawns, Healthy Families, which outlines the benefits of reducing pesticides on residential lawns and 10 Steps to a Healthy Lawn — which details how. Brochures will be distributed to homes in Ward 2 as part of the pilot project, but they are available to all residents through the town offices.

Information will also be available on the town's website and a helpline has been established with tips on naturalizing your lawn and garden. That number is 905-415-7535.

As well, the town will offer participating residents a lawn sign — "This lawn is pesticide free and safe for all living things" — to stimulate discussion in neighbourhoods.

For more information, call the helpline above or visit www.city.markham.on.ca.

Safety kits make their mark

A Markham teen accepted a cheque for \$1,000 from the Ontario fire marshal's office Tuesday night after her name was picked from the dozens who purchased a fire safety kit from the provincial organization in the last year.

Rick Morris, the provincial representative, congratulated Ms Yan as he handed over her prize, telling council the Markham Fire Department is "setting the pace" for fire safety in Ontario.

The department's Risk Watch program, its educational programs in schools and its annual support of Fire Prevention Week by opening fire halls to the public combine to reinforce the important fire safety message for residents, Mr. Morris said.

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