

# York residents a nice bunch of folks

What a nice bunch of people you are.

Perhaps everybody's heart grows three sizes during the holiday season, but the majority of York Region residents passed our test of compassion and initiative with flying colours.

The York Region Newspaper Group has been sending spies around the region to see how residents respond to typical situations.

Last week, we explored how you respond to common annoyances. This week, we tested your willingness to help others and how you respond when someone helps you.

## TEST 1: BUDDY CAN YOU SPARE A DIME?

Our reporters found themselves short a few cents at a checkout counter.

In Whitchurch-Stouffville, there was no need to even ask for help. Gracious shoppers were quick on the draw with their change and the cashier pointed out the "give a penny, take a penny" box.

In Newmarket, it was a case of "ask and you shall receive" as shoppers volunteered as much as 60 cents to help our reporter purchase chocolates.

But in Richmond Hill and Vaughan, it was a different story. Our spy couldn't pry a nickel out of people in a checkout line.

## TEST 2: LOST IN YORK REGION

Our testers went looking for directions in all corners of York Region and everyone went above and beyond the call of duty.

In Newmarket, drivers were willing to sit still even after a light turned green to offer directions and, in one case, even went ahead of our driver to point the way to the courthouse.

In Vaughan, passers-by not only offered directions, they also warned our reporter his destination, Paramount Canada's Wonderland, was closed.

In Markham, our spy not only



received directions to Hwy. 407, but a warning about the cost.

## TEST 3: MY HANDS ARE FULL

Our testers loaded themselves up with packages and bric a brac and strolled through York Region communities.

No matter where they went, people came forward to hold doors open. In Richmond Hill, they even offered to help carry the packages.

In Whitchurch-Stouffville, our tester concluded, they will open the door for you if you're only holding your breath.

## TEST 4: TURNING THE TABLES

Our testers put on their Good

Samaritan hats and held doors open for shoppers at the area mall.

In Markham and Richmond Hill, every single person said: "thank you", although some Hillcrest shoppers appeared puzzled by the unexpected kindness.

Our Newmarket spy encountered a mixed bag: some shoppers were genuinely appreciative, others blew by without so much as a glance.

So congratulations, York Region, you're helpful, compassionate and overflowing with the milk of human kindness.

Next week, we'll see how honest you are.

## Hold door open? No problem

BY HANNELORE VOLPE  
Staff Writer

Would people stop to open doors for me and generally lend a hand?

That was my mission in Stouffville as I lugged a heavy briefcase in one hand plus a purse and a large bulky sweater to cover both hands.

I tried to look like a helpless damsel in distress in downtown Stouffville. Although no knight in shining armour rode up, a man held the door as I headed to Latham Gallery and the Care and Share Thrift Store.

On my way out, I spotted a lady sitting on the bench nearby. I slowed down, hoping she'd notice my plight. She ignored me.

However, I noticed that she looked pretty tired and had a cane. I guess she was in more need of help than I was.

The local doughnut shop was no problem. Time and time again I've noticed anyone in the doorway will hold the door open, sometimes letting in a dozen coffee drinkers at a time. I'm sure even if you were only holding your breath, they'd hold the door open.

At Canadian Tire, a woman let me go through first. Maybe it's a small-town thing. Or something related to the fact that if we go to Canadian Tire, it must be to do some important home renovation. I could feel the camaraderie of tradesmen, tradeswomen, er... people emanating from the place.

I decided to challenge the younger generation and headed off to the nearby Two for One Pizza place, where I knew the kids hang out at lunch time. I slowed down and added a little limp to make the look convincing.

I appeared distressed. I asked for

help. A young man, maybe in Grade 10, held the door until I was all the way in. Coming back out I was even more laden down.

Now I had to carry my heavy bag, purse, sweater and a couple of pizza slices, that, of course, had to be kept perfectly horizontal so the toppings wouldn't slide off. A high school girl did the honours.

The TD Canada Trust, with its heavy doors, is another place where folks help each other. People came to the rescue as I was in mid-push.

Very seldom have I encountered rude behaviour when it came to entering places around town.

Sometimes someone, who obviously has their knickers in a knot, will breeze by and push ahead. I could probably count those times on one hand in all the 15 years we've been in Stouffville.

## 'Thank you's is normal behaviour

BY KATHLEEN GRIFFIN  
Staff Writer

Maybe it's the Christmas season. Goodwill towards men and all that. Or maybe it's just the Canadian way.

Each and every one of the dozen or so people I held doors for at Markville Shopping Centre, recently noticed. And they all said "thank you."

Even obviously harried shoppers, like the brown-haired woman with two toddlers clinging to her red jacket, were appreciative.

She carried two enormous Walmart bags and was trying to calm one of her overheated, tired boys. He sounded like he was gearing up

See TEENS, page 11

# I might be a conman, but people helped me anyway

BY MIKE ADLER  
Staff Writer

Who might I be?

A conman with a hard luck story to tell. A panhandler. A fanatic.

But people I approached for directions in Markham seemed unconcerned that I might have an underlying motive.

They didn't even look annoyed.

The first person I accosted in a parking lot at Denison Street and Markham Road not only gave me exact directions to Hwy. 404, she offered to drive a few blocks to Steeles Avenue just so I, following

her car, would know where to turn. As if that weren't enough, she also told me how to reach the highway on Hwy. 407.

Of course, she had to explain some things about the 407 in case I had never heard of it.

I would receive a bill later, she said. "You have to go under the camera."

I did no worse when I put the same question to four teenagers hanging out by a doughnut shop at the same plaza. Just drive west on Steeles for seven or eight minutes, they said, past the IBM building, past Victoria Park Avenue, until I see

"a bridge thing".

"You'll see it," one of them said. I discovered the same courtesy was extended to a clueless stranger in other parts of town.

A man heading into a bank on Main Street, Markham pointed out the way to Markham Museum, just north of 16th Avenue.

So did a woman on the sidewalk. "You should drive though. It may be too far for you to walk," she said.

For some reason, I asked her if the street, which continues north as Hwy. 48, goes all the way to Barrie.

She didn't flinch at this, although she did not supply me the sorry

truth that it doesn't. "Maybe part of the way," the woman said.

So I might use it to reach Barrie? "Get a map," the woman suggested, starting to move away but still smiling.

In another plaza, this time on Hwy. 7 just west of Main Street, I stopped a man walking in from the Jonquil Crescent entrance and asked him where Sciberras Road was.

Radiating confusion, I said it was supposed to be near Main Street, just east of Main Street. I was sure of that. (My "mistake" here, assuming Main Street, Markham was the only one in Markham was the same one

I made on January 8, 1996, my first day on the job).

"I thought Sciberras was in Unionville," the man said, and as he explained there was a Main Street there as well, I marvelled.

But now he was thinking harder. "Sciberras might run all the way down to Unionville," he said, pointing with his hand.

"I don't know, you got me stumped there."

Soon, however, I told him I'd follow his advice and look for Sciberras in Unionville (where it really was) and thanking him, scuttled away.

## Experience Fine Dining This Festive Season

Available For Christmas Delivery At Special Pricing

4747 Hwy. #7  
(east of Kennedy)  
Unionville  
(905) 477-5524



Mon - Wed 10-6 pm  
Thurs - Fri 10-9 pm  
Saturdays 10-5:30 pm  
Closed Sunday

