

# 'Strangers remain the nicest people'

BY JOAN RANSBERRY  
Staff Writer

I was 15 cents short.  
The bill at Houston's Drugs in downtown Stouffville was \$11.17. I'd emptied my pockets and dumped everything out of my purse to come up with \$11.02.

I was about ready to put one of the three items back when a little voice said, "Excuse me but I have ten cents.

## Teens surprised at offer to help

From page 3.

for a very ill-timed tantrum.

"Oh, thank you so much," she said, as I held the first door and stepped in front of her to hold the second as well.

My offer to help her to her car was refused, politely, with a smile. "I can manage, but you're very kind. Thanks again."

Two teenagers wearing hip-slung, baggy jeans and baseball caps looked surprised as I reached ahead of them to hold the door.

They were both bogged down with bags, these from The Gap and Old Navy.

"Hey, thanks, man," they said, almost in unison. "Merry Christmas!"

Don't believe everything you hear about youths today.

An elderly man pushing his wife in a wheelchair also reacted with some surprise as I deliberately changed direction to come back and hold the two sets of doors for them.

"Thank you very much, my dear," he said, gathering bags from the back of the chair to sling around his wrist. "Not so cold today, is it?"

The cheeriest Christmas gift-seekers were downright effusive with gratitude.

One man in a burly plaid coat weighed down with several Sears bags gave me a brilliant smile as I did my thing.

"Well thank you very, very much and a happy Christmas to you," he said, grinning.

It's OK. Really.

The mothers with children were the ones who really seemed to appreciate the help — and the good feeling that results from a kind word or action — especially those pushing overloaded strollers and towing older children in its wake.

"Thanks a lot!" said one curly-haired mom. "What a day! I'm exhausted! I love this time of year but boy, is it busy!"

Would it help?"

I turned to see a pretty teenager standing behind me holding a dime. The clerk heard the teen's offer and added to it by suggesting I take three pennies from the Take-A-Penny, Give-A-Penny box to make up the difference.

A wave of embarrassment washed over me. And then I thought better of it. I took stock of the situation.

The teenager was quite willing to part with a dime. I reminded myself

that I've made a penny donation to the little box on the counter many times.

Besides, two other customers had joined the lineup. A decision was in order.

I accepted the dime, took three pennies from the box and paid the clerk in full.

I left the drug store with three items in hand and a warm feeling knowing that strangers remain the nicest people.

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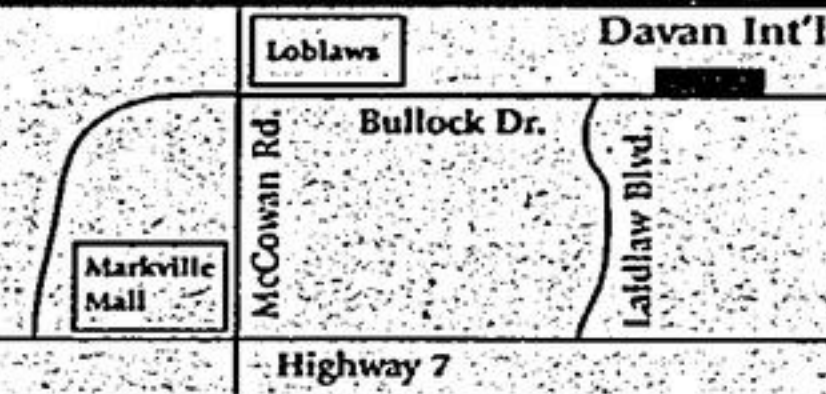
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