

Just another weekend in the hometown

So often it takes someone from the outside to properly analyze a situation.

In the business world, they're highly-paid consultants, who wear Armani suits and use five-syllable words. In the everyday world, they're unpaid visitors with open minds and fresh dispositions.

An analysis of the latter variety occurred in our household over the weekend.

"There's always something going on in Stouffville," said one of our house guests from Northwestern Ontario. "Where does everyone find the time?"

Our after-dinner conversation had drifted into the world of Stouffville at its best. We talked about the trio of major fundraising events held here over the last two months: dances to aid Luke Anderson, who suffered a spinal cord injury, and leukemia sufferer Brad Stevens; and Keith Acton's benefit hockey game in support of cancer research and care.

All three were wonderful, heart-warming days that reminded us all why we chose to live here and just how cherished our friends are.

But we moved on to the mid-winter grind of the work week and other commitments. Or so we thought.

"Is it like this every week here?" a tourist in Stouffville said last weekend.

People in our home and in our neighbourhood were doing their thing. The visitors thought it was fast-paced and action-packed. Maybe it was.

The Royal Canadian Legion hall in Stouffville bustled with activity and nostalgia Saturday afternoon. Branch 459's ladies auxiliary was celebrating its 50th anniversary and there was no other place



JIM MASON
OFF THE TOP

suitable. After all, they have catered to so many wedding receptions, sports team banquets and beef luncheons since 1952 in those same four walls. There have been teas, receptions for war veterans and bazaars. The women's organization ran the Stouffville blood donor clinics in the same hall for so many years.

Dignitaries and common residents stopped by in large numbers to say thanks for 50 years of community service and caring. Well deserved.

In west-end Stouffville, men, women and kids paid \$10 each for an hour's worth of hockey on the Buttermakers ice pad at

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There's always something going on in Stouffville. Where does every one find the time?
-comments of a tourist
”

Boyd's Source For Sports. Thirty-four hours in total skated by shinny players Friday through Sunday. The only score kept was the amount of money raised for Luke Anderson.

Luke himself visited the hockey marathon Saturday from the Toronto rehab centre he currently calls home.

How Canadian. How Stouffville. Playing hockey in the open air to help out a neighbour.

That same afternoon, with the biggest storm warning of the winter blowing in and freezing rain already turning Stouffville side streets into rinks of their own, about 600 fans were in the Stouffville Arena.

It was Game two of the junior hockey playoff series between the Stouffville Spirit and Newmarket Hurricanes. It's a rivalry that's carried some heat with it over the years. On this day, the hometown boys — five Stouffville residents are on the Spirit roster — came back from a 2-0 deficit to win 3-2. The crowd — those who weren't from Newmarket — went nuts.

A co-worker who lives in southern York Region mentioned recently she has been on her street for 13 years and knows only one neighbour by name. Few people say hello on the street.

I got up Sunday morning to find our neighbour of eight months snowblowing that nasty overnight storm out our driveway.

Busy and friendly. Only in Whitchurch-Stouffville, you say?

We'll take it.

Jim Mason is managing editor of the Stouffville Sun.

STOUFFVILLE SAYS

BY HANNELORE VOLPE

"What do you think of last week's federal budget?"



KIM LEWIS

"The government allows you to stay off work for a year, but most daycares don't take children until they are 18 months old. That leaves a six-month gap. There are not enough daycare facilities in this area yet. Many more are needed and even more has to be spent on child care than is in the budget."



NICK WILBRINK

"There is some good news. The \$34.8 billion for health care is a start. Health care is in a crisis. I have been in hospitals and waited in hallways for days. I waited five months for an MRI in Oshawa and it took one year to get my operation."



SHIRLEY GIBB

"Health care is our number one priority because of all the baby boomers. Unless we keep ourselves healthy, we are going to be on the bottom of the line and we will suffer. Will there be enough money in the coffers when all the baby boomers reach 65 and older?"



HAZEL MURRAY

"The budget has made a step in the right direction because you do need compassionate leave to help care for someone who is very sick. More daycare is needed because there are so many single parents and families where both parents work."



ELSIE HINES

"The government took so much out, they are not even replacing what they had before, especially in schools and care for special needs children."

Some churches get ready for the boom

Be prepared! As the Big Pipe sewage system inches ever closer, Stouffville past and present, braces for change.

In 10 years or less, this close-knit community will look nothing like its former self. We'll face a population explosion unlike anything in our history.

Will we be ready? We'd better be. For, like it or not, the archangel of progress stands waiting at our gates, heralding the approach of migrant hordes anxious to enjoy the fruits of our labours.

Some will be received with fear and foreboding.

Others with jubilant joy. Regardless, we've built it and they will come.

Front-runners in rolling out the welcome mat are four congregations within our town of churches community, Stouffville Missionary, Christ Church Anglican, Stouffville Pentecostal and Springvale Baptist. While none has yet put a spade in the ground, discussions, some formal and some casual, are now taking place.

Stouffville Missionary, with site already selected — donated by Norm Clements of Stouffville Country Market — hopes to turn a first sod this summer.

Christ Church Anglican has a major expansion proposal in place while Springvale Baptist is working towards 2004 to make its move.

The board of Stouffville Pentecostal church makes its plans known at a meeting this week.

Four congregations, each with a vision.

While I've seen only designs put forward by Stouffville Missionary, I'm told proposals



JIM THOMAS
ROAMING AROUND

by Christ Church Anglican and Springvale Baptist are also awe-inspiring. Stouffville Pentecostal will undoubtedly follow suit.

According to Springvale's Bill Thornton, the expanded sanctuary will accommodate up to 1,200 worshippers. Because that church's focus is on youth, a double gymnasium is also planned.

"Young people are our strength," pastor Thornton said, "with our youth, we've established a unique and wonderful relationship." He refers to the proposed site as "our field of dreams", adding, "I'm thrilled to be a part."

Build it and they will come, as the movie slogan claimed. Three and possibly four Stouffville congregations believe this to be true. So do I. They're marching to the sound of a different drummer, with amazing results. Present facilities are bursting at the seams, a nice problem to be sure.

As Rev. Arthur Walsh, former Stouffville Missionary minister once said "A congregation should never stand still; must always look ahead; plan for tomorrow." Here was a minister with a vision.

Likewise Rev. Richard Greene of Frostburg, Maryland.

In a dream, Rev. Greene envisioned a new church for his congregation, a replica of Noah's Ark. Through some sort of miracle,

he was able to convince his flock to initiate construction "supported only by a seed fund of \$300, an age-old typewriter and mimeograph machine."

The first sod was turned on an Easter Sunday.

This Ark maintains the same specifications as spelled out in the Old Testament: 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high. In practical terms, it's length would take in one and a half football fields and measure three stories in height. When completed, it'll accommodate a Christian school, a Bible college, a conference and counselling centre plus a 1,500-seat sanctuary.

While the Internet story doesn't provide a completion date, the structure's being built in three phases with help, both physical and financial coming from all across the country.

To date, it's attracted thousands of visitors from all corners of the world, including hopefully, Stouffville, Ontario, Canada. This spring, Jean and I plan to make this a side-trip while passing through the State. Who knows, we may even worship there.

While the news release makes no mention of co-habiting pairs that walk, crawl, fly and swim, we'll keep our fingers crossed. I can't envision Jean sharing a pew with a boa constrictor.

Regardless, like Stouffville Pentecostal, Stouffville Missionary, Springvale Baptist and Christ Church Anglican, this is a congregation with a vision.

How practical? We'll see for ourselves.

Jim Thomas is a Stouffville resident who has written for area newspapers for more than 50 years.