

Stouffville Sun-Tribune

# PEOPLE

## Doug Watson: Man of many hats

### Busy year for head of Stouffville Lions, chamber

BY HANNELORE VOLPE  
Stouffville Sun

Although Doug Watson may have the smile of a mischievous urchin, he relishes being in the midst of his community, sleeves rolled up and ready to work.

When he became president of the Stouffville Lions Club and chairperson of the board of directors for the Whitchurch-Stouffville Chamber of Commerce last year, he had goals firmly in mind: He replaced Carl Johnston, now past-president of the Stouffville Lions, and former Whitchurch-Stouffville Chamber of Commerce board chairperson John Webster.

Mr. Watson has become entrenched in the Whitchurch-Stouffville business scene — and beyond — in a decade as general manager of the Stouffville Co-op and manager of the Uxbridge Co-op, the Cedar Valley Co-op and the Port Perry Pet Headquarters. The Stouffville Co-op is a longstanding member of the Whitchurch-Stouffville Chamber of Commerce.

#### SUPPORT SYSTEM

His unflappable ability to juggle many jobs while looking like he's having fun seems to have carried over to his work in the community. After all, he took over leading positions in not one, but two, influential organizations.

"It has been a great year," Mr. Watson said. He has found the support he received from people in both organizations to be "absolutely tremendous."

Before becoming board chairperson of the chamber of commerce, Mr. Watson had "learned the ropes" as the chamber's secretary-treasurer. He came in as chairperson with the aim of making the organization more responsive to members' needs and communicating more effectively with them. To this end, the chamber surveyed members last year to find out exact-

ly what they needed and wanted. Mr. Watson also worked to increase local residents' awareness of the work of the local chamber. By lobbying more effectively through the Ontario Chambers of Commerce and the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, he wants the organization to continue improving the local business environment and increasing economic development.

Another of his priorities was increasing membership, which now stands at around 170, ranging from one-person businesses to Cook Canada Inc., the town's largest employer.

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Mr. Watson looks back with a sense of accomplishment on the board strategy planning sessions over the past couple of months that will lead to an official plan for the chamber's future direction and focus. It's designed to make the job of incoming executive members easier and to give them a starting point as they take up their new duties.

He's proud of the work that's been done so far, but says, "You never get to accomplish everything."

On April 10, he should find out whether he'll be re-elected for a second one-year term as board chairperson of the chamber.

Although Doug and his wife, Elaine, live in the Uxbridge area, the family is obviously tied to the Stouffville community. He has already gotten his daughter, Irene,

15, and his 13-year-old son, Brandon, to help out with some of the Stouffville Lions activities.

Another dual-organization dynamo, Helene Johnson, the CEO and president of the Whitchurch-Stouffville Chamber of Commerce and Lions Club vice-president, calls Mr. Watson "very down to earth" and a "great young man to work for."

His enjoyment of community events and willingness to pitch in is evident at events such as the Lions beef barbeque at the Strawberry Festival, where several hundred meals will again be served in June.

The Lions also feed the crowds at Markham Fair, enlisting at least 64 volunteers to staff its food booth.

Mr. Watson joined the Stouffville Lions Club almost six years ago because he was, he said, "kind of at a stage where I should be giving something back to the community. How better than with a service club like the Lions Club?"

#### HELPING KIDS

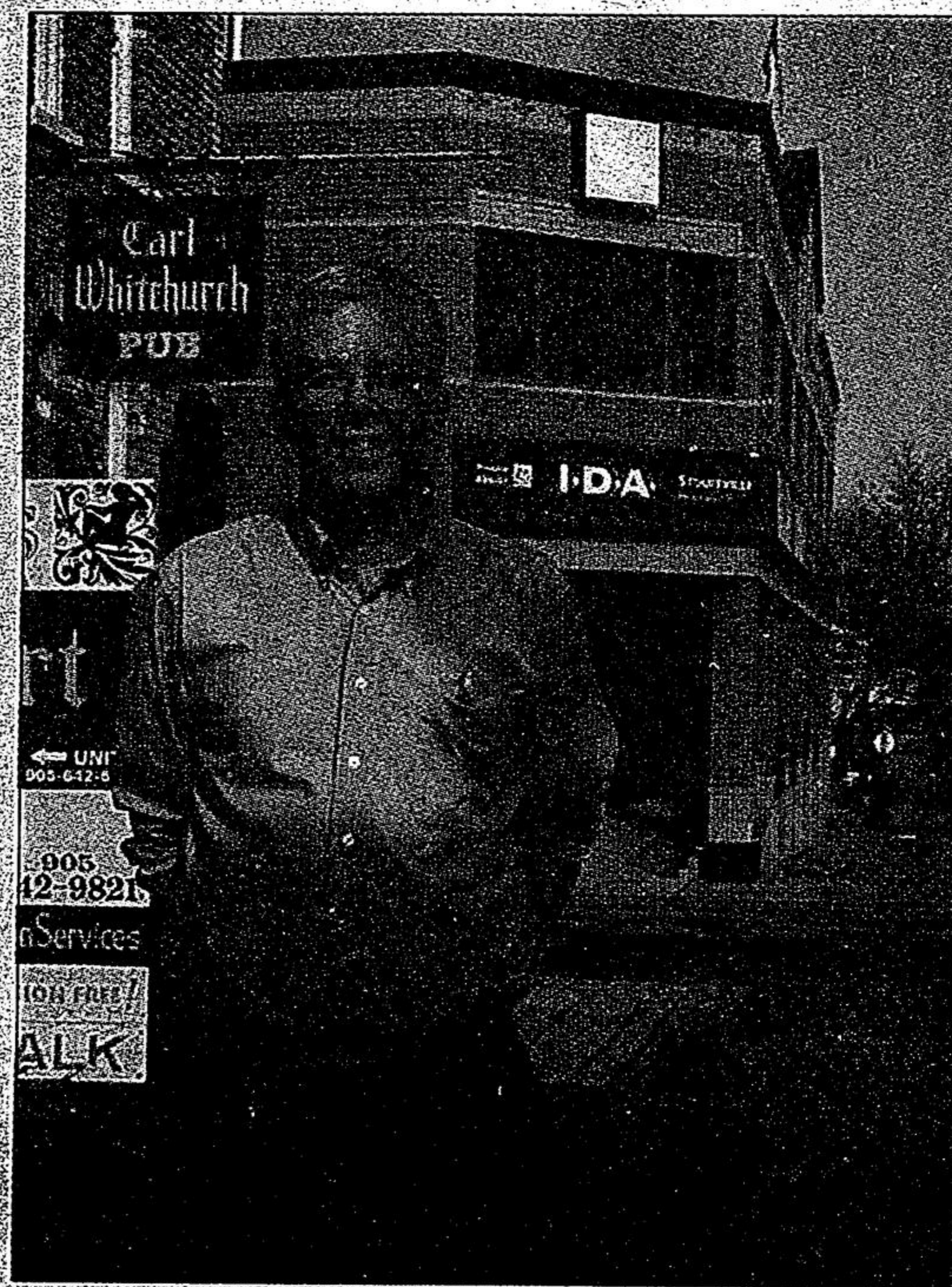
He was attracted by the work he saw the Lions doing in the community: helping people at Christmas with food and gift baskets, with toy drives, with the Lions fishing derby in the summer and with vision screening.

He has found the fishing derby to be "very rewarding because the seniors look forward to it, the children look forward to it and the smiles on their faces make it all worthwhile."

After helping other municipalities with their vision screening programs, the Stouffville Lions have brought the program to Whitchurch-Stouffville.

Since the fall, kindergarten children in all local schools have been screened for "lazy eye" and other conditions at a stage when they can still be easily corrected.

The Stouffville Lions also keep a stock of hospital and medical



Doug Watson lives in Uxbridge but is general manager of the Stouffville Co-op. In his spare time, he heads the Stouffville Lions Club and the Whitchurch-Stouffville Chamber of Commerce. He's shown on Main Street in downtown Stouffville.

HANNELORE VOLPE PHOTO

equipment for anyone who needs it. Wheelchairs, hospital beds and other items are kept in good repair by the Lions and lent out upon request.

Getting young people in the community involved in the Lions Club is something Mr. Watson is emphasizing during his presidency.

The Stouffville Lions are organizing a chapter of The Leos Club for

youngsters up to 18, to introduce them to community work.

"It gets them interested in their community and what they can give back... It fits very well with the high school curriculum," he said.

Mr. Watson and the Stouffville Lions Club are continuing to look to the future, especially to later this year when the organization will celebrate its 65th anniversary.

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