

Fumiko Ishioka, who asked for artifacts for the Japanese Holocaust museum, she directs and got the suitcase of Hana Brady talked to a crowd of students at Ballantrae Public School recently with Hana's surviving brother, George Brady. Hana died at Auschwitz in 1944. Ms Ishioka researched the suitcase and discovered Mr. Brady in Canada. The story became the popular book *Hana's Suitcase* by Toronto author Karen Levine, who also attended the session. Here, Mr. Brady and Ms Ishioka sign copies of the book for students.

SJOERD WITTEVEEN PHOTO

## Story in a suitcase



## Gender not an issue for first female president

BY HANNELORE VOLPE  
Staff Writer

The fireworks marking Canada Day will coincide with Helene Johnson's first day as the new president of the Stouffville Lions Club.

The dynamic woman will take over the venerable 65-year-old institution from current president Doug Watson to continue the community work she loves.

Although she is the Stouffville Lions Club's first woman president, she believes the emphasis should be on the work she continues to do, not on the fact she is a woman.

She joined the Lions Club five years ago, shortly after the local club began accepting women as members.

As well as continuing the many Lions Club activities that help the community, Mrs. Johnson is hoping a Leo Club for young people 18 and under will be established during her year in office.

"You need young people coming up," Mrs. Johnson said.

Increased fundraising will be another major initiative so the club can continue to support the Markham Stouffville Hospital, the Jennifer Ashleigh Foundation and local residents through a variety of programs.

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*happened to me in my life.*

The Stouffville Lions host a yearly fish derby in June for seniors and physically challenged residents living in the municipality, have an extensive Christmas basket program for the needy, carry out vision testing on primary age children in local elementary schools and help people overseas with projects such as eyeglass and hearing aid collections.

They also feed the community while fundraising through their annual beef barbecue the first Thursday of the Strawberry Festival in Stouffville and through their food booth at the Markham Fair in the fall.

Mrs. Johnson comes from a business background, having working in personnel for many years before starting her own bookkeeping serv-



HELENE JOHNSON: New president of Stouffville Lions Club also CEO of local chamber of commerce.

ice in town. She joined the Whitchurch-Stouffville Chamber of Commerce in 1988 while she still ran her own business.

For the past three years, she has represented local businesses as president and CEO of the chamber. An important part of her job is lobbying the Ontario and Canadian chambers of commerce on behalf of local businesses.

She also carries out the chamber's mandate to lobby municipal, provincial and federal governments on issues such as education, transportation and health care.

"Business is affected by all of these things," she said.

Mrs. Johnson grew up on a farm south of Musselman's Lake and is a mother of six and a grandmother. Her husband, Ralph, prefers to keep in the background, she said, but "he will help me in whatever I am doing."

Being of service to the community is the reason she joined the Lions Club in the first place.

"It's a give-back situation," she said. "It is just payback time for all the good things that have happened to me in my life."

### ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

The Lions Club started in 1938 in Stouffville.

"We have been doing service in the community for 65 years," the new president said.

Instead of the 65th anniversary celebrations originally planned for this year, the Stouffville Lions Club is looking ahead to the year 2008 when it will celebrate its milestone 70th anniversary.

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