

OPINION

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Editorial

York West Nile 'firsts' may be good news

Is York Region the West Nile virus capital of Canada?

It's not the most appealing title, but it could be legit.

The first West Nile positive mosquito pool this year in Ontario was found in Whitchurch-Stouffville June 18, York Region health officials confirmed Monday. The mosquitoes were trapped close to the intersection of Aurora Road and Ninth Line, east of Ballantrae.

There were 14 positive mosquito pools reported last year in York Region. The first two crows to test positive for West Nile in Canada this year were found in Newmarket and Aurora.

A Richmond Hill man became the first suspected human case of the summer, although tests later determined he didn't have the disease.

What does this mean to residents of York Region and visitors to our communities?

It means, if it can happen in Ballantrae, it can happen in Woodbridge, Unionville, Aurora or Queensville.

But, while York is clearly in a West Nile-prone area, all our 'firsts' might be good news.

Associate medical officer of health Dr. Hanif Kassam noted the region may be detecting infected mosquitoes and crows first because it has an aggressive surveillance campaign. He pointed out other municipalities are typically making similar discoveries shortly after York.

So while we know the disease is here, we can also be assured York Region Health Services is on top of it and is being forthcoming with news on West Nile, SARS and other serious health issues.

West Nile is transmitted by infected mosquitoes. In humans, it takes three to 15 days after a bite from an infected mosquito for flu-like symptoms to begin.

It means residents should be careful without going overboard.

- Wear protective clothing, such as long-sleeved shirts, full-length trousers, socks, light-coloured clothing and high boots.

- Make sure screens on your home are tight-fitting and in good repair and

- Eliminate standing water around your property in pool covers, flowerpots, children's pools, old tires and bird baths.

For more information, call 1-800-361-5653 or visit www.region.york.on.ca



PAT WHEELER
SUN-TRIBUNE



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

Driveway of dreams lights up on NHL draft day

The winters of the late 1980s seemed especially frozen and snow-filled in Stouffville.

But no matter what time I arrived home from work, it seemed they were forever in their driveway across the street slapping hockey pucks into the top corner of their net or working on a big-time move.

Mike Sullivan and his big brother Matt would later be joined by younger brother Mark.

Mike took his game to the Stouffville Arena where he put up mind-boggling Gretzkyesque stats in the house league of the Whitchurch-Stouffville Minor Hockey Association.

He'd move on to rep hockey with the A-level Stouffville Clippers and then AAA, the highest level of minor hockey, with the Richmond Hill Stars. He played junior C in Uxbridge and last season broke out with his hometown junior A Stouffville Spirit. The team's rookie of the year and playoff MVP also earned a scholarship worth about \$140,000 US to Clarkson University in upstate New York.

Along came NHL scouts, a first in the eight-year history of the Spirit, to view Mike Sullivan and linemate Kevin Jarman.

Last Sunday night, the hockey net was put away. The driveway of hockey dreams on Linden Lane was filled with the vehicles. Dressing it up were balloons of black, purple and white — the colours of the Los Angeles Kings.

Earlier in the day, as the Sullivans tried to follow the NHL draft from Nashville on the Internet, the phone rang. It was Kings' general manager Dave Taylor welcoming Mike to the Kings' family — he'd been selected in the eighth round.

Kevin Jarman, the Spirit's red-haired scoring whiz from Aurora, went in round 4 to the Columbus Blue Jackets. He was in Nashville for his selection.

Back on Linden Lane, the phone didn't stop ringing with well-wishers on the other end. On the back patio, toasts were made, hugs and handshakes exchanged.

Out front, the driveway was smiling.

Jim Mason is editor of the *Sun-Tribune* and a director of the *Stouffville Spirit*.

Letters to the Editor

Nothing constructive from singling out schools

Re: School board rankings important to parents, editorial, June 19.

The age-old adage that "the pen is mightier than the sword" is much more than a trite slogan for a bumper sticker. It is a warning to writers that words carry weight and influence and for this reason, it is incumbent on newspaper editors to measure their words with a view to their effect.

I find it hard to believe your editorial on the Fraser Report on Elementary Schools only coincidentally aligned the sentences "some schools face chronic performance issues..." and "York Region schools near the bottom... include Stouffville's St. Mark." The ranking was then included to make certain that the writer's point was taken. But what was the point?

If this is not a reason for condemnation... then what was the reason for singling out St. Mark in a small community where all our schools have traditionally supported each other?

Our students will play on the same teams all summer. Why this divisive wedge?

I fail to see any constructive value in the manner in which this information was presented.

SUSAN WHITEBREAD
CLAREMONT

The Stouffville Sun-Tribune welcomes your letters. All submissions must be less than 400 words and must include a daytime telephone number, name and address. The Stouffville Sun-Tribune reserves the right to publish or not publish and to edit for clarity and space.
 Write: Letters to the Editor, 34 Civic Ave., P.O. Box 154, Stouffville, L4A 7Z5, e-mail jmason@ymg.com

Stouffville rallied around family after near-drowning

Re: Ten-year-old hears cries, Dad pulls tot from pool, June 19.

Saturday, June 14, was one of the most traumatizing days in my son's and my lives. I am writing to thank all my neighbours for their strong mental and moral support.

I would once again like to thank the Cussion family for everything it has done.

I would also like to thank my next-door neighbours George Prentovitch and Lisa Huckell for their strength and calming words through the whole ordeal.

The paramedics, doctors and nurses were great, to thank every individual who was involved in the rescue and recovery of my son would fill this entire paper.

I just want to say that living in a small town on a small street is like having your own little community. Knowing everyone stands behind you puts your mind and heart at ease.

CHRISTIANA M. LITTLE
STOUFFVILLE

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