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**ECONOMIST & SUN (905) 294-8244** 

# Textiles to TV appearances keep museum volunteers busy

BY HANNELORE VOLPE  
Staff Writer

Cataloguing wedding gowns worn by brides more than 100 years ago, tending old-time flower and vegetable gardens and keeping track of everything on modern computers were some of the jobs performed by 68 volunteers this year at the Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum.

The volunteers were honoured at the museum's annual volunteer appreciation night recently.

They come from Whitchurch-Stouffville, Markham and surrounding areas and have donated close to 1,850 hours of their expertise and love of things from bygone years.

Markham resident Judith Pipher began visiting the local museum when it was still in Bogartown, Newmarket to perfect her spinning and weaving skills. That was in the 1970s when she was still working in nursery schools run by York Region. Then, in the 1980s, she began to volunteer at the museum by gardening, painting, filing documents and doing whatever else was needed.

### TALK TO SCHOOL GROUPS

Now she is one of the museum's interpreters who makes the early days of the municipality come alive for York Region school children. She'll talk to school groups either at the museum or at their school. Teachers can choose one of four interpretative programs, including spinning and weaving. She has appeared on CITY-TV with museum curator Dorie Billich to highlight the museum's programs.

"We are a group who work together very well," she says of her fellow volunteers.

"My major love is textiles," she said. "This is a wonderful opportunity to catalogue and see textiles such as wedding gowns and embroideries." She also speaks to sororities, women's groups and service clubs about the museum and its programs and about designing your own garments and working with fibre. Three of her sweater designs were recently published in the machine knitters' magazine Knitwords.

Another volunteer, Anne Murray of Whitchurch-Stouffville, is often mentioned when the topic of gardening comes up.

She has also worked in the kitchen over the past six years during the museum's special events, such as the Victorian Tea Nov. 28, and catalogued artifacts, many of which are donated by area residents.

She remembers when the log cabin was moved about two summers ago. When it went to a new location on the museum grounds, so did every plant in its garden. Squash, lovage, broomcorn, swiss chard and spinach can be found there. "We try to plant what the pioneers would have had," she explained.

That doesn't always work out. Sometimes, there



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Anne Murray of Stouffville is a Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum volunteer who likes to help out in the gardens.

are challenges to the pioneer country garden.

Critters of varying forms come to sample the produce while it's still in the garden, eat the cobs on the cornstalks or even knock down some of the plants. "I imagine the early farmers had the same difficulties," she says, philosophically.

Putting the gardening she learned from her mother to good use, Ms Murray is one of the volunteers who also tend the new vegetable garden by the Brown House and the perennial garden.

### VOLUNTEERS THROUGHOUT TOWN

When she's not at the museum, Ms Murray can be found helping with events put on by the Royal Canadian Legion ladies auxiliary, at the Silver Jubilee Club, at historical society meetings and driving for GHATS.

She enjoys seeing the artifacts that come into the museum and trying to figure out what they are. She finds the old clothes intriguing.

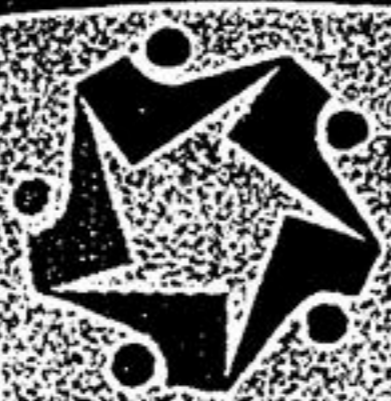
"We have dresses and the waist lines were 10 inches — who in the Sam Hill could fit into that?" she exclaimed.

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