

Classroom early birds get November break

BY MITCHELL BROWN
Staff Writer

All in all, Morgan Green has had a pretty good summer.

When she wasn't volunteering as a tutor or hanging out with friends, she spent time portaging through Algonquin Provincial Park and getting up close and personal with a moose.

While all that sounds like fun, she can't deny it's nice to get back to school.

"Yeah, because then I get to see all my friends and stuff," the Grade 9 Keswick High School student said.

Summer, in case you haven't heard, is almost over, even more so for stu-

dents at Keswick High and Markville Secondary School in Markham.

While most students across the region return to classes next week, students at those two facilities returned this week in exchange for a week-long break in November.

For returning students, who started coming back Tuesday it's a chance to get the administrative stuff out of the way before hitting the books.

For incoming Grade 9 students, such as Ms Green, it was a chance to find home rooms and get oriented before the older students arrive.

"I think she's ready," her

mother, Barb Wood, said.

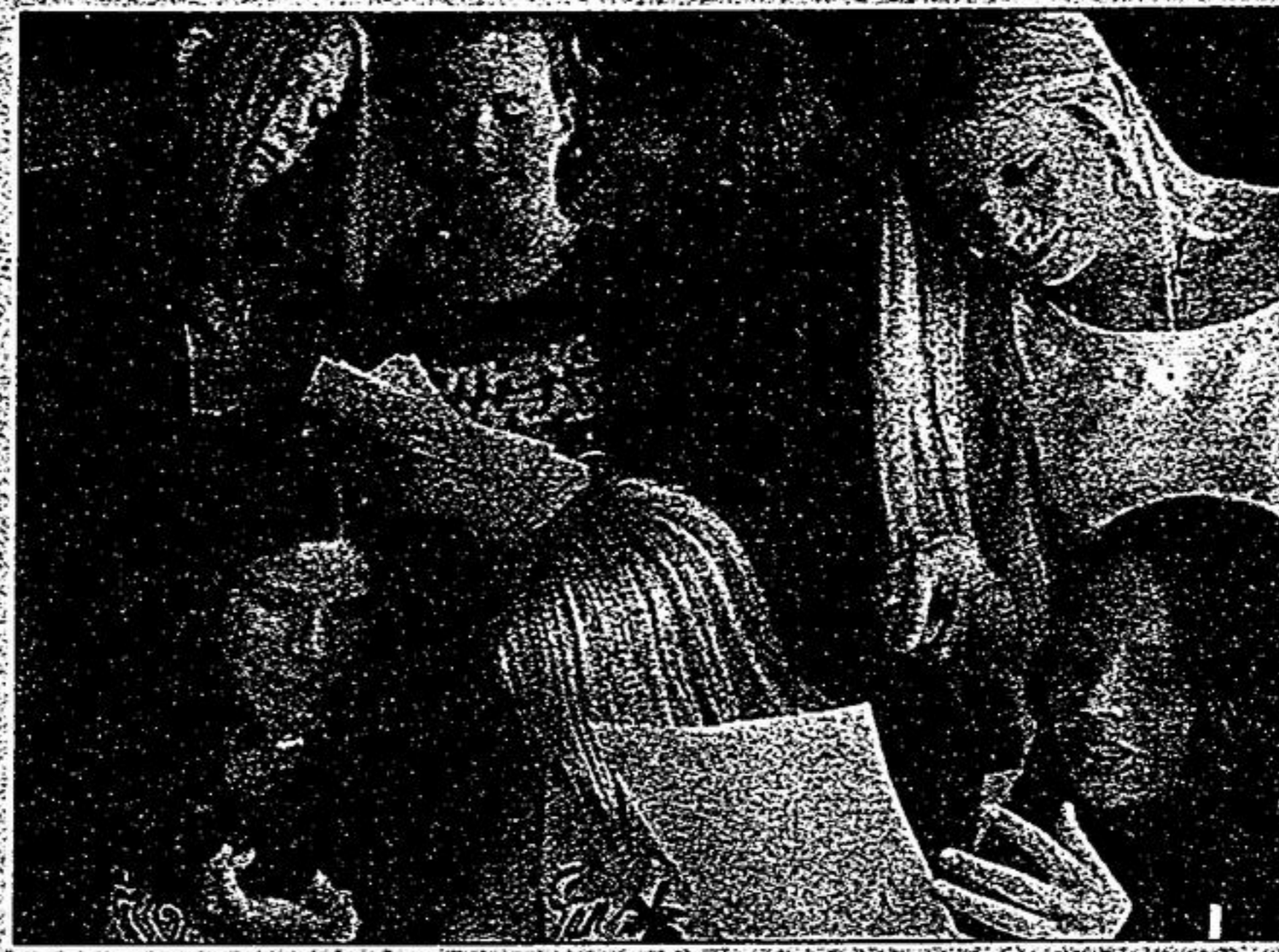
"I think the kids after the summer get kind of bored, so they're ready to come back a week early ... they say attendance really drops off around November and December, so coming back a week early, I think it's a great idea."

The early opening that Keswick High first tried last September and Markville Secondary is implementing this year for the first time, is just one of the ways in which parents and teachers are trying to ease those dreaded back-to-school jitters.

Most students feel a mixture of sadness and excitement just before the new school year, but students in those transitional years, who are leaving elementary school behind, are more often at risk for increased levels of anxiety, according to Glenn DiPasquale, chief psychologist for the York Region District School Board.

"It doesn't help they hear all those rumours from older kids about how terrible high school is," he said.

"Older kids like to scare the younger kids, but the fact is



STAFF PHOTO/SUSIE KOCKERSCHIEDT

Keswick High School Grade 9 students (front left) Morgan Green, Megan Robertson, Sasha Clements, (back left) Courtney de Mamby, Erin Burford, Bethany Stephens and Brittany Howard discuss schedules during lunch Monday.

we all survived it."

Regardless of what grade they're entering, it's normal for some children to feel anxiety about the upcoming year, he said.

While that is usually balanced by the excitement of seeing old friends again, he suggests concerned parents watch for any changes to the

child's sleeping or eating habits.

"I think parents should be careful they don't feed into the situation," he said.

"Attitude is everything and when a child starts to show dread about going back to school, that will get the parents worried and the kids can sense that. The only advice for

parents is try to stay excited, stay positive and draw the child back to the fun."

That advice also works for parents of students about to enrol in college or university, Angela Spiers said.


The Aurora-based consultant and guidance counsellor for EDvice Consulting said the elimination of OAC in high school means students are arriving on campus at a younger age, which can lead to stress for those who may not feel prepared for the change.

"I think parents are struggling with stress as well, which is normal because everyone in the family is going through the transition," she said, adding more and more schools are inviting parents to frosh week activities.

As for the students themselves, she said making connections is key.

Most schools have orientation events, open houses and peer mentoring programs designed to help incoming students find their footing and she recommends students take advantage of whatever is available.

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Anthony Hussain



Interests/Hobbies:
Baseball, hanging out with friends, mall

Saving Money:
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Saving Points:
To buy an X-Box




Gregory Kerr




Interests/Hobbies:
Computers, video games

Saving Money:
Buy a new computer



Elliot Kwan



Interests/Hobbies:
Talking with friends on the internet and sleeping

Saving Money:
Saving for a new pair of shoes




Sinthuja Skandeswaren




Interests/Hobbies:
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Saving Money:
University costs and a trip to France



Ben Tancock



Interests/Hobbies:
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