

OPINION

Stouffville Sun-Tribune
 A Metroland community newspaper
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Editorial

Police jumped gun issuing media release

York Regional Police's statement Janette Montgomery was under the influence of drugs the morning she crashed her car and died illustrates the dilemma that can be caused by scientific advances.

Last week, the police service issued an apology to the obviously dismayed Montgomery family.

The wealth of information police provide can create a dilemma for our newsrooms as we wrestle with whether or not we should publish such statements.

The facts were clear: Ms Montgomery's blood had levels of THC, the active ingredient in marijuana, trace amounts of ethanol, a form of alcohol, and benzoylecgonine, a metabolite of cocaine, according to a toxicology report from the Centre for Forensic Sciences.

Yet the report never stated she was impaired. The amount of alcohol in her blood was well under the legal limit and there is no legal level of THC that indicates impairment. Police stated she was impaired, based on the determination of a drug recognition expert, a breath alcohol technician and a collision investigator.

Claiming police jumped to conclusions without scientific proof, Ms Montgomery's family demanded officers retract the claim her daughter was impaired. The family was right.

It's a big leap to conclude the accident was the result of impaired driving. And while Chief Armand La Barge has personally apologized to the family, the police service's refusal to retract the statement she was impaired still leaves the family's emotional wounds open.

Her death seems tailor-made for the message York police are trying to convey to residents. As Canada's political system continues to debate the merits of legalizing marijuana, our cops have toughened their stand on the drug's use.

Police want to hammer home the message driving while impaired by marijuana can be fatal. A young woman's tragic death was used in an attempt to make that point. If only it were true, or at least, provable by scientific means.

Since it wasn't, making a public declaration was not only insensitive, but also inappropriate.

There is no law precluding us from printing the facts of this case or the police service's interpretation of them.

But just because we can publish all the details, should we?

It certainly gives us food for thought.



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

Stouffville has game for charity hockey, barring NHL return

For a guy who has made his living from hockey for more than 25 years, this has had to be one weird winter.

But Toronto Maple Leafs assistant coach Keith Acton has made the most of the NHL work stoppage, turning into a small-town rink rat again.

Just like when he was a kid and Stouffville Arena was on Park Drive.

The former NHL all-star and Stanley Cup champion was in the stands on the main ice pad Sunday afternoon watching his 11-year-old twins, Robbie and Elise, and their Stouffville Clipper teammates win the minor peewee division of their 48-team home-town tournament.

That night, he was on the other ice pad as guest coach of the Stouffville Spirit Jr. A team, leading the lads, including 17-year-old son Will, in a breakout drill.

All the while, a big smile on his face and the Maple Leaf logo proudly on the front of his parka.

CANCER RESEARCH

Keith will be back on the main pad the afternoon of Jan. 30, leading a celebrity team against the Spirit.

The occasion is The Game of our Lives II, the encore version of the 2002 game that sold out the rink in less than an hour and raised more than \$20,000 for cancer-related charities.

Gary Roberts will play along with his Stouffville brother Greg and Leaf teammate Tie Domi.

There won't be any Spirit players taking runs at Mr. Domi as rumoured in the Spirit dressing room Tuesday night. There isn't enough insurance in this country, the lads were warned.

The money will go to cancer causes again, including Leukemia Research Fund and the oncology unit at Markham Stouffville Hospital.

Keith Acton is a survivor of testicular cancer, a father, a coach and a true community spirit.

He won't say it, but the game is a celebration of that will as much as it is a noble effort to raise money to better the lives of others.

Stay tuned to this newspaper and stouffvillespirit.com for updates on roster additions and ticket sales.

See you at the rink. *Jim Mason is editor of The Sun-Tribune and an organizer of The Game of Our Lives II.*

Letters to the Editor

Taxpayers hit five times for tsunami donations

Re: York Region contributes \$500,000 to relief fund, Jan. 8.

It is unbelievable York Region politicians decided to donate \$500,000 of taxpayers' money to the tsunami relief fund without any debate.

When you read Vancouver will debate a motion Jan. 18 to give \$100,000 to relief efforts, Hamilton's \$25,000 donation for relief efforts and the outcry Kingston's plan to donate \$100,000 created, causing council there to back down from its proposal, why is York Region donating \$500,000?

Further, York Region is budgeting for a healthy 8.9-per-cent increase in property taxes in 2005 and used \$500,000 from the 2004 operating surplus.

Why wouldn't regional politicians apply this donation money to the 2005 budget deficit?

There is a definite lack of co-ordination by all levels of government when the federal, provincial, regional and municipal governments are all making donations.

In other words, taxpayers are donating to the same fund four times plus any personal donations they make.

In my particular situation, that makes it five times.

What other disasters have we, the taxpayers, had to contribute to five times?

FRANK V. VETERE
 MARKHAM

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

Alexander the Great a Greek

Re: Letter to editor, Movie didn't tell the truth, Jan. 6.

It is amazing how freely Steve Pliakes criticizes Oliver Stone's *Alexander The Great* while he shows his ignorance of Greek history and geography.

For the benefit of our Canadian readers who read your paper, I will clarify the truth.

Macedonia, Athens, Thivai, Corinth, Sparta, etc. were all independent kingdoms, yet were all located in Greece, geographically speaking.

Macedonia has been a geographic region in Greece since ancient times. It was split in 1922 by the big powers. One third went to former Yugoslavia and two thirds remain in Greece.

This is also to correct the claim that our area liberal MP, Lui Temelkovski, is a Macedonian. Simply, he is a Yugoslav.

Finally, Alexander the Great was a purebred Greek and educated people know it.

J. POULOS
 MARKHAM

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A York Region Newspaper Group community newspaper

The Sun-Tribune, published every Thursday and Saturday, is a member of the Metroland Printing, Publishing and Distributing Ltd., a wholly-owned subsidiary of Forstar Corporation. Metroland is comprised of 70 community publications across Ontario. The York Region Newspaper Group includes The Liberal, serving Richmond Hill and Thornhill, Vaughan Citizen, The Economist & Sun (Markham), The Era-Banner (Newmarket/Aurora), Stouffville Sun-Tribune, Georgina Advocate, York Region Business Times, North of the City, yorkregion.com and York Region Printing.