

OPINION

Stouffville Sun-Tribune
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Editorial

Vision must turn to action

The Character Community Council of York Region's second annual conference last week was themed Vision into Action. And that, in a nutshell, is the challenge we face with the character development initiative in York Region.

John Wright, senior vice-president of Ipsos-Reid, unveiled the results of a poll taken on community character that confirmed what many of us know.

On the surface of it, we live in communities with character.

"Character in Ontario is pretty good," Mr. Wright said, after surveying 1,000 people across the province about all aspects of community character. "People support it. People feel it's in their community."

But the pollster then drew a stark line between "propensity" and "intensity".

"Most people in Ontario have the notion character is alive and well in their communities, but when you look past the top line, you see the intensity of the view is half-hearted," he said.

In other words, while we can get all warm and fuzzy about character, when push comes to shove the intensity diminishes dramatically.

You know that if you drive on our roads, where the raised middle finger is an all too common salute.

You know that if your child is one of the many victims of bullying in our schools.

The reality is, time and time again, we tolerate dishonesty (see Gomery inquiry), disrespect, pessimism, irresponsibility, exclusivity, cowardice and lack of initiative.

But the good news is 90 per cent of respondents believe character can make a difference. Character has the potential to be much more than pie in the sky.

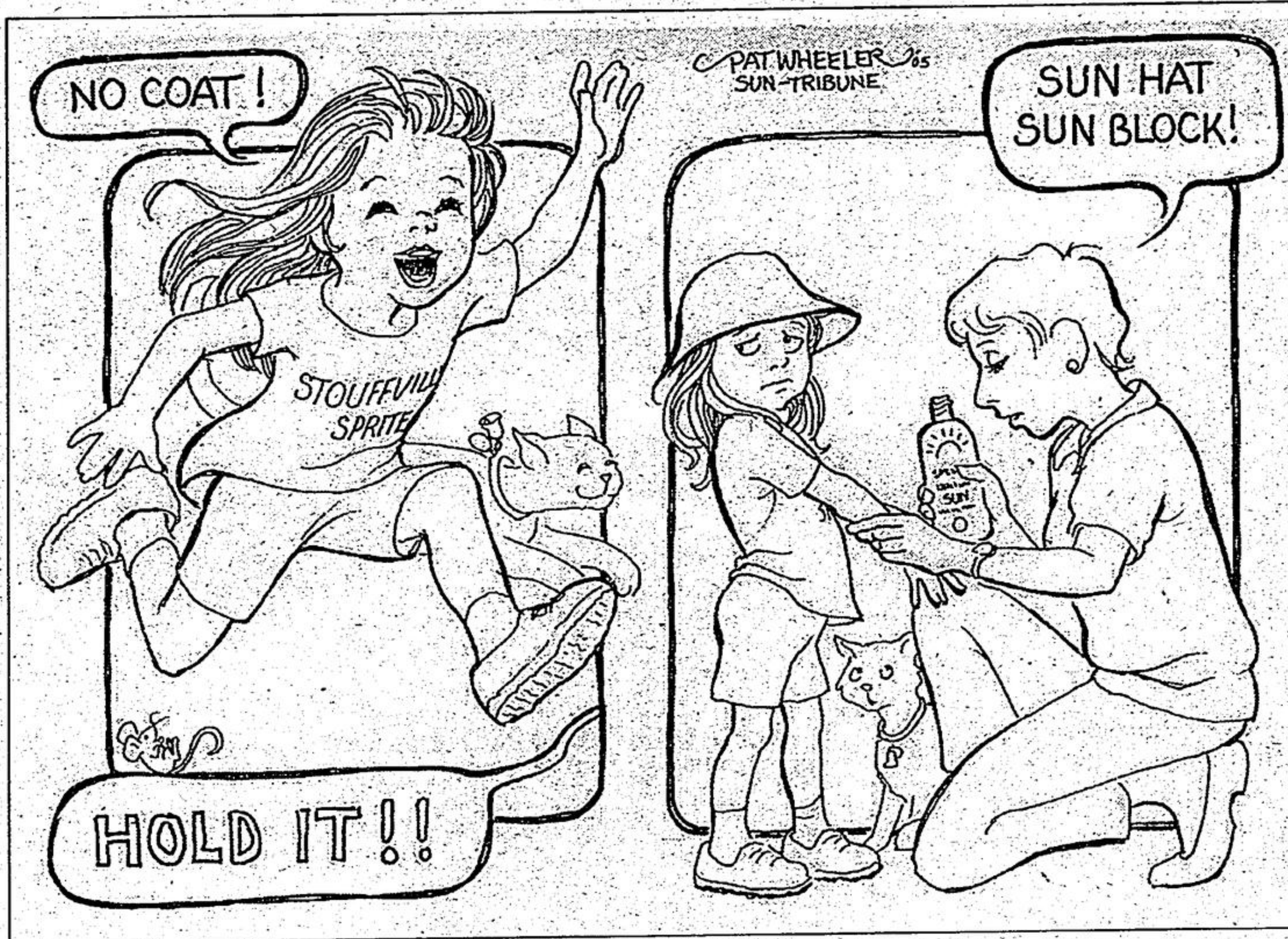
The challenge of the Character Community Council — our challenge — is to motivate those receptive citizens to embrace the fledging movement that literally has the potential to transform our lives. The vision must, indeed, become an action.

Mr. Wright likened the momentum to the growth of the environmental conscience in the late 1980s.

Few would have imagined what is commonplace today — most citizens have readily accepted their obligation to recycle, for instance, and will go to great lengths to divert waste from landfills.

The survey indicates there is hope a virtual tide of character can sweep through our communities, but we must do more than simply promote it.

We must stop tolerating and condoning the lack of character that, regrettably, is so often demonstrated.



Letters to the Editor

Councillors didn't show character

Re: Town hall theatre rejected, April 7.

I would like to thank all of those in the community who came to the meeting on the development of an arts and culture centre at 19 Civic Ave., packed the council chamber to the rafters and spoke with great passion and eloquence about their desire to see this happen.

It fills my heart with joy and wonder to see so many people from this community, young and old, professionals and children, new residents and old, coming together to try and create something we could be proud of in a place that has great historical significance. What a wonderful community of residents we have.

I thank Councillor Rob Hargrave, a true gentleman and the only councillor who seems to understand it is the role of government to listen to what the community wants and then try to make it happen. And to our mayor, Sue Sherban, who fought with ferociousness to try and get the rest of council to understand this basic concept, thank you.

As for the rest of council, the sadness that I feel, to see this wonderful idea shot down, is overwhelmed by the extreme embarrassment I feel by your absolutely shameful and ignorant treatment of the two consultants who did our feasibility study.

While I understand there were legitimate concerns over the information provided by the study, I cannot understand why two professionals should be publicly berated in such a rude and caustic manner. I shudder to think of the damage this is going to do to the reputation of this town.

I thought that we were a character community, but I guess this must only apply to the residents.

PAM MANDICH
 STOUFFVILLE

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@yrmg.com

Elvis festival good for Stouffville

Re: Tattoo parlours, Elvis festival not what downtown needs, letter, March 31.

We had never been to Stouffville or even thought of coming until we heard about the Elvis festival in your community.

We attended, as did a lot of other retired adults, and had a wonderful time and spent money at your restaurants and shops.

We also go to the largest Elvis fest in Ontario, in Collingwood, and it remains a beautiful place.

People go to enjoy good music and see friends made over the years at the other Elvis fests in new places.

Perhaps letter writer Brian Claman should go and see what the festival is all about before comparing it to a tattoo parlour.

Many of the Elvis tribute artists donate many hours to charity work.

We hope the Elvis fest remains in Stouffville.

Thank you, thank you very much. See you there.

WAYNE & MARILYN YOUNG
 WELLAND



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

Thanks, muskrat, for making our weekend

It came as no surprise the muskrat was responsible for a weekend incident that forced 50 northern Whitchurch-Stouffville families to boil their water.

The muskrat is my personal public enemy No. 1.

He was blamed for the deposit of thousands of gallons of raw sewage into Bogart Creek, between Ballantrae and Vandorf at the Aurora Road Friday. He didn't produce the excrement that fouled the water. King Coal Ducks' bird of choice took care of that. But Mr. Muskrat apparently ripped a hole in a retention pond that let the duck do pour out and do its bad thing to the water supply.

Very nice, muskrat.

Radio and TV reporters were warning neighbours to disinfect their water, while trying to pronounce our town's full name. One news organization made it sound like the tainted water story that crippled this town in the early 1980s was back. (History lesson: a health study 20 years ago disproved claims that an abandoned dump south of Ballantrae was making residents sick or worse.)

Thanks for the memories, Muskrat.

It wasn't bad enough that one of your kind disrupted my Sunday afternoon nap on the previous weekend, turning the remainder of the day off into an adventure that could have left me in my own legal do-do. My PGA viewing was abruptly interrupted by a loud scratching at a rec room window. We don't own a cat. The kids are too old for such high jinx. Must look up.

Yikes!

I'm not Hinterland Who's Who but what looked down at me, stuck in the window well, was a cross between a beaver and a rat.

But the Canadian Wildlife service says the muskrat is "basically a large field mouse that has adapted to life in and around water".

And my yard in suburban Stouffville.

At least until we hoisted this Tasmanian devil of a fighter onto the lawn and eventually placed him in a guinea pig cage for the drive to his new home, Island Lake.

The friendly folks at the OSPCA later told me I'd contravened some law — maybe the muskrat-human treaty — by moving the intruder more than one kilometer from my, er, his home. Arrest me.

Then again, if this same varmint is responsible for spewing tons of duck manure across the town, I apologize.

And no, Captain and Tenille's Greatest Hits aren't playing in my car. No Muskrat Love on me.

Jim Mason is editor of The Sun-Tribune.

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