

Delays done, safety village set to open

BY JOAN RANSBERRY
Staff Writer

Despite weather and construction problems, the doors to York Region's \$4-million Community Safety Village are slated to open in Whitchurch-Stouffville Saturday.

The miniature village on a six-acre site at Bruce's Mill Conservation Area was to open in the fall of 2003.

Project spokesperson Rodney Sine, a staff sergeant with York Regional Police, said poor weather and construction problems delayed the project which is designed to keep children across York Region safe.

"We had a holdup due to wet weather and we had huge delays from in-kind donations," Staff-Sgt. Sine said. "The construction problems have now been put to bed. Everything has been settled and we're going to open."

"It's to serve all of York Region," he said. "As for Whitchurch-Stouffville, it's wonderful to have it in their own back yard."

The village is life-like and child-size, with 30 buildings, roadways, traffic lights and street signs.

It's reproduced to scale from architectural features found in rural and urban Ontario communities. Highlights include a town hall, railway station, school, shops, police station, fire hall and post office.

About 30,000 children are expected to visit the village every year.

They start their day in a classroom by taking a lesson in traffic, bicycle and pedestrian safety.

Outside the classroom, the children will practise their skills as they walk, ride, bicycle or drive motorized vehicles in the controlled environment of the village.

To date, \$3.2 million has

been raised towards the project. Most of the money came from corporate sponsorship. The campaign is short \$800,000.

Corporations sponsored most of the buildings and other features. Sponsors are needed for a one-acre park and community room.

The opening is the result of "six years work" by a volunteer board of directors, police, Vanbots Construction and other community partners, York Regional Police Chief Armand La Barge said.

Donations of time, resources and money went into construction.

"Children will learn and practice lessons in traffic and fire safety, parents will learn how to correctly install infant car seats and programs will be available for young drivers, seniors and youth, making the village a valuable resource for people of all ages," he said.

OPENING DAY EVENTS

Citizens have the opportunity to visit with the officers from the police service's units including canine, emergency response, air support and traffic from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The police pipes and drum band perform at 10:30 a.m. and the police male chorus at 1:30 p.m.

Children can meet Bobby Bear, the service's new mascot, enjoy face painting and take part in a colouring contest. Parents can have their children fingerprinted by Child Find and volunteers from the Stouffville Policing Centre.

There will be a barbecue from noon to 2 p.m.

Police Week events will be held at the village between May 16 and 20.

Tours will be held daily between from 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. Police officers will deliver evening presentations on safety topics.



The Stouffville Volunteer Firefighters Association is ready for Saturday's opening of the Community Safety Village at Bruce's Mill. Village fire safety educator Melanie Duke accepted a \$1,450 donation from association president Chris Leonard and retired deputy chief Murray Emmerson. The donation will pay for a smoke simulation machine in the apartment of Snoopy, the fire department mascot.

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