

Festival bloomin' good show

More than 7,000 visitors expected at two-day event

BY JOAN RANSBERRY
Staff Writer

An upcoming flower and garden festival in Unionville promises to be a show stopper.

More than 7,000 people are expected to attend the two-day event June 10-12 at the Angus Glen Community Centre at 3990 Major Mackenzie Dr.

Mayor Don Cousens has issued a special invitation to all of Markham.

"The festival is an excellent way to get Markham residents interested in gardening while inviting them to visit Angus Glen, our newest community centre," Mr. Cousens said.

As part of the Community In Bloom program, the Markham Flower and Garden Festival is sponsored by the town and Kate Seaver of Kate's Garden.

Ms Seaver hopes the show will be a success.

"It will be a small-scale Canada Blooms-type event," Ms Seaver said. "The festival provides a unique opportunity to focus on the goals of Community in Bloom. Hopefully, by focusing on the environment, beautifying our town and volunteering, Markham will, once again, be recognized as an award winner in this national competition."

Communities in Bloom is a friendly competition among municipalities that recognizes participation in landscape beautification, heritage and cultural

preservation and environmental awareness.

Markham first participated in the program in 1996 when it won at the provincial level, leading to a national competition in 1997. As the Canadian Communities in Bloom champion, Markham competed internationally in 1998 and received recognition for achievement in the environmental awareness category.

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The flower and garden festival includes celebrity guest speakers, including Mark Cullen, Denis Flanagan, Beckie Fox and Marjorie Mason.

"There will be three theatres of free seminars, lectures and hands-on demonstrations," Ms Seaver said. "There will be exhibition space for landscapers to showcase hardscaping, softscaping and garden decor products and ideas."

The show will be a marketplace for vendors of plants, gardening tools, products, garden art and floral-related products. "It's a juried floral competition to allow local horticultural groups to showcase their abilities," Ms Seaver added.

Proceeds from the festival will go toward the restoration of the garden at the McKay Art Centre, formerly known as the Eckhardt-McKay House in Unionville.

Group of Seven painter Fred Varley lived in the house for the last 13 years of his life. The Fred Varley Art Gallery is steps away from the house.

The town-owned house is now "a lovely gallery and studio space for local and budding artists," Ms Seaver said. "The garden, now less than inspiring, stands in need of care."

The goal is to create "a venue with much greater access to the public, as it provides both an integral link in the story of the Group of Seven and the history of our community," Ms Seaver said. "The net profits of the festival are being donated so that the garden can be restored to the time when Fred Varley painted it."

Community Blooms program manager Catherine Harrison said the flower and garden show is "a great way for everyone to get involved" in restoring the garden of one of Markham's historical buildings.

Advanced tickets to the festival are \$6. Tickets are available at Kate's Garden, Pine Ridge Garden Gallery, Varley Art Gallery and the Markham Civic Centre. Tickets at the door are \$8 for adults and \$7 for seniors and students, children under 12 years are free.

For more information, call 905-475-7674 or e-mail katesgardenstore@hotmail.com



STAFF PHOTO/STEVE SOMERVILLE

Kate Seaver, of Kate's Garden, hopes the festival will encourage residents to beautify their properties.

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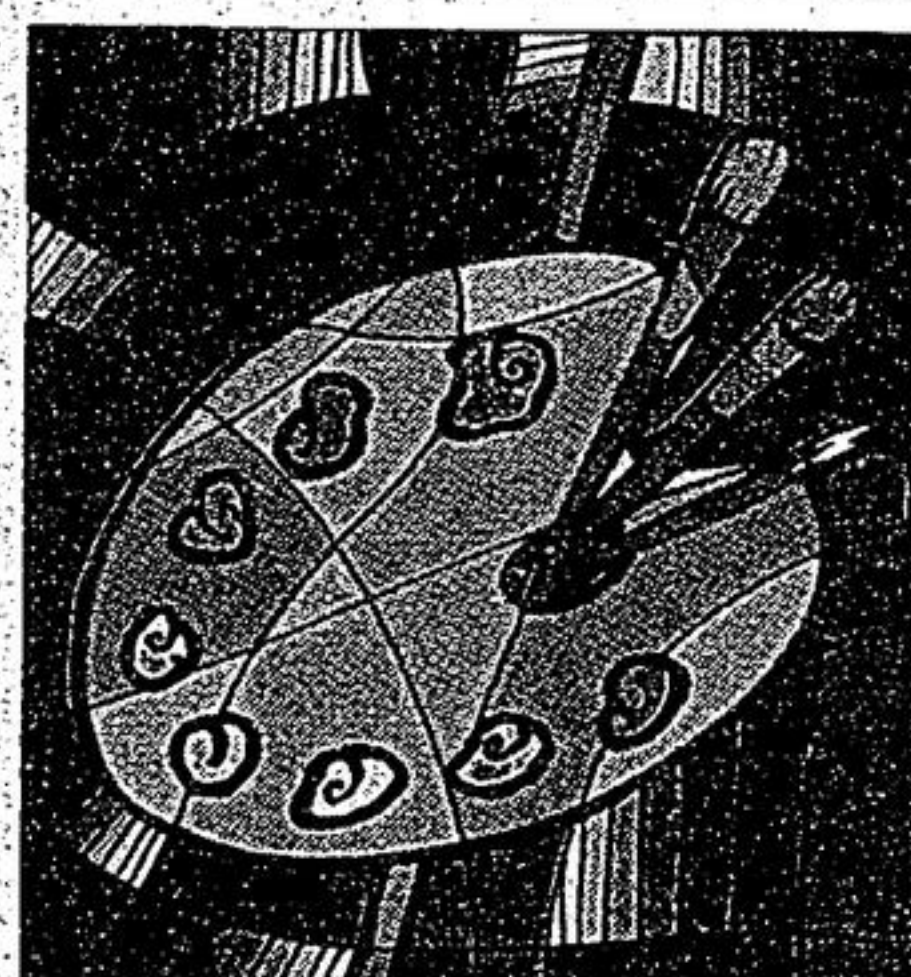
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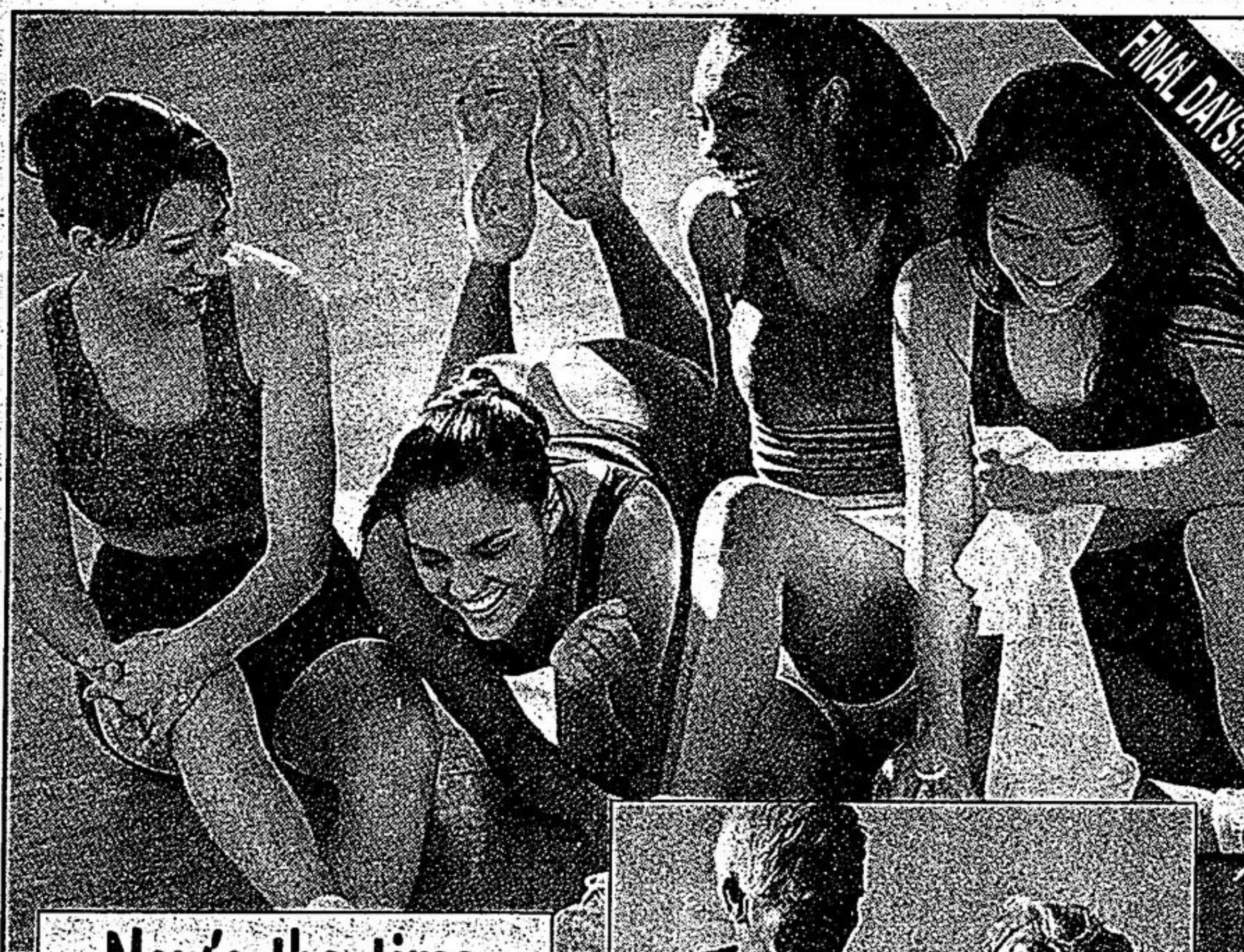
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