

Student turns page at Queen's Park

Twelve-year-old Michael Bourgeois has been working at Queen's Park Toronto for the past three weeks.

He was one of 80 students chosen from more than 500 applicants to be a page in the Ontario legislature.

The Grade 7 student at Balantrae Public School is responsible for delivering messages and other items to MPPs when the legislature is sitting. He's met with politicians such as MPP Frank Klees and has had a chance to see politics in action. The pages have met with Premier Dalton McGuinty and have had lunch with Michael Brown, the Speaker of the House.

Only grades 7 and 8 students with an average of 80 per cent or more are considered for the Ontario government program.

Pages serve either a three- or six-week term.

The schools have to approve and give a leave of absence for their students to take part in the page program. Students catch up on their school work through tutoring twice a week.

"They get to know all their Members of (Provincial) Parliament first-hand," Michael's mom Ann Bourgeois said.

Pages often don't finish their

Our Town

with Hannelore Volpe

day until 6 p.m.

"It is really fun being a page," Michael said. "You get to know a lot of the MPPs."

Michael has found the Legislature to be a lot busier than he thought "with everyone asking for different things from the pages."

Twenty pages work in each of the four sessions.

Michael would definitely recommend the program for anyone interested in politics. Although a career in politics isn't his first choice, it is something he will consider in future.

As part of the application process, would-be pages have to answer six essay questions.

For information on how to apply for the legislative page program at Queen's Park, call 416-325-7457 or e-mail to page_program@ontla.ola.org

Enchanted objects dance in Beauty and the Beast

The youthful cast of the York Durham Academy for the Performing Arts production of *Beauty and the Beast* brings the 'story as old as time' to Stouffville this weekend.

The musical takes place at EastRidge Evangelical Church in Stouffville March 2 to 4 with performances at 7 p.m. tonight (Thursday) and Friday and at 12:30 p.m. Saturday.

The action is set in the French countryside of long ago where Belle lives with her eccentric inventor father. When he doesn't return from a trip, she rushes off to find him, ending up in an old castle held by a horrible beast. She eventually transforms him into a handsome prince.

The play is performed by a cast of about 50 young people ranging in age from six to 13.

Belle is portrayed by Clara Hoover, who slowly transforms the Beast, played by Nick Turman.

Mrs. Potts, the teapot, is played by Breanna Maloney while Andee Hoover plays Chip, the little teacup.

The imaginative costumes have been created by local resident Pam Mandich. They include "enchanted objects" such as the dancing cutlery, plates and napkins.

Wayne Hill is the producer. Todd Martin directs and Jaime Wagg is the choreographer. Natalie Wu is the musical director.

New this year for the York Durham Academy for the Performing Arts is the school program, where local school groups can see the play and meet with the cast, producer and directors afterward to learn more about musical theatre. They'll be attending a performance of *Beauty and the Beast* during the day Friday.

Tickets are \$19 for adults and \$15 for children and seniors. They can be purchased at www.y-shows.ca.

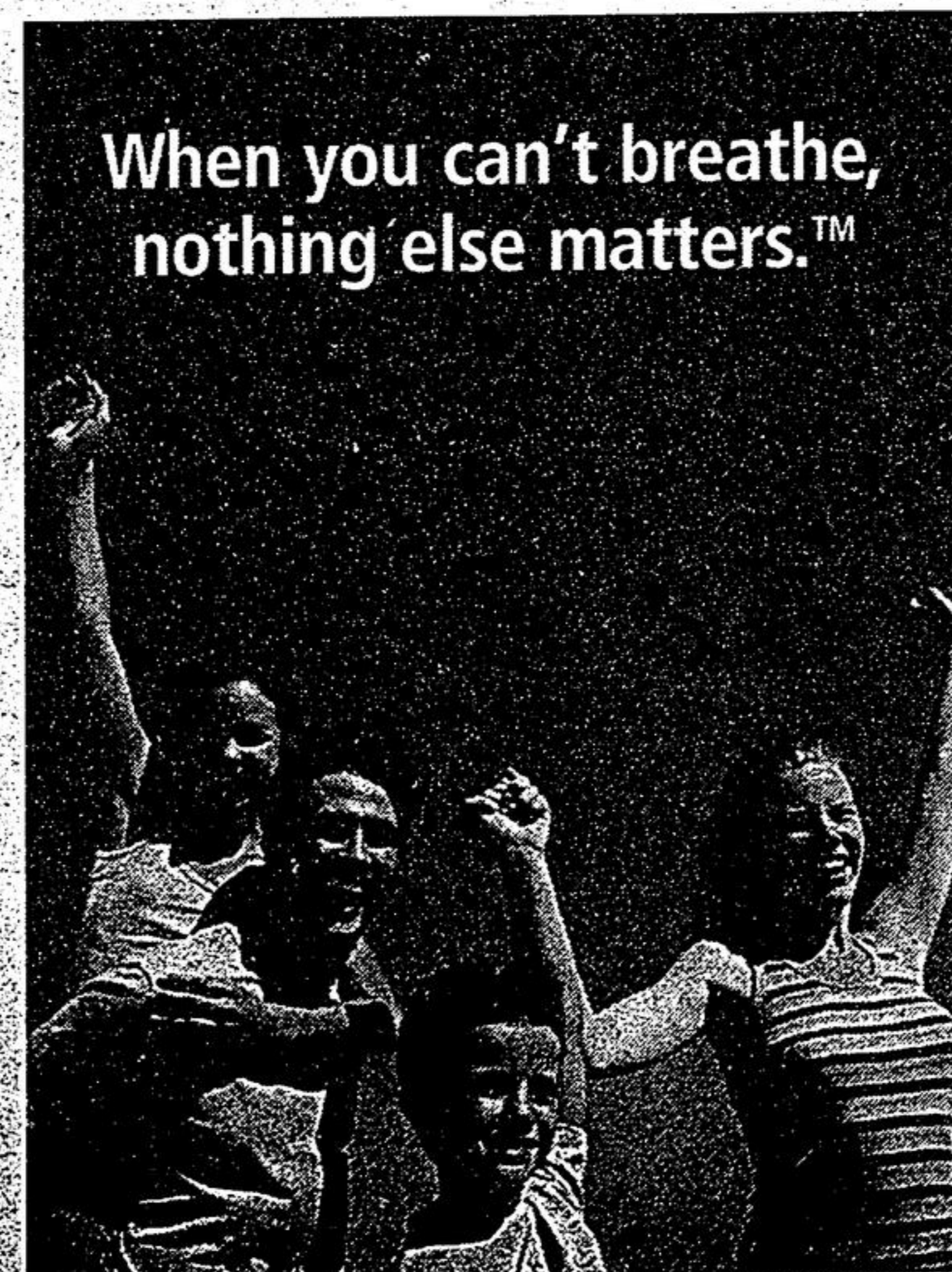
The church is located at 12485 Tenth Line, north of Main Street.

The next YDAPA productions are the *Sound of Music* from May 4 to 6 with performances at 7 p.m. on the Thursday and Friday and at 11 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. on Saturday, followed by *Little Shop of Horrors*, presented as Stouffville's first dinner theatre June 9 and 10. The dinner theatre is being held in the Great Hall of Christ Church Anglican.

A program to help youngsters improve their skills in singing, dancing and acting is being planned by YDAPA for later in March.



MICHAEL BOURGEOIS



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