



Stephanie Mak (left) and partner Pauline Zhang of Milliken Mills Public School perform for an adjudicator at Christ Church Anglican in Stouffville Monday.

*...alive with the sound of music*



STAFF PHOTOS/STEVE SOMERVILLE

Adjudicator David Ford leads Milliken Mills Public School's string ensemble during the Music Alive 2006 festival put on by Artslink, a non-profit York Region organization. Musicians are judged but the event is non-competitive. The six-week festival ends May 4.

## Women turned away from York shelters

BY CAROLINE GRECH  
Staff Writer

You have finally made the decision to leave an abusive relationship, and have even called a local shelter, only to find there is no space.

It's happening to at least one York Region woman a week and with a growing population shelter staff fear it will only get worse.

"Over the last six months we've exceeded our occupancy rates and often Sandgate (in Georgina) is full as well," said Yellow Brick House executive director Lorris Herenda.

Sandgate Women's Shelter of Georgina has about 30 beds.

With only two shelters to serve women in a region of 900,000, shelter staff are often forced to refer victims to Toronto.

"We're in dire need," Ms Herenda said.

Relocating a woman to another area comes with a new set of problems, however.

"When a woman is asked to leave an area she is familiar with, some of them choose to stay in their situation until a bed becomes available," Ms Herenda explained, adding staff always explain the risks of staying in an abusive situation.

Yellow Brick House in Aurora, which has 21 beds, receives about 40 crisis calls a day. It usually takes about four phone calls before a woman decides to take refuge in a shelter, Ms Herenda said.

The growing population is just one of the factors con-

tributing to more women using the shelter, Ms Herenda said.

Another factor is a growing awareness of the help available to victims of abuse.

Women new to the country are also finding out Yellow Brick House, which adds to the pressure to provide more beds.

"We are able to educate them in their own language and let them know there is help out there," Ms Herenda said.

*"Over the last six months we've exceeded our occupancy rates and often Sandgate (in Georgina) is full as well."*

The Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services determines funding based on current population and the projected female population, ministry spokesperson Paul Doig said.

The rural population in a region is also considered when decisions on funding are made.

Although more cash from the government is needed, the United Way of York Region just announced \$457,000 to go to shelters for abused women in the region.

The money will go to programs at the Sandgate shelter, preventative programs to educate women about abuse, children's programs at Yellow Brick House.

## Markham Wal-Mart Associates Support Earth Day with Randal Public School planting gardens



Wal-Mart associates from Markham are setting out to support Earth Day by planting & donating supplies to Randall Public school for their front gardens. Local Wal-Mart store associates took part in the activities April 21, 2006. They were joined in their efforts by students in the school. Earth Day is held each year on April 22, to promote environmental awareness globally in over 180 countries.

"Each year, Earth Day activities take place at Wal-Mart stores across the country, and are an important part of Wal-Mart Canada's commitment to our environment," says Michelle Osborne, store manager of the Markham Wal-Mart. "Here locally, we're proud to participate in activities that enhance the community where we live and work."

Wal-Mart Canada is an active partner to various charities & community groups primarily focused on children's health & education & Canadian causes like the environment.

For the past two years, Wal-Mart Canada has partnered with Evergreen to fund Wal-Mart's **Green Grants**, an environmental revitalization project. With a donation of \$300,000 each year to fund **Green Grants**, the program provides funding to community-based organizations across the country to restore key urban habitats, such as woodlands, meadows, wetlands and ravines.

Established in 1994 & headquartered in Mississauga, Wal-Mart Canada operates one of the strongest community involvement programs in Canada under the Wal-Mart "Good Works" banner. Every week Wal-Mart Canada raises & donates more than \$190,000 to Canadian charities, & last year alone contributed close to \$10 million to causes across Canada. Over the past 11 years the company has contributed more than \$50 million to Canadian charities and organizations in need.

