

# Student writers find place in inaugural symposium

BY HANNELORE VOLPE  
Staff Writer

More than 200 students and teachers from across York Region attended a writing symposium that came about because a Stouffville parent couldn't find a school geared to writers.

Tom Donoghue's daughter, Alice, has been expressing herself in writing since kindergarten. She writes poetry and prose. She loves to write about horses.

When it was time to look for a high school, he found there were programs for dancers, drama enthusiasts, musicians and artists, but nothing for writers.

*'Although the board couldn't add a writing program... (it) began working on what was to become the first ever Writers Guild symposium.'*

He decided to phone the York Region District School Board to see what could be done. Although the board couldn't add a writing program to its schools, superintendent of education John Havercroft was receptive to Mr. Donoghue's plight and began working on what was to become the first ever Writers Guild symposium.

The symposium, called Words, Words, Words, was a chance for students to get excited about writing and be inspired by their peers, Stouffville District Secondary School teacher Raquel Cosme said.

She took 11 students to the symposium, mainly from her Grade 9 academic English and Grade 12 writ-

ers' craft classes.

There were workshops on how to get published, scriptwriting for the novice, slam poetry, crime writing, journalism and others.

The symposium took place May 23 at Richmond Green High School in Richmond Hill.

Alice, who is 14, has found her Grade 9 English class, taught by Ms Cosme, to be an inspiration.

Alice is just one writer at SDSS who Ms Cosme wants to encourage with a special writing program next year.

She would like the students to have a safe space to express themselves in writing.

Many students think you have to do something like work for a newspaper before you can write. Not so, according to Ms Cosme.

"If you decide to write and find joy in it, you are a writer," she said.

Kelly Doran, who is in Grade 10, was drawn to the slam poetry workshop, which she described as outspoken, harsh and loud, and meant to be read out loud, at the symposium.

Kelly would eventually like to join the Student Association of Songwriters at SDSS to explore songwriting.

"The symposium inspired me, seeing the stuff that other teenagers could write," she said.

The 16-year-old writes all the time at home, about problems that are bothering her, becoming more motivated, and family and friends.

She's aiming to take journalism at either Ryerson University or George Brown College.

Crime writing holds a fascination for 15-year-old Corey Knecht. The Grade 9 student at SDSS has been writing for several years, but really got jump-started with Ms Cosme's English class.

Corey likes to delve into the characters' traits in his stories and see "how far I can go with that — how much I can relay to the reader."

After taking the crime writing workshop at the symposium, Corey learned how to better deal with missing pieces of information in his stories, he said.

He's planning to write short fantasy stories over the summer.



**ALICE DONOGHUE:** Stouffville student's love of writing led to board creating symposium.

## New coffee shop wants to be cultural hub

Coffee culture is coming to town with the opening of For the Love of Jo, a bohemian-style coffee house in the heart of Stouffville.

Visitors can sample organic and fair trade specialties and pastries at the opening Saturday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. at 6308 Main St.

The coffee house is owned by musicians Grant and Jo Ivens of the Slime Dogs. Ms Ivens is running the business, which offers speciality coffees, soft drinks and pastries.

"Our focus is to turn it into a real cultural hub for

Stouffville," Mr. Ivens said. The coffee house will feature art shows and live music, mostly acoustic, on Saturdays and Sunday afternoons. There will also be free high-speed wireless internet connections.

At the opening, The Family Quarles is performing Celtic music at 12:30 p.m. and Ms Ivens is singing jazz accompanied by Dan Irwin on keyboards at 2 p.m. The Slime Dogs perform rock music, unplugged, at 4 p.m.

The Ivens are long-time Stouffville residents and operate an advertising company in Markham.

For more information on the coffee house's events, check out [www.loveofjo.com](http://www.loveofjo.com)

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