

# United Way adds three agencies

BY SIMONE JOSEPH  
Staff Writer

## NEW SERVICES IN REGION

### ► YORK REGION FOOD NETWORK:

Advocates on behalf of the hungry and food access agencies such as food banks;

### ► SOCIAL SERVICES NETWORK:

An information and referral agency linking the South Asian Community in York Region to services;

### ► LITERACY COUNCIL-YORK SIMCOE:

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An announcement this week has the potential to bring more food for the hungry, literacy training for the needy and drop-in centres for senior citizens in York Region.

The United Way announced Thursday it is bringing three community agencies under its umbrella: The Literacy Council York-Simcoe, Social Services Network for York Region and the York Region Food Network.

Social Services Network for York Region, an information and referral service that links the South Asian community in York Region to service providers, received \$50,000.

"This will take us to the next level of direct services," said Naushad Hirji, the network's chairperson.

The network will use the money to establish seniors drop-in centres across York Region. The program will not extend to Vaughan, which is already served by a new program called Integrating Communities run by CHATS (Community Home Assistance to Seniors) and Human Endeavour, a community development and social justice organization. This program is also supported by new United Way funding.

But while the Vaughan program operates out of the Vellore Community Centre, Social Services Network's program will

use places of worship, such as mosques and temples.

This is the obvious place to run a program aimed at new immigrants, said Charanjit Bamra, a member of the network's board.

"The natural place for them to go is places of worship," he said.

The drop-in program will run out of 10 locations, mostly in Markham and Richmond Hill. These centres, which will start out serving about 300 seniors, will open Oct. 1. They will run once a week for four to five hours.

The network hopes to expand it.

The York Region Food Network received \$50,000 to operate a food bag drive, a task it has never done before because it would have been too expensive. Bags will go to York Region homes during fall and spring food drives and donated food will go to York Region food banks.

"We're hoping people will realize it (the food) will stay in York Region," said Linda Alderson, treasurer of the network's board of directors.

The bags, which will first be delivered in October, will contain a message about the risk of homelessness and a person's right to food security, she said.

"We found food donation has plummeted and demand has increased by 21 per cent since 2001," said Elizabeth Brims, executive director of the network.

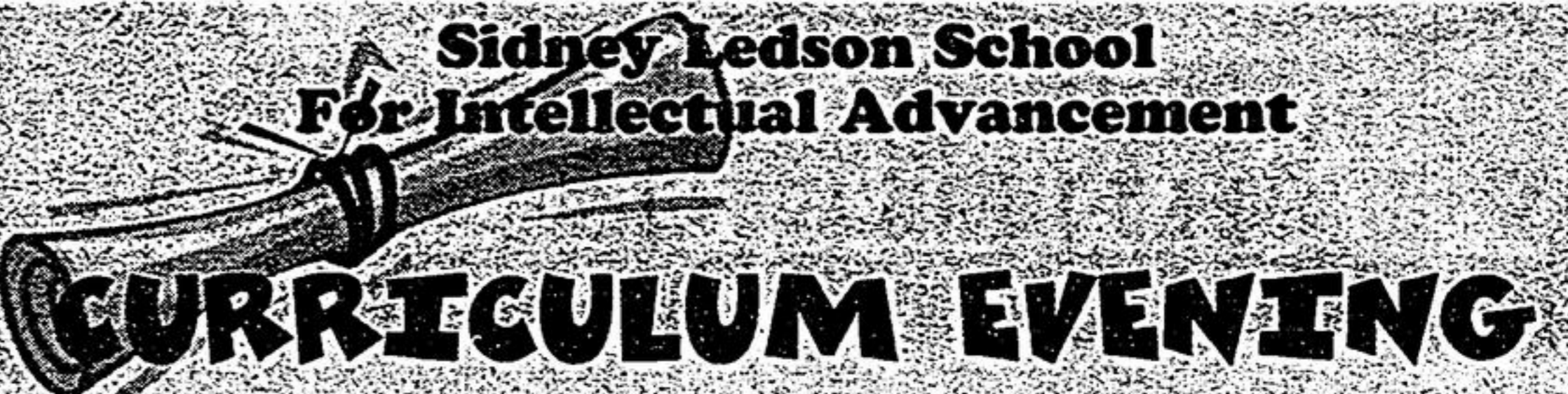
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