

Profits likely up at Nofrills this year

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said Helene Johnson, president of the Whitchurch-Stouffville Chamber of Commerce.

It's impossible to compete with Wal-Mart, she said. That's why retailers have to offer either upscale or less expensive merchandise.

For money-conscious young families, Wal-Mart is a good place to buy clothes and other items, she said.

"Overall, it (the arrival of Wal-Mart) has been very good," Mrs. Johnson said.

Despite the location of the giant retailer just outside of town, a new pet shop opened in Stouffville just three weeks ago.

Mayer's Pet Shop moved its business of 45 years from Toronto to Main Street, near the Stouffville Fire Hall.

Another downtown pet store, the Pet Stop, closed earlier this year.

People come into the shop delighted there is a downtown pet shop again, Ms Balek said.

Wal-Mart was no deterrent to opening a business here, she said. In her old location, Wal-Mart, Zellers and large grocery stores were nearby and another pet shop was across the street.

What sets her shop apart from the big box retailers is the extensive selection of pets, including fish, birds and small animals, and everything needed to look after them.

Sydney's Home Decor and More has an edge on big-box stores because of the

services it offers, owner Lisa Harrison said.

She opened her business several months before Wal-Mart arrived. She sells gift items, furniture and home decorating items that can be personalized to the customer. Towels can have names, initials or sayings embroidered on them. The store also offers decorating and furniture refinishing services and sells antiques.

When people go to box stores, they know what they are going to buy. When they go to the little shops, they come across all kinds of unique items they weren't expecting, Ms Harrison said.

Pat Montgomery of Candlelight and Memories, a downtown tea and gift shop, has noticed sales are down since Wal-Mart came.

People grocery shopping at Wal-Mart, for instance, will stay at the store to buy items such as candles, napkins and small gifts so they don't have to make another stop, she said.

Her shop has many items not found in larger stores.

A lot of faithful customers return to her shop again and again, Mrs. Montgomery said, because of the merchandise and prices.

The super-centre hasn't had an altogether detrimental effect on Steve and Liz Balsdon's Nofrills store.

Although sales were down somewhat when Wal-Mart opened, Mr. Balsdon is expecting profits to be up for this year-end.

"Stouffville people are pretty loyal to

our store," he said.

The initial effect Nofrills experienced certainly wasn't what many American grocery stores encounter, a drop in sales of between 20 to 30 per cent in the wake of Wal-Mart's arrival, Mr. Balsdon said.

The IDA Drug Store prepared itself for Wal-Mart's arrival by eliminating some lines of merchandise and combining operations with Houston Pharmacy. The drug store offers traditional and alternative medicines and products as well as personalized nutrition counselling.

Even though many people come to Wal-Mart from other municipalities, they "aren't too likely to come to our store," owner Rob Croxall said.

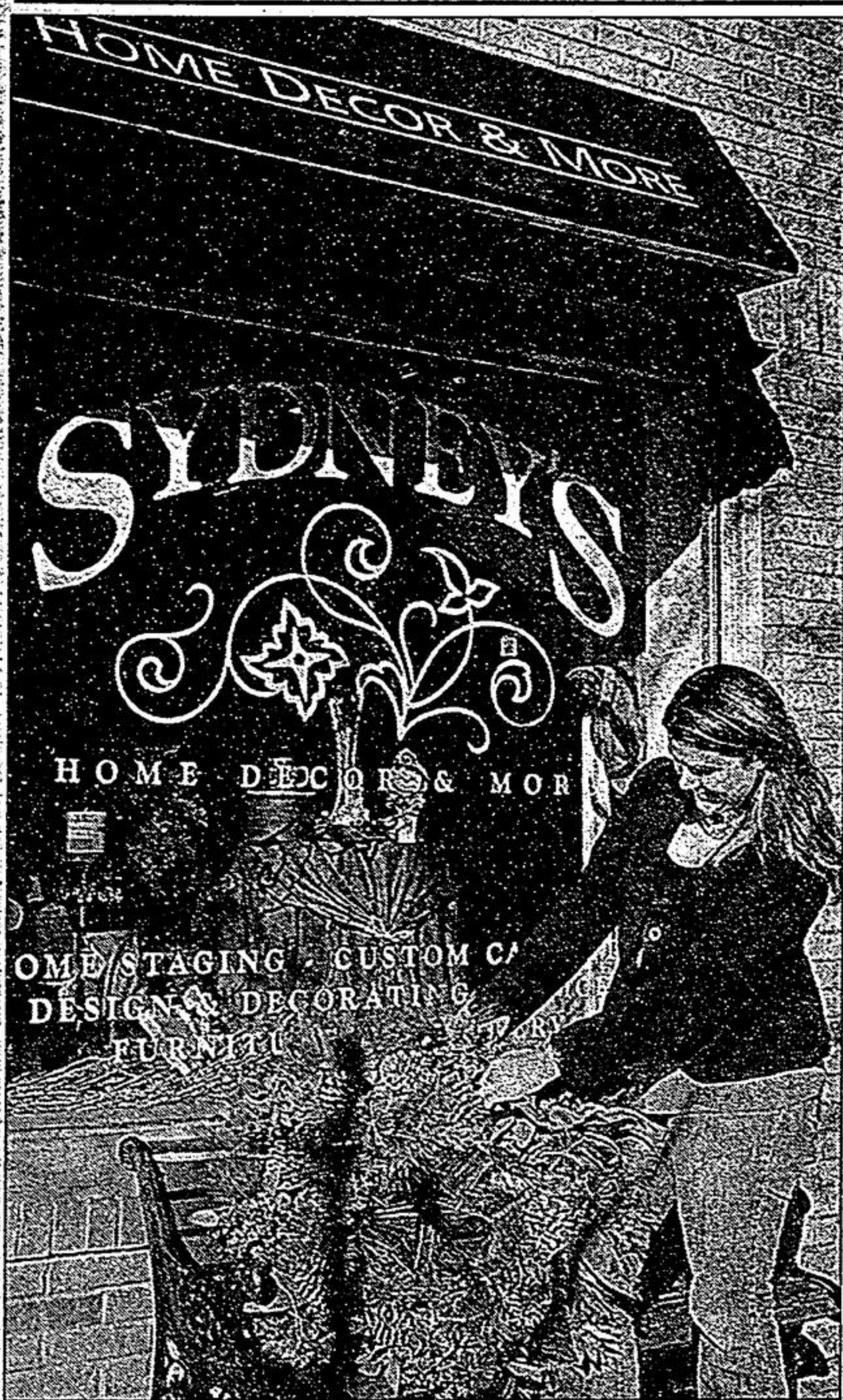
Lynda Sargeant of Lindy's Floral Boutique believes it's beneficial to Stouffville if people stay in town to shop, in the big box stores or in the downtown area.

"Sooner or later, they will patronize the downtown," she said.

The Wal-Mart store is a few years ahead of its time, Mayor Wayne Emmer-son said. "We have less than 28,000 people in the municipality."

In the past four years, only about 3,000 new residents have moved here, he said. Many customers come from Markham and beyond, he said.

Canadian Tire opened its new store, which is three times the size of the old outlet on Main Street, next to Wal-Mart this month. It includes a Mark's Work Warehouse store. Boston Pizza and Tim Hortons restaurants are under construction, with more stores coming to the complex.



STAFF PHOTO/HANNELORE VOLPE

Lisa Harrison opened Sydney's Home Decor and More in downtown Stouffville in advance of Wal-Mart opening last year. It's advantage is offering unique services.

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IMPORTANT NOTICE

STOUFFVILLE COMMUNITY POLICING CENTRE

Change of Location: LMPR ROOM Lebovic Centre

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
 Nov. 19/07 - 7:30p.m.

The purpose of this meeting is to elect the officers for the coming year, and give a financial report for year end. The general public are encouraged to attend and even get involved, should they be so inclined.

The Speaker of the evening will be; Staff Sergeant, **Ricky S. Veerappan**, Diversity & Cultural Resources Y.R.P. The topic will be: The changing Culture of our Community

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