

OPINION

Stouffville Sun-Tribune

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Editorial

Paying it forward at Christmas

Halloween wasn't even upon us and the excesses of Christmas and whatever other holidays you are celebrating at this time of year were upon us.

The messages were every where: Buy this, do that, give this and cook this meal for the perfect holiday.

Trouble is none of the above express the true meaning of the season.

It's about giving, especially giving back, for those who are able.

In a community as affluent as Whitchurch-Stouffville, most of us have so much.

And many of us are giving back, through our families, businesses, churches and service clubs.

But if you're looking for an outlet for your generosity, here are some suggestions:

- The Stouffville Lions Club runs the granddaddy of all Christmas drives in this community.

The service club collects items and money to fill holiday baskets that it delivers to needy families.

If you parked in a snow route and paid the fine with a toy, you have contributed to the Lions effort. For more information, call 905-640-4087.

- York Regional Police, who often see the negative side of our community, are doing something about.

The 11th annual Toys For Tots drive, aided locally by Stouffville Canadian Tire, puts gifts in the hands of needy children.

You can leave donations at any York Regional Police station and the Community Safety Village in Whitchurch-Stouffville.

- Member churches of the Stouffville Ministerial Association do good deeds year round. At Christmas they also deal with special requests to assist the less fortunate.

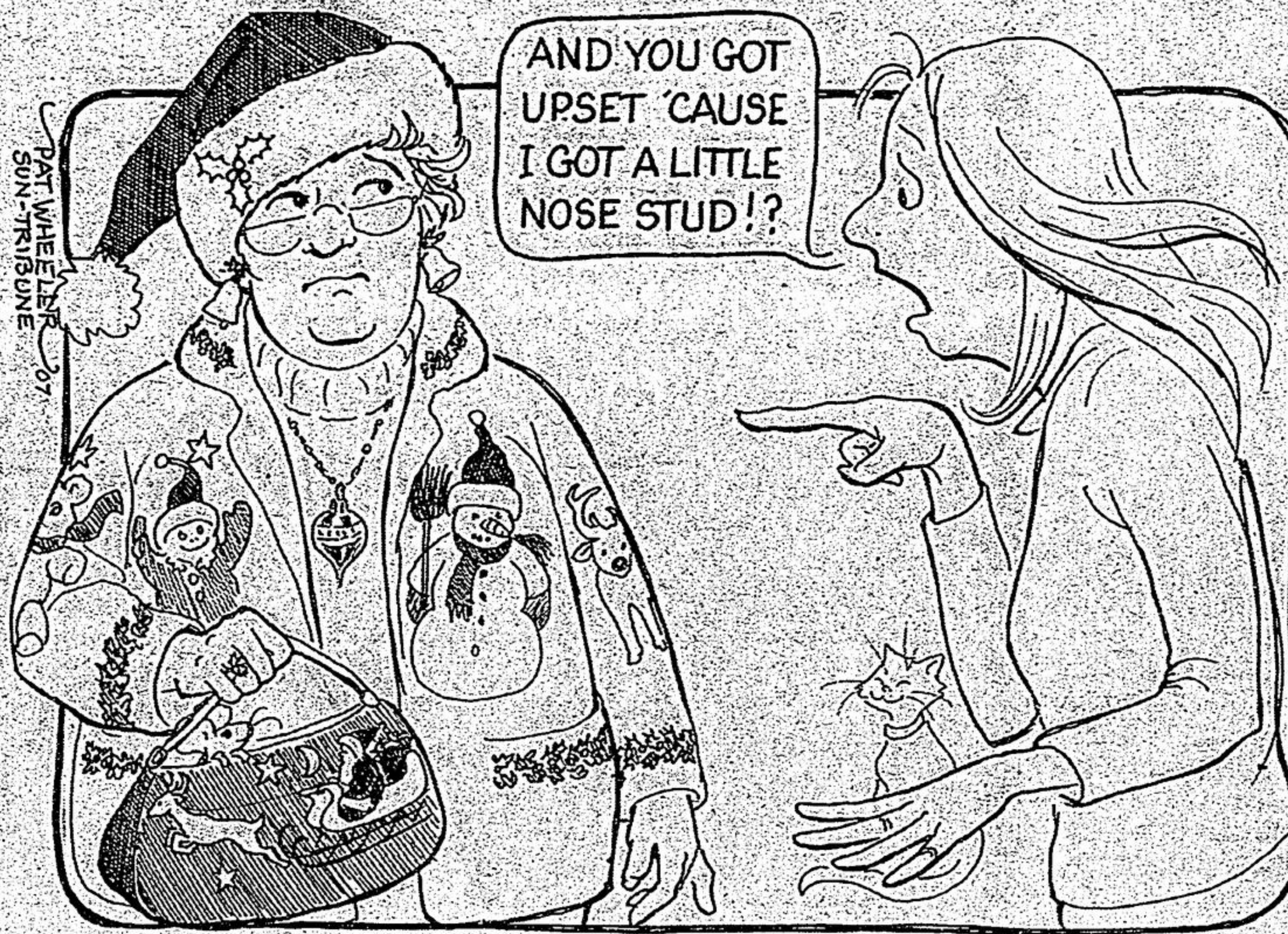
- The new Whitchurch-Stouffville Emergency Care Fund does exactly that; provides care in times of emergency.

You can make a donation year round at RBC or the mayor's office in Stouffville.

- The Stouffville Christmas Dinner serves up fellowship, food, gifts and entertainment on the big day at EastRidge Evangelical Missionary Church.

The event is always looking for donations of money and volunteers.

Enjoy the holidays. Spread the kindness. Pay it forward, Whitchurch-Stouffville.



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

Want a rush? Enter the 2008 Santa Parade now

If you do one thing before you leave this place, go in the Stouffville Kinsmen Santa Claus Parade.

Don't just watch, participate. It's one of the coolest experiences. Trust me.

Imagine getting the opportunity to say hi to hundreds of your closest friends in a one-hour time slot. You'll see folks you haven't seen in months, maybe years.

The down side is you don't get to see much of your fellow parade participants. You'll live.

And it's far easier to stay warm by walking the mile or more of Main Street, or driving a Mustang convertible with the dashboard heater on full bore as I did Saturday. Sun-Tribune citizen of the year Audrey Gibson was in the back doing her best Queen Elizabeth wave to the thousands on the route.

"Congratulations, Audrey," came calls from the crowd. "Way to go."

Hats off, too, to the Kinsmen who run a first-class parade with their small membership. One suggestion, guys? How about naming a parade marshal? It could be the citizen of the year or another worthy person in our community.

Stouffville may be losing some of its traditions. This parade isn't one of them. In spite very frigid conditions. This year's crowd was massive, especially in the east end and downtown core.

You realize how many hundreds of hockey parents and players wear Stouffville Clipper coats. And you see ingenuity at its best, with folks hauling out makeshift benches to the route from where they consume beverages, some of a questionable variety.

The decision of town council to dish out hotdogs and hot chocolate before providing commentary over loud speakers was a wise one. It harkened back to the 1980s when my old golf buddy, the late, great Eddie Luther of CFRB fame, announced the parade from the entrance of the IGA.

Next year's parade date is Dec. 6. Be there. You'll thank me later.

Jim Mason is editor of The Sun-Tribune.

Letters to the Editor

Chamber president should be constructive instead of insulting

Re: Downtown merchants blasted by chamber, Nov. 24.

I take exception to Whitchurch-Stouffville Chamber of Commerce president Helene Johnson's insensitive and unrealistic comments made during the annual mayor's luncheon.

I think Ms Johnson is out of touch with the very serious issues concerning Main Street merchants. Who does she think would set up business in downtown if it weren't for small entrepreneurial minded people?

Does she think the big box stores would be interested in consistently run down locations that without enough parking? Not a chance.

So, yes, maybe these businesses are not open late enough, but has she ever stopped to think about why. Small business owners, unlike big box stores, don't have unlimited funds to staff the store seven days a week until 9 or 10 p.m.

Therefore, they are forced to make decisions based on what their core customer period is. If they hardly see a customer in their store after 3 or 3:30 p.m., paying staff to work until 8 or 9 p.m. is hardly economically viable. The alternative would be for the owners themselves to be working all the hours of the day to accommodate what Ms Johnson is proposing. That is hardly realistic.

As I see it, the biggest problem is not enough people shopping Main Street. If there were enough shoppers to validate the owners paying staff to stay open later, then I can assure you it would already be happening.

If Ms Johnson wants to blast anybody, perhaps she should be blasting the lack of consistent shop-

pers. Shoppers want every convenience at any given time. There is no Main Street in any small town that would be able to accommodate shoppers demanding exceptional service.

If there are niche stores that shoppers frequent because of their individuality of their exceptional service, then the shopper should make the time to frequent them during their business hours.

I am astonished the head of the chamber, which is supposed to support and encourage small business, could be so unsupportive and myopic.

I am no longer a member of the chamber and I would encourage other businesses on Main Street that are members to seriously consider if it is in their best interest to belong to a group whose leader is blatantly opposed to all their efforts.

Instead of insulting and alienating hard-working business hours, Ms Johnson would be better to direct her energy to more constructive issues.

SARA MARSALA
TEMPEST IN A TEAPOT
STOUFFVILLE

Warm welcome on cold concert night

Thank you from Bach to Blues to all who attended our concert Sunday.

Despite the inclement weather, our audience support was overwhelming. Our guests and visiting alumni were thrilled to be welcomed by such enthusiasm. We collected \$774 for the Santa Wish Fund. Thank you to Stouffville United Church for allowing us the use of your sanctuary; it held a perfect Christmas concert.

PAT WILD
BACH TO BLUES COMPANY
STOUFFVILLE

LETTERS POLICY

The Sun-Tribune welcomes your letters. All submissions must be less than 400 words and must include a daytime telephone number, name and address. The Sun-Tribune reserves the right to publish or not publish and to edit for clarity and space.

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