

OPINION

Stouffville
Sun-Tribune

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Store owners don't bite

There is a myth small quaint stores are expensive. People think you cannot get a bargain and big-box stores are the only place to shop these days.

Buy local does not just mean buy local produce. Buy local and support your hometown neighbours.

Everyone just loves the downtown and the stores they see as they pass by. It is one of the things that spark our interest in moving to this town. They look so nice and make Whitchurch-Stouffville unique. But if residents of this town do not recognize these vendors, then the downtown will be a ghost town.

I shop locally and have been in several of the downtown establishments. You know what I find?

Great customer service, unique gifts and competitive prices from wonderful, helpful people. People who have a passion for this town and support local sports and fundraising initiatives for the people in this community.

There are complaints of parking, but I know many of you do not have trouble finding parking to go to your bank or stop for a bite to eat for breakfast.

I know for a fact a lot of residents do make the effort to go to the stores on Halloween and Easter to fill their kids baskets with goodies and yet never give back to the

precious storekeepers who create a unique experience for the kids.

This holiday season, take the time to get to know the small group of retail business owners in our downtown and give back to them what they give to every one of us.

Experience the customer service of yesterday, where they know their products and can gift wrap and prepare gifts for the special someone in your heart.

Don't be afraid. They don't bite and, if anything, they will give you the most for your dollar.

LAURIE VANZEELAND
STOUFFVILLE

Volunteers make agency work

We at Big Brothers-Big Sisters of York want to express our gratitude to the community for its support throughout the year.

The children and families we serve join us to thank the volunteers, who give of their time making a difference in a child's life.

The impact made by these volunteers is overwhelming. Children in our program experience real, positive change.

Not to be forgotten are the many participants, sponsors and volunteers of our various fundraising events, as well as our donors.

NEIL HAGGARTY
BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS OF YORK



Local woman quietly gives time to Sick Kids

Whitchurch-Stouffville has long been known for dedicated volunteers.

In all areas of activity, volunteerism is the heart and soul of success.

Most appreciate who these people are. We can attach names to the faces of those who carry the load.

Many are repeat providers.

But are we aware of those around us who give their time and talents beyond our borders?

I doubt it. For they go about their work beyond the spotlight of media attention.

Out of sight, out of mind, so to speak.

One such person is Stouffville's Carol Brodie, mother of four and grandmother of eight.

Carol boards a GO train out of Stouffville every Thursday morning for six years and travels to Toronto.

Later, she returns via the same service or, on occasions, is picked

up by husband Doug, a semi-retired family physician.

Between times, she assists in the Play Park at The Hospital for Sick Children.

But why Sick Kids?

Carol came to appreciate what the hospital has to offer when a grandson, then aged two, was diagnosed with epilepsy. The lad was admitted for surgery, a procedure that, according to Carol, "gave us new hope".

The patient, now 17, leads a normal life.

"They (the hospital) did so much for us," Carol said. "I wanted to give something back."

The Play Park, Carol explains, is a partnership between the hospital's women's auxiliary and the Canadian Tire Foundation for Families.

As well as volunteer hours, the auxiliary provides funding for trained staff and day-to-day requirements.

Meanwhile, the foundation donated \$1 million last year.



Jim Thomas

Roaming Around

The Hospital for Sick Children opened in 1951 and the auxiliary was founded soon after by Dr. Helen Chute. She died in 2004 at age 93.

Carol's time in the Play Park extends from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. In attendance are two full-time staff members, Telma Demelo and Lina Sannuto.

They hold degrees in Early Childhood Education.

The Play Park's goal is to provide a safe, cheerful, relaxed and educational environment

for siblings of in-patients and out-patients awaiting clinic appointments," service co-ordinator Gwen Moravek said.

"I was looking for a hands-on thing," Carol said. "And this is what the Play Park provides. It's marvelous."

Children come from all over the world, she said. Some are temporary residents, along with their parents at nearby Ronald McDonald House.

In addition to crafts, Carol sings and reads to them.

Despite the diversity of backgrounds, no language barriers exist, she noted.

"We do everything we can to keep them happy," she said.

Ages range from two to 13. No fee is charged.

The Play Park is well-run, affording parents the peace of mind that their children are safe and secure, Carol said.

Many mothers and fathers leave notes expressing thanks

Telma Demelo, the Play Park's supervisor, is loud in her praise of Carol's contributions.

"I don't know what we'd do without Carol," she said. "She's a grandmother to the children."

"I count it a privilege and an honour to be involved."

Telma described Carol as "a very warm person, not only to the boys and girls but to their parents."

In a single year, more than 8,000 children are accommodated.

Carol has no thought of giving up her trips to Sick Kids, even though, some days, she returns home exhausted.

"I count it a privilege and an honour to be involved," she said.

Jim Thomas is a Stouffville resident who has written for area newspapers for more than 50 years.

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 for clarity and space.

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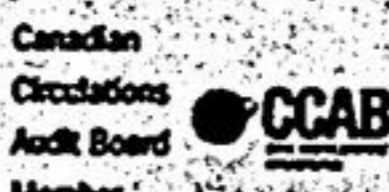
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