

More programs needed to bring people together: new resident

From page 1

He prefers to get books at the local library, rather than having to travel to Markham or other communities.

The library has earmarked funds in the 2008 budget, which still has to be approved later this month, for a larger multicultural book, magazine and music collection, Ms Nordheimer said.

To help decide which books in which languages are most needed and which other services residents would like to have, the library has conducted a community needs assessment since the fall. Throughout the process, the aim is for local residents to be surveyed either at the library, in focus groups or by telephone interviews.

The library has music from different cultures, but library staff would like to hear what new residents prefer.

"They have a better feel for what is relevant in their culture," Ms Nordheimer said.

The library will be calling on these residents to help staff assess books in other languages.

Media, too, are responding to the changing face of Stouffville. It was gratifying for Mr. Somasundaram to see a photograph of a young girl performing a traditional dance at a program for Tamil seniors, as part of the Stouffville Sun-Tribune's favourite pictures of 2007.

"I was pleased to see that because it reflects our community," he said.

He praised community events, such as those organized by Mattamy Homes throughout the year.

Hilda Crick-McDermott moved here for the small-town quiet, which reminded her of the Saskatchewan neighbourhood where she grew up.

It's important to meet your neighbours, she said.

She has been here for a year, after moving from Richmond Hill.

Of Caribbean background, she said she prayed before moving here, worried the current residents might not know how to embrace new cultures. But her fears were unfounded.

"We have been truly embraced by everyone and my neighbours (of many diverse backgrounds) have been, too," she said.

But that isn't the case for everyone.

There are local residents who don't feel they have been embraced by Stouffville, she said. They feel like outsiders, tending to stick to their own ethnic groups instead.

She'd like to see programs such as those offered in other municipalities. The family (including husband Baring-

ton, son Jelani, 12, daughter Zalika, 10, and little Kimani) frequented a library in Richmond Hill where various clubs and classes, such as chess and math, were offered.

"Kids are going to meet there and get along and grow together," she said.

She foresees an increased demand for this type of program.

In addition, more sports clubs would give children even more opportunity to meet, she believes.

She and some neighbours organized a barbecue in the summer. Many of the residents hadn't met before. Mrs. Crick-McDermott hopes this will grow into an annual event and would like to see other neighbourhoods hold similar events.

For Strawberry Festival and other events, Mr. Somasundaram would like to see multicultural musical performances by musicians and art shows included.

The Strawberry Festival committee is welcoming input from residents, chairperson Laura Roessler said.

The committee is mounting a more aggressive advertising campaign, hoping to appeal to a wider diversity in town. More information is also available on the strawberryfestival.com website.

When it comes to events reflecting different cultures, "we would love to incorporate them into the festival", Mrs. Roessler said.

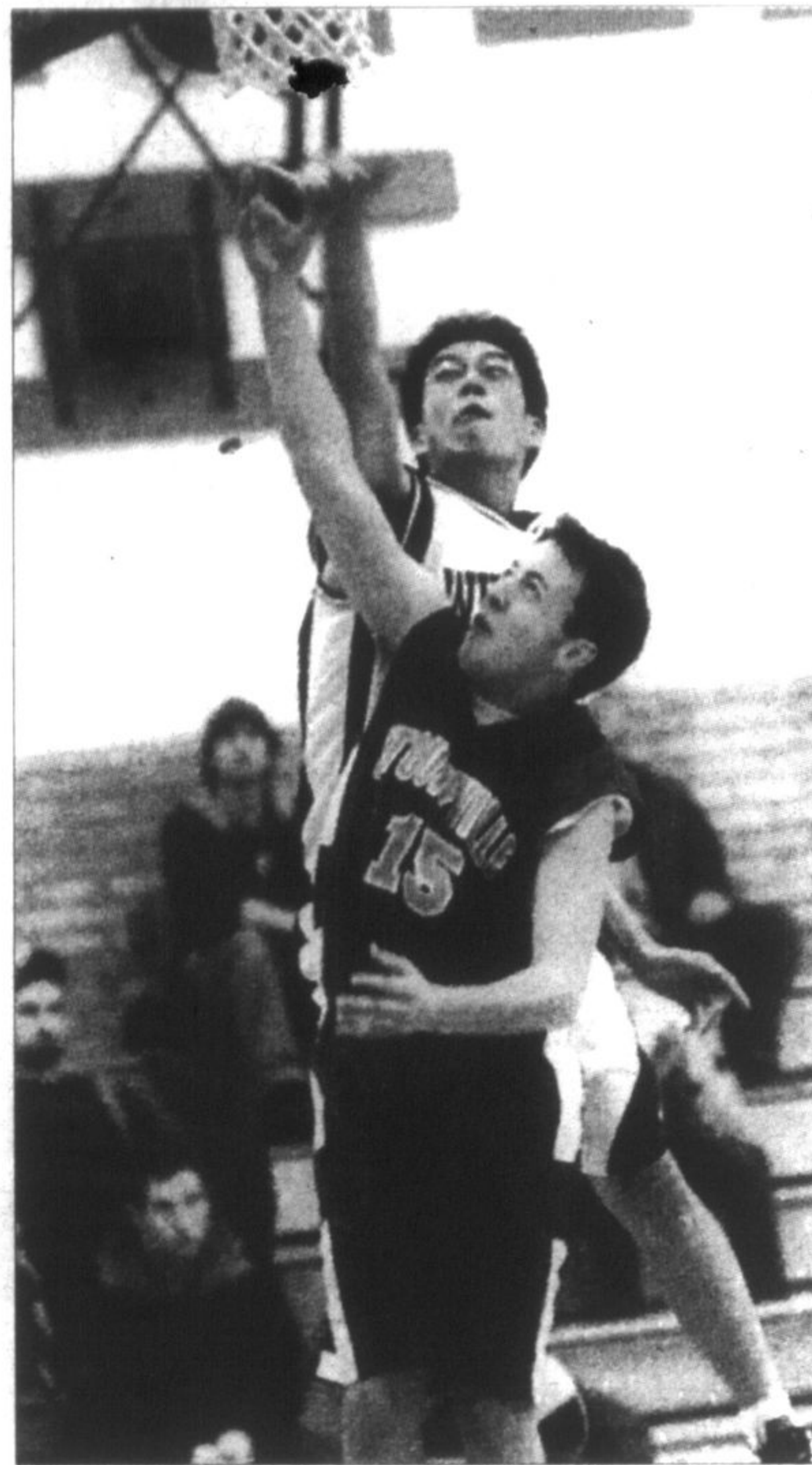
The town, which recently appointed former Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum curator Dorie Billich as manager of cultural and museum services, is poised to assess residents' wants.

Whitchurch-Stouffville's municipal cultural policy, the first in York Region, was approved in 2006.

The cultural policy, was "a big move forward", Susanne Hilton said.

Ms Hilton also works with the regional cultural planning committee and Canadian Federation of Intercultural Friendship and Policy liaison committee, which asked council to officially proclaim the town's diversity and inclusivity.

SLAMMING IT HOME



STAFF PHOTO/SUSIE KOCKERSCHIEDT

Dr. G.W. Williams Wildcats' Joel Jin tries unsuccessfully to block the shot of Stouffville Spartans' Tyler Kiatipis during senior boys Tier 2 basketball action Dec. 21 in Aurora. Stouffville won the game 52-35.

Club prepares for Nicholas invitational

From page 1

In the 50m butterfly, he lowered his time by nearly five seconds.

Making her competitive debut with the club, Amber Hutchinson, 15, broke the three-minute barrier in the 200m freestyle.

Caleigh Stallybrass, 13, posted eight personal best times while knocking 20 seconds off her best in the 200m individual medley.

Alison Romano, 13, recorded five best times in six events.

Battling the flu, Mackenzie Moyer, 12, fielded seven personal bests.

In the senior men's division, Kevin Boehnke, 16, and Carter McGhie, 15, set club standards as each finished under 30 seconds in the 50m freestyle.

Boehnke also took off more than one second in the 200m breaststroke while McGhie, dropped more than seven seconds in the 400m freestyle and swam his first 400m individual medley under the six-minute mark.

He also achieved seven personal best times.

The club is competing at the Cindy Nicholas Invitational Meet in Scarborough Jan. 26 to 28.

For more information on the club, contact Andrea James at 905-888-9994.

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