

LIONS CLUB MARKS SEVEN DECADES OF GIVING BACK, SERVING DINNERS, HELPING IN THIRD WORLD

Celebrating 70 years of serving Stouffville

BY HANNELORE VOLPE
Staff Writer

It's the service club that come up with an idea like the Martian Tabernacle Choir for a Stouffville Santa Claus Parade float.

And with members who aren't afraid to grab a snow shovel so they can deliver Christmas baskets to residents in need, it's surely an integral part of its community.

Without the Stouffville Lions Club, which celebrates its 70th anniversary Feb. 16, "I really believe the community would not be the same," Governor Dick Peel of Lions Club International District A16 of Markham, said.

Many would be surprised at the number of events this club takes part in and the many causes it supports. Stouffville Lions programs help every age group, from kindergarten pupils getting their vision screened to seniors who react with joy when a Lion brings in a pot of spring flowers for them.

HELP KIDS TO SENIORS

They organize the Christmas light bus tour for seniors, serve hot chocolate and goodies and hand out toys at the Mayor's New Year's Eve celebration in Memorial Park, support the Stouffville District Secondary School art show at Latcham Gallery each year and back Camp Kirk for children with learning and other disabilities, to name just a few.

They're not afraid to put on the work clothes, steel-toed boots and helmets to help build facilities enjoyed by many residents, such as the pavilion in Memorial

Park, the gazebo on Main Street and doing the plumbing and electrical work at the Stouffville Train Station and operating the outdoor pool for many years.

As clubs go, the Stouffville Lions are one of the more active clubs, Mr. Peel added.

Not every club, he said, is as involved in supporting overseas projects.

The local club supports the Mwanzaa Lions Club in Tanzania, which in turn helps the Stouffville Igoma Project.

RESTORE SIGHT

Through their support of SightFirst 11, which was started in 1989, Lions have helped restore sight to 7.3 million people in developing countries, especially children, through cataract surgery. The program has prevented vision loss in around 20 million people and improved eye care services for hundreds of millions more.

You're probably already familiar with the Lions roast beef barbecue that's part of Strawberry Festival and the Christmas tree sales, which constitute important fundraisers. Most funds, however, for the Lions work comes through the sale of Nevada lottery tickets at Stouffville Country Market every weekend.

There's a recurring refrain when you ask a Lion why he or she joined the club. The answer is usually, 'to give something back to the community'.

One of them is John Moffatt, who joined the Lions more than 35 years ago. He was president in 1990-91.

He remembers taking part



Winter or summer, parades have always been big with the Stouffville Lions, including its Farm Boys Band.

in the Lions roast beef dinner when it was still a chicken dinner. A large pit was dug in Memorial Park and fired up until the coals were five or six inches deep and glowing hot. A giant spit with screens to hold about 40 half chickens was placed over the pit.

A couple of Lions gave them a half turn every so often and "four flips and they would be done," Mr. Moffatt said.

The Lions are part of his life, he said. "I have enjoyed it all."

The Lions entered floats in the Stouffville Santa Claus Parade for many years, and he and John Foulds (known as "Mr. Float") came up with themes ranging from the

infamous Martian Tabernacle Choir to a hillbilly band.

Mr. Moffatt particularly enjoys the friends he's made over the year and continues to make as he travels to several conventions per year. Those who don't go to conventions are missing the biggest part of Lionism, he believes.

"That is where you meet people from other clubs and get new ideas," he said.

The Stouffville Lions have 39 members.

Long-time members such as past president Joe Cote usually have a go at tackling almost every position in the club from running various committees to executive positions. Mr. Cote was also zone chairperson last year,

during which he oversaw numerous clubs.

His job was, he said, to get members updated on what was happening in other clubs and get them to work together.

Lion Tom Winters, who has been with the club for 25 years, chose the Lions because he saw it as a well-run organization. He found it most gratifying when he was district governor in 1993 and was able to keep up that position as well as his local club activities.

DAUNTING DINNER

When it comes to large club activities such as the roast beef dinner that serves hundreds in the summer, it looks daunting, Mr. Winters said.

But because the club is so well organized and planning starts way ahead of time, on the day of the dinner, "we just go where we are told," he said.

The Lions Club is ideal for people who want to become more confident public speakers, have aspirations of getting into government or want to get more involved in work that involves committees.

"It is a perfect training ground," Mr. Winters said.

"I can't imagine myself not being a Lion," he added. "It is part of my life."

The Lions current presi-

dent is Cliff Dunkeld, a former councillor and Whitchurch-Stouffville citizen of the year.

The Stouffville Lions Club's 70th anniversary celebration takes place Feb. 16 in the Great Hall of Christ Church Anglican, 254 Sunset Blvd. It begins with a social from 6 to 7 p.m., with dinner starting at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$35 per person. For tickets, call 905-642-3850.

ALL ABOUT LIONS

Fast facts on the Stouffville Lions:

▶ John Hodgins was the first club president. The first club dinner meeting was held Jan. 13, 1938, at the Mansion House, now home to Pizza Pizza, Mr. Sub and others. Annual dues were \$4.50.

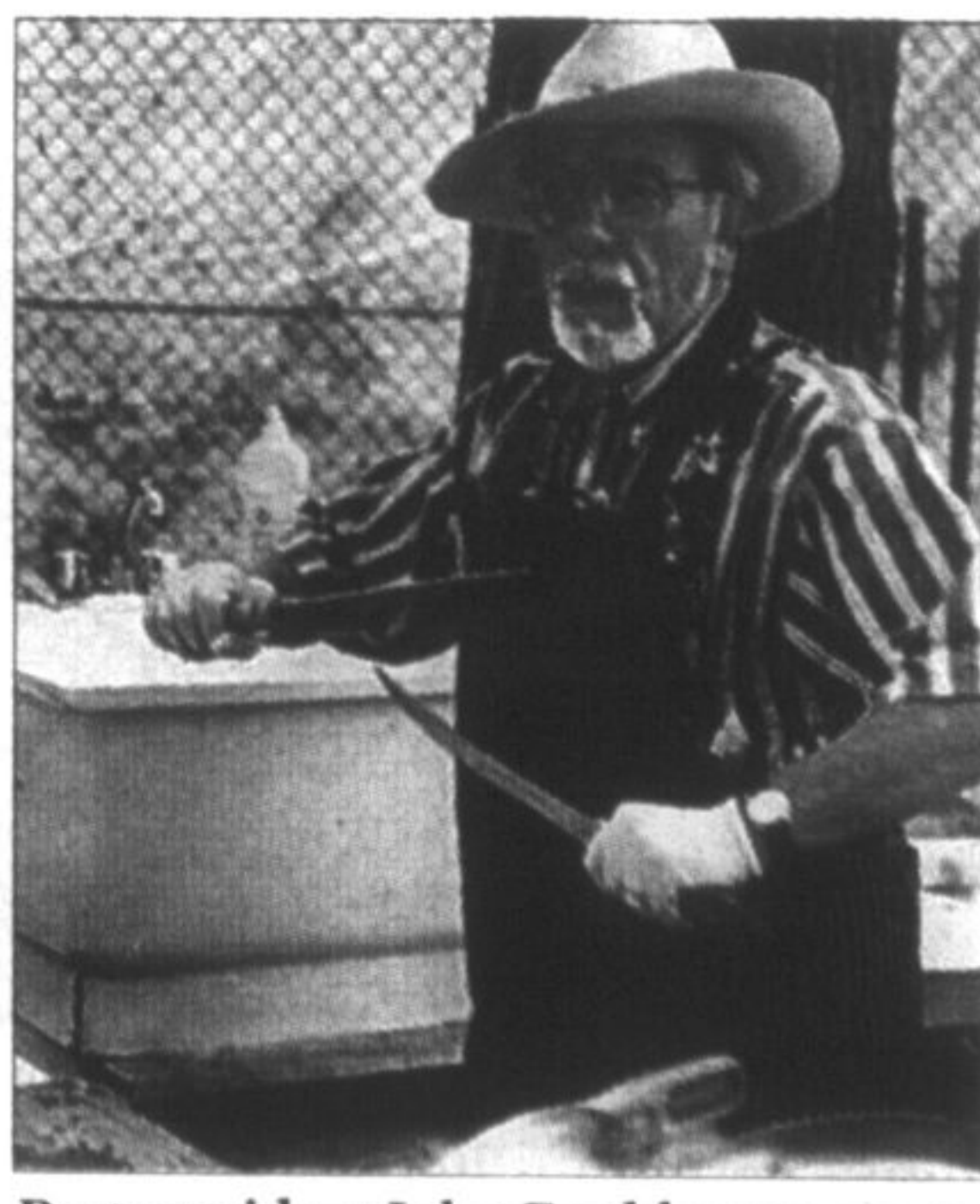
▶ Past presidents include former Tribune publisher Charles Nolan (1947), car dealer Neil Patrick (1962), principal Lorne Boadway (1966) and Glen Peart (1994), father of Rush drummer Neil Peart.

▶ Current president is Cliff Dunkeld, a former town councillor and citizen of the year.

▶ There are more than 1.3 million Lions in more than 43,000 clubs in 202 countries. The organization was founded in 1917.



Club members work on the reconstruction of the Memorial Park pavilion in 1998.

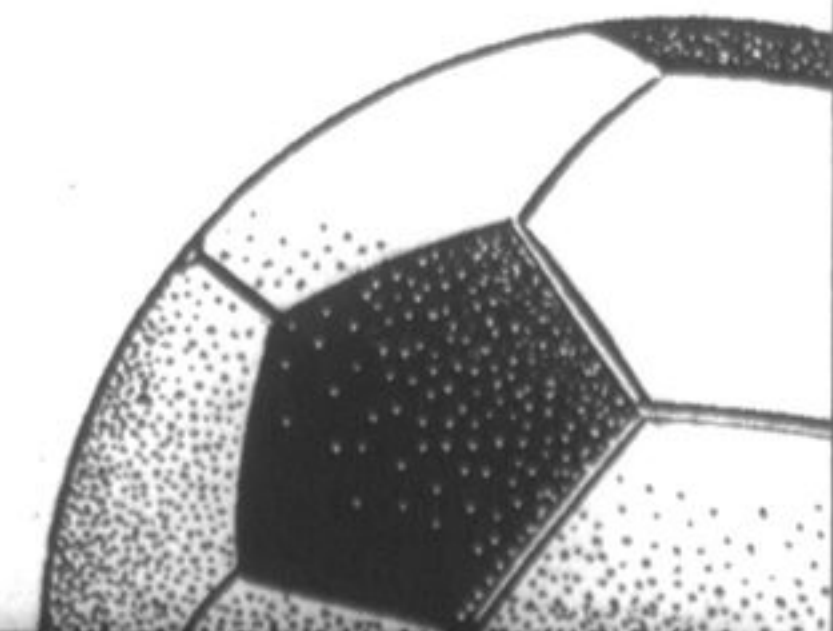


Past president John Foulds prepares to carve at the club's annual barbecue.



SOCCER REGISTRATION

Sign up for the 2008 outdoor season at the Stouffville Arena
SAT. JAN. 26 OR SAT. FEB. 2 from 8 am - 2 pm



For more information call 905-640-1800 or www.wssc.info