

# SUN-TRIBUNE PEOPLE

## Region's top teacher embraces cultures

BY MARILYNN MULKINS

She's talented, artistic and enthusiastic. Stouffville's Gayle Sankey is also the Teachers' Federation of Ontario's teacher of the year in York Region.

She taught Grade 1 at H.G. Bernard Public School in Richmond Hill for 13 years before retiring in June. She also taught in Markham and Scarborough.

"I will miss teaching, my pupils and my colleagues," she said.

It wasn't a 9-to-5 job. Her days started at 5:30 a.m. and she often went until 11 p.m., thanks to work on the next day's projects. She wrote poems, stories, skits and songs to personalize her teaching and make learning fun.

"H.G. Bernard is a multicultural school, so I used the different national holidays on which we wore the national costumes, learned the different customs and even invited the parents from their different cultures to come join us in celebrating," she said.

"I always encouraged any parents to come into the classroom to be a volunteer, or to merely observe.

"My goal was for every child to have equal opportunity, a good foundation (upon which) to build."

Mrs. Sankey created a "character tree" in her classroom and encouraged the children to respect each other, be kind and follow the golden rule.

Their reward? A leaf with their name on it was added to the tree.

Her advice for new teachers: spend September showing the children the routines you want them to follow.

Then, keep them busy.

Mrs. Sankey is still glowing from her retirement celebrations.

"The school, the children and the parents gave me a wonderful send-off," she said. "I felt like a queen. There was a special assembly, a retirement party and the parents gave me a surprise party in my classroom."

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Gayle Sankey  
top teacher

She was presented with a scrapbook containing pictures of her students from throughout the years, children in costumes, the character tree and many other activities.

"There were many, many notes to me handwritten by the children on rolled-up paper scrolls that expressed their feelings about our time together," she said.

She will volunteer in other schools and re-launch her business of making candles in the shapes of foods.

Surrounded by the memorabilia, Mrs. Sankey emotionally recalled the note a six-year-old boy wrote.

"Mrs. Sankey, I want to thank you for listening to me and for loving me."



Stouffville's Gayle Sankey retired this summer as the Teachers' Federation of Ontario's teacher of the year in York Region.

## Whitchurch-Stouffville News Digest

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### Armed bandits rob gas attendant

York Regional Police are hunting three men after a Whitchurch-Stouffville gas bar employee was held at gunpoint during a robbery.

At about 1:20 a.m. Thursday, three masked men walked into the Petro-Canada at 15228 Woodbine Ave., just south of Aurora Road and demanded cash.

One man, packing a sawed-off shotgun, held the employee at gunpoint while the other two took money, cigarettes and lottery tickets before fleeing, police said.

The employee was not hurt during the heist.

All three robbers are described as male, between 18 and 25 years old.

If you have any information, call police at 1-866-876-5423, ext. 6630, Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS or leave a tip at [www.1800222tips.com](http://www.1800222tips.com)

### Screening promotes peace, tolerance

Calling all family film buffs! York Regional Police has invited you to a free screening.

Between 6 and 8:30 p.m. Aug. 19, police will host an evening for *The Peace Tree*, a film about two girls who overcome their parents' resistance to participating in other cultural holiday celebrations, at the York Region Community Safety Village in Bruce's Mill Conservation Area at 3291 Stouffville Rd.

The two girls at the centre of the film's plot bridge a cultural gap through their innocence and natural curiosity and teach the adults around them to be more open-minded, showing them the importance of diversity.

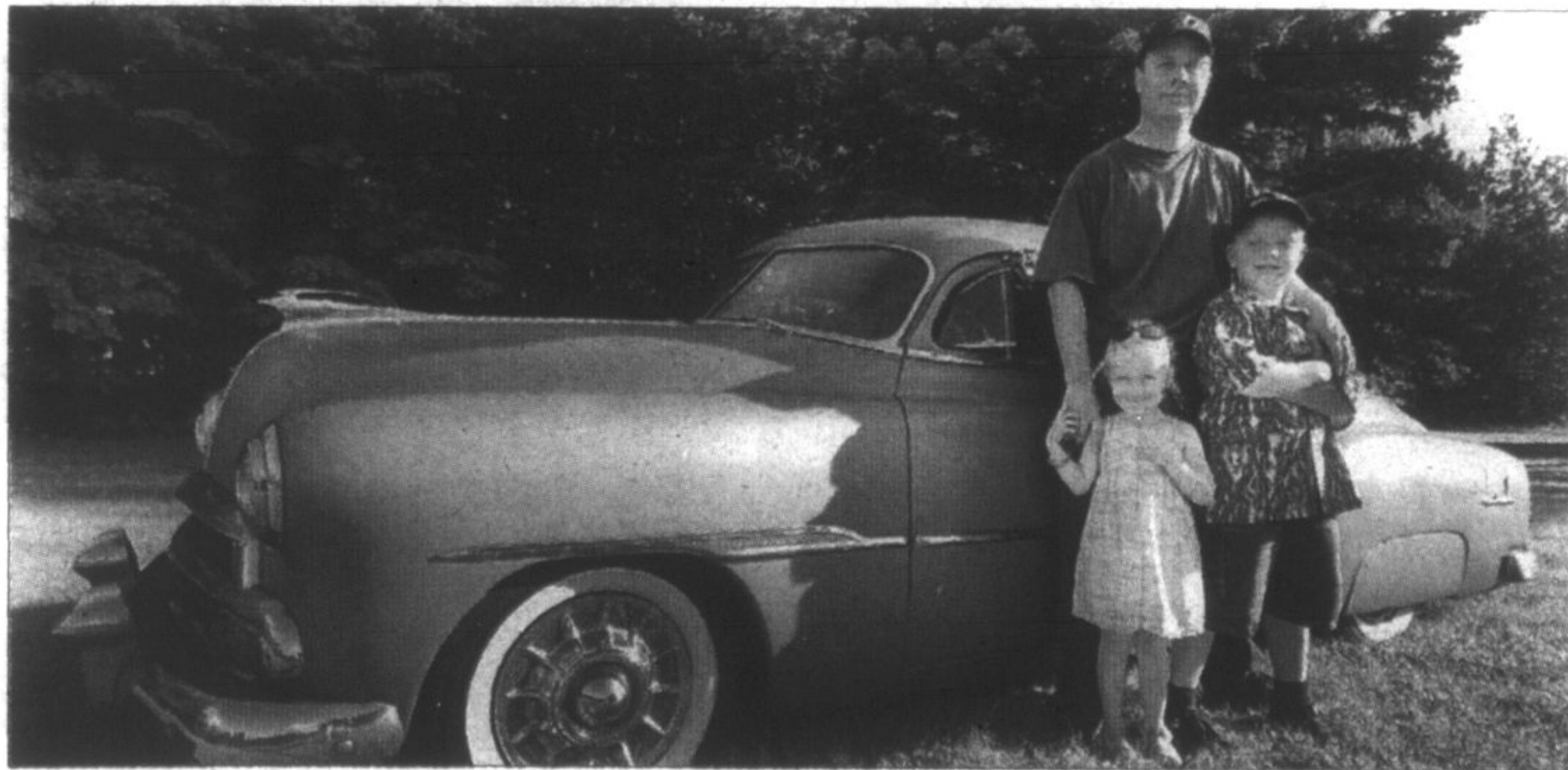
The show starts at 7 p.m.

### SOUND OFF

Have something to say about these or other stories?

E-mail us at [jmason@yrmg.com](mailto:jmason@yrmg.com)

## Visitors can vote to determine show's award winners



STAFF PHOTO/BILL ROBERTS

Jamie McDowell, with daughter Shelby, 4, and son Dylan, 9, will be at the show with his 1951 Chevrolet.

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expansion.

The public also has a chance to vote for their favourite cars in several categories, Mrs. Billich said.

Prizes for the best antique car, best early classic and driver's choice are among the many titles to be won, with plaques and trophies going to the winners.

A 50/50 draw will also take place, with proceeds going toward future museum projects.

Admission is \$5 per person or \$12 for a family of four.

Children under seven are free.

A barbecue will also take place, selling food for an additional fee.

For more information, go to [townofws.com/town\\_museumevents.asp](http://townofws.com/town_museumevents.asp) or call 1-888-290-0337.

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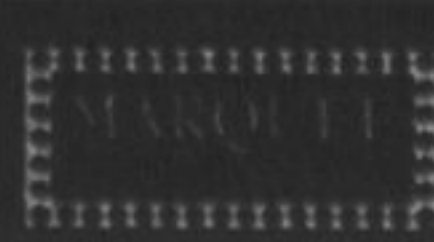
Book online at  
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Newmarket Theatre Box Office Hours:  
Monday to Friday, 1-5:30 p.m. and  
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All showtimes are 7:30 p.m.  
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