

Sun-Tribune

905-640-2612
Fax: 905-640-8778

EDITORIAL

ADVERTISING
905-640-2612

Classified: 1-800-743-3353
Fax: 905-640-8778

DISTRIBUTION
905-640-2612

EDITORIAL

Editor
Jim Mason
jmason@yrmg.com

ADVERTISING

Retail Manager
Dianne Mahoney
dmahoney@yrmg.com

Classified Manager

Bonnie Rondeau
brondeau@yrmg.com

DISTRIBUTION

Circulation
Supervisor
Carrie MacFarlane
cmacfarlane@yrmg.com

Stouffville

Manager
Carolyn Norman
cnorman@yrmg.com

PRODUCTION

Manager
Sherry Day
sday@yrmg.com

INTERACTIVE

MEDIA
Marketing
& Advertising
Manager

Dawna Andrews
dandrews@yrmg.com

York Region Media
Group community
newspapers

The Sun-Tribune, published every Thursday and Saturday, is a division of the Metroland Media Group Ltd., a wholly-owned subsidiary of Torstar Corporation. Metroland is comprised of 100 community publications across Ontario. The York Region Newspaper Group also includes The Liberal, serving Richmond Hill and Thornhill, Vaughan Citizen, The Era-Banner (Newmarket/Aurora), Markham Economist & Sun, Georgina Advocate, York Region Business Times, North of the City, yorkregion.com and York Region Printing.

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.

Letters to the Editor,
The Sun-Tribune
6290 Main St.
Stouffville, ON
L4A 1G7
jmason@yrmg.com



OPINION

Stouffville Sun-Tribune

6290 Main St.
Stouffville, ON. L4A 1G7
www.yorkregion.com

PUBLISHER Ian Proudfoot

EDITOR IN CHIEF
Debora Kelly

BUSINESS
MANAGER
Robert Lazaruko

DIRECTOR,
OPERATIONS
Barry Black

DIRECTOR,
ADVERTISING,
DISTRIBUTION
Nicole Fletcher

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Stouffville produce, late-night shopping keys to new market

Re: Second Stouffville market gets go-ahead from farmers, March 4.

"Sell only what you sow" should be the motto for the new downtown farmer's market. Quality produce grown locally by real farmers is the key to success.

Mind you, I'm not sure how many real farmers remain with all the fertile farmland being turned into housing developments.

There is enough Ontario Food Terminal, mass-produced, imported produce available at the many supermarkets in town.

There is no need to duplicate this. And the Stouffville Country Market seems to be filled with hucksters selling a multitude of goods, so no need to duplicate that either.

A downtown farmers' market would inject much needed pedestrian traffic into the area.

Yes, there will also be cars but it sounds like those in support of the market have parking top of mind.

HAVE YOUR SAY, WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE

▶ What do you think of these issues or others? E-mail letters to the editor to jmason@yrmg.com

This is essential.

Operating hours are also key. For my own selfish reasons I hope that the market will remain open late enough for those of us who commute by car or train to shop locally.

The last GO train pulls into the Stouffville station at 7:32 p.m., if it's on time.

But that's another letter.

LYNN KAHRKLING
STOUFFVILLE

You can read letters, columns and editorials printed in the Stouffville Sun-Tribune on our website. Go to yorkregion.com and click on Whitchurch-Stouffville.



People's big hearts bright side of sad story

In the 1990s I lived in Montreal and worked as a reporter and editor at two different newspapers, the second one being The Westmount Examiner, where I was at first a reporter before being promoted to editor. (Somebody later told me I just looked like an editor, and that's why I got promoted. Too bad I didn't just look like a CEO who ought to be making something in the high six figures. But that's how it goes.)

Between the first job and the second, I set out on my own for a while as a freelance writer. I had a few articles published in the Montreal Gazette, the big English-language daily, and also contributed regularly to an alternative weekly named The Montreal Mirror.

This was during a recession and frankly I was terrified. But I needed to get out of the first job, which did not pay well, and start making some connections to get a better job. So I did it.

Several of the stories I wrote were picked up by radio stations. So when the Westmount job came along, I had great clippings and references. However one of the stories I ended up writing to get there, still haunts me to this day. It was a story about homeless youth and what life was like for them on the streets around Christmastime in 1993.

How do you find homeless youth? Well, a photographer and I met up one winter day and started roaming around



Bernie O'Neill

downtown, looking for them.

It didn't take long for us to find two young guys, 18 or 20, sitting outside a department store, a dog curled up beside them, begging for loose change.

Incredibly, one of the young men, who was originally from London, Ont., spoke no French, while his fellow panhandler and only friend from St. Jerome, up the river from Montreal, spoke no English.

They'd met on the street. They communicated by hand signals and nods. They shared cigarettes and coffee. They fed the dog. They split the money.

They explained how the dog increased donations from shoppers. They understood people felt sorry for the dog, not necessarily for them.

We met up with them over a period of several days and it became obvious one young man had psychological

problems. We were talking to him at one point and he just began to cry and wandered off.

They were using drugs and drinking daily. They told us of a communal house where several street kids spent the night, mostly in sleeping bags on the floor. It had to be the most undesirable piece of real estate you could ever find, right next to a busy four-lane road near a tunnel.

The photographer and I went inside and found a young man lying on a couch, a haze of pot smoke in the air.

At first we feared he was dead, but went a little closer and realized he was breathing. He was simply passed out or sound asleep. Everywhere in the house there was garbage. Every utensil had been taken out and used and not washed. The same went for every dish, every glass, every cup. Water spun in a toilet that no longer flushed.

The photographer, Francois, took photos and we left. We both went home and told our girlfriends what we'd seen. Both of our girlfriends cried.

The editors didn't use any images from the house or the words I wrote about it. They wanted a positive story about agencies helping the kids. And that's fine. But what was clear was the kids were messed up, mentally, emotionally, chemically. They were slowly destroying themselves.

What was stunning about the whole thing — we spoke to many other kids,

too, walking around downtown with them over five days to make a record of how they lived — was that, while you were within five feet of them, it was like you were invisible.

Montreal is a people watching place. But as we strolled along St. Catherine Street with these street kids, some of them tattooed or with mohawks or in black boots and army fatigues or just plain dirty, it was like a parting of the seas. Every head turned away.

That is, almost every head.

When the kids panhandled — they seemed a little less threatening sitting down — many people gave. And more than just change. They knew some of the money might be spent on drugs or booze, not food and shelter. Either way, they gave.

They also gave to the agencies such as Dans la Rue (In the Street) that watched out for these kids and made sure they were fed and clothed and for the most part sleeping indoors.

In our area, food bank use has jumped, but so have some donations. When times are tough, people help each other. They have big hearts. Whether it's youth on the street or people who have lost jobs and their confidence, others will help them back up, which is the bright side of many a sad story.

Bernie O'Neill is a Stouffville resident and editor of the Markham Economist & Sun.