

Former festival queen knows what entrants need to win

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COMING UP

Participating in the Whitchurch-Stouffville Strawberry Festival pageant is not only about the crown and sash, but more about what it can do for the contestants' career, according to festival chairperson Sue Sherban.

"Those who really (want to be) involved in something in the public — radio DJ, fashion, sales — this really helps you prepare for that," Mrs. Sherban said.

Yes, contestants will be judged on how they manoeuvre around the stage in stilettos and a ball gown, but the young women are also required to speak in front of judges and a packed hall, eloquently and without breaking out in a cold sweat.

"It's not easy; it's really challenging," Mrs. Sherban said.

The last Strawberry Festival queen to be crowned was Jeni Hoover, back in 1991. Mrs. Hoover has returned to spear-head this year's 25th anniversary pageant.

However, Mrs. Hoover never intended to participate in the 1991 pageant, let alone win it. She attended one of the practices out of curiosity, but with some encouragement by others, "I was convinced to do it."

Mrs. Hoover went on to become Miss Markham Fair and was named Miss Congeniality at the Miss CNE pageant in 1991.

Now, she teaches at Stouffville Christian School, where her pageant-circuit public speaking skills have come in handy.

The pageant also provides women the opportunity to network with professionals in the fashion industry, including Sandra Napier, who is the president of the Peace Management modeling agency. Ms Napier is also a Whitchurch-Stouffville resident.

After competing in such pageants as Miss Teen Toronto, Miss Toronto and Miss Etobicoke, Ms Napier was discovered by agent Judy Welch. She spent 10 years modeling in Milan, Paris, Barcelona, Tokyo and New York.

So what does it take to become Miss

Whitchurch-Stouffville Strawberry Festival Queen 2009?

A good and lasting first impression. During the mumble and mangle, judges will also be looking for a naturalness and relevance that would be of interest to her peers, strong communication skills, aspirations and opinions, personality as well as personal appearance, attractiveness and physical beauty. The contestants will also be evaluated on leadership and sense of accomplishment as well as knowledge of, and commitment to, a community service advocacy issue.

The competition also includes a talent portion, lifestyle and fitness in sport wear and evening wear portions.

Five finalists will have to answer an on-stage question. An overall winner, as well as a Miss Congeniality and a Miss Talent will be crowned.

Registrations will be accepted until May 19.

The pageant takes place Saturday, May 30, at the Christ Anglican Church's Great Hall, 254 Sunset Blvd. The show costs \$5, with proceeds going to the Markham Stouffville Hospital's breast health network and starts at 7 p.m.

For more information, go to strawberryfestival.ca or e-mail strawberrypageant25th@yahoo.ca

Advertorial

Out with the old. In with the new central AC unit.

"Are we paying for the entire street's air conditioning?" My husband pointed at a figure on our electricity bill. Last summer, even though the temperature wasn't soaring, our electricity bill was. Like the average Ontarian, more than half of it was spent keeping our house at just the right temperature. (If only I had known then what I do now.)

That number sealed the fate of our loyal (it had been with us for 12 years) - albeit inefficient - central air conditioner (CAC). It had to go. But what would take its place? I found my answer after spending some time on the internet. Here's what I learned: energy-efficient units have gotten considerable buzz over the past few years, and for good reason. Aside from being eco-friendly, they are also big money savers. In my case, upgrading my cooling and heating system could shave up to 15% off our electricity costs. That could translate into roughly an extra \$350 per year. Enough to convince me that yes, replacing the old CAC would be worth it.

Given their popularity, locating an efficient CAC unit was easy. The magic words: ENERGY STAR®. Find a qualified unit and you're guaranteed it's at least 8% more efficient than standard models. Happily, Ontario government-funded rebates made buying our new energy-efficient system cost-

effective. Take the **COOL SAVINGS REBATE** from Every Kilowatt Counts: an easy-to-get, valuable rebate of up to **\$525** on ENERGY STAR qualified central cooling and heating systems. (Not to mention a \$25 rebate on programmable thermostats.)

Savings-wise, that's just the tip of the iceberg. Arranging for a simple home energy audit (through an organization licensed by Natural Resources Canada; all the information is on everykilowattcounts.ca) opens the doors to a slew of other rebates. By participating in the **eco-Energy Retrofit for Homes** (through Natural Resources Canada NRCan) and Ontario's **Home Energy Savings Program** you can receive up to an **additional \$1,400** in rebates. (Plus, for a limited time NRCan has increased their rebates by 25%). Bundled with the **COOL SAVINGS REBATE**, you can save up to **\$1,950**. Read that number again! Not to mention the new **Home Renovation Tax Credit** (HRTC) that will offer a credit of up to **\$1,350** on all energy-efficient home renovations in the coming year. Plus, I found no shortage of contractors willing to help make the transition to energy-efficiency less painful.

"What's with all of these government rebates?" my skeptical husband had countered when I showed

him what we could save. I found that the Ontario government kicks in and helps people because consuming less electricity at home means less electricity needs to be produced overall. Ultimately, that helps us all because it's good for the environment and the province.

Now, almost a full year after switching over, my family has been saving for months; plus we're armed, efficient and ready for when those hot days of summer come calling once again.

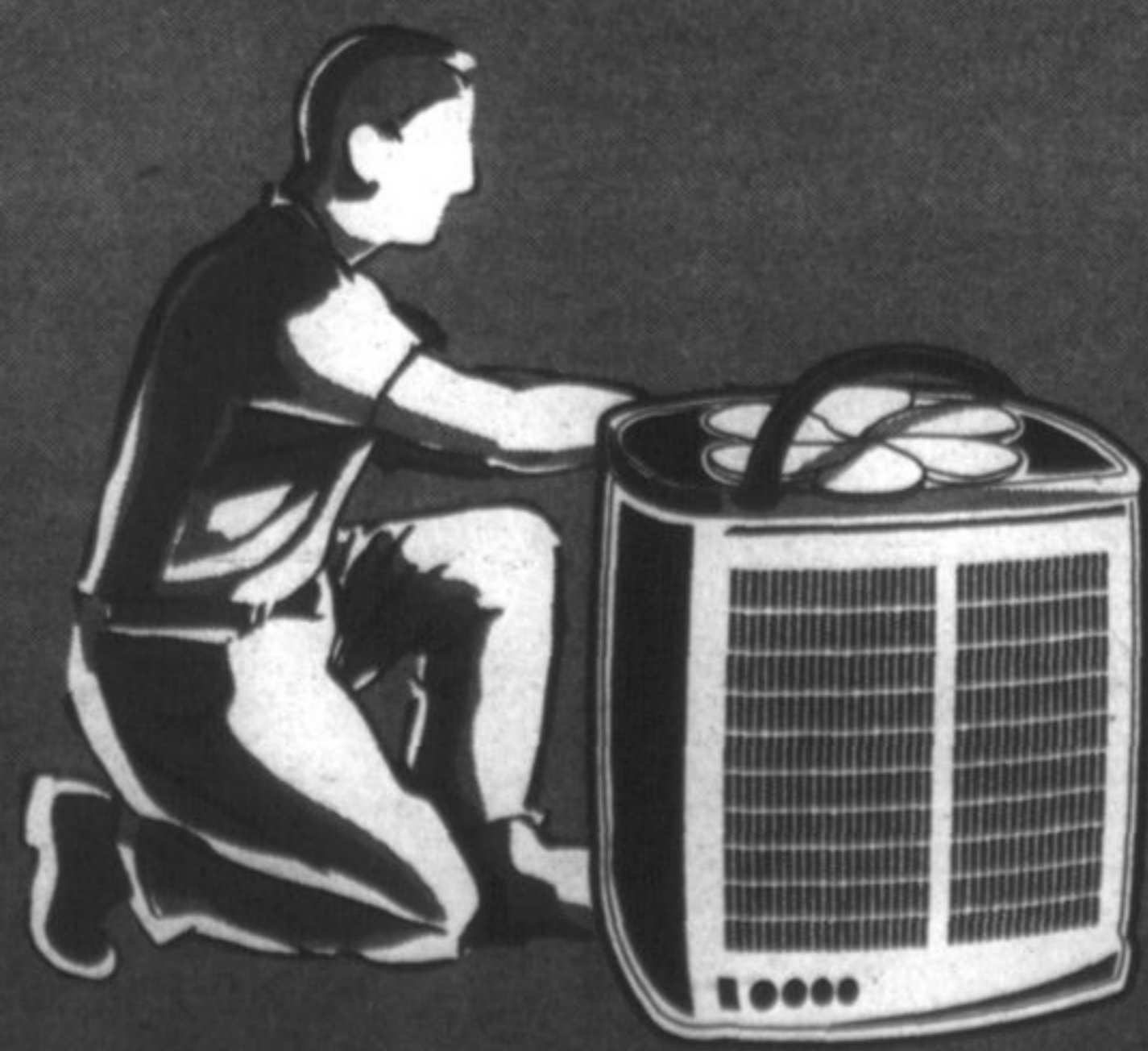
Tips to trim down your electricity use this summer from everykilowattcounts.ca:

1. Clean your air conditioner's filter every 30 days or so.
2. Use ceiling fans in the summer to create a cool breeze.
3. During the hot days of summer keep your house at 25°C when you're home and 28°C when you're away.
4. Sign up for **peaksaver**® and let your CAC's temperature get cycled down for short periods of time during weekdays. It lessens the strain on the electricity system and helps the environment.



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Long-time Stouffville pageant organizers Bruce and Bunny Burton flank Miss Strawberry Festival Queen 1991 Jeni Montgomery Hoover of Stouffville as they prepare for the return of the pageant this month. The festival is marking its 25th anniversary this year.



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