

EDUCATION: New French day care named for Stouffville girl

Day care blooms for Emma Rose

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Stouffville's Emma Rose Grenon-Lemaitre has a class to call her own, but the seven-year-old who the class is named after won't be staying with her friends at La Garderie des Moussaillons, the only French day-care centre in Markham.

During a ceremony that celebrated the completion of La Garderie's long-awaited expansion last Thursday, the new classroom that took two years to build was officially dedicated as the Class of Emma Rose.

"We had many obstacles (during the construction), from getting permits from the town to problems with the gas line," said Nicole Williams, who has been the director of La Garderie for 16 years. "As captain of this ship, it is very satisfying."

Located at the French elementary school Sainte Marguerite Bourgeoys, which also celebrated its 20th anniversary last Thursday, La Garderie received more than \$400,000 from York Region's Best Start Funding for the construction of the new classroom.

The expansion allowed the day care, on John Button Boulevard in the Woodbine and 16th avenues area, to take on 24 more kids.

GET INVOLVED

▶ A black-tie gala fundraiser called A Night of Enchantment will take place at Le Parc Banquet and Conference Centres in Concord on Oct. 23, at 7 p.m., to launch the Emma-Rose Fund. Details will be posted on www.emma-rose.ca shortly. To purchase tickets, at \$125 per person, e-mail Lara Pietrolungo at lara@emma-rose.ca.

"The day care first opened with a capacity of 42 children," Ms Williams said. "When I started here, there were 18 kids enrolled, the centre struggled financially and faced closure at one point."

Today, La Garderie is at capacity with 143 children and a wait list of more than 100 is growing every day.

"We wanted to dedicate the new classroom to Emma Rose because she has been an important part of the family here," Ms Williams said.

"(She) has made us all better people and her legacy will never be forgotten."

Emma Rose was diagnosed with Hurler syndrome, a genetic disorder also known as mucopolysaccharidosis type I (MPS I), shortly after she came to La Garderie six years ago.

It was here that she began walking as a toddler and stopped walking last July, when her health declined.

"It has been a hard year this year. Emma was hospitalized a lot.

"The support we got from the day care was amazing — we never felt Emma was not accepted here," said an emotional Carole Grenon,



STAFF PHOTO/L.H. TIFFANY HSIEH

Nicole Williams (clockwise, from top left), Jim Lemaitre, Carole Grenon, Emma Rose and Adele Grenon-Lemaitre celebrate the opening of a new French day care.

Emma Rose's mother.

Ms Grenon, along with her husband, Jim Lemaitre, and their daughters Adele, 9, and Emma Rose, will move this summer for the much-needed family and financial support.

"I'll never be able to thank them enough... if I could take them to Quebec, I would," Ms Grenon said.

Four years ago, another special bond developed at La Garderie between the Grenon-Lemaitre family and Lara and Rudy Pietrolungo, who are also parents at the day care.

Ms Pietrolungo, who is the manager of Sick-Kids' international program development, said

she had been looking for ideas to raise awareness and funds for children's diseases.

"When I met them, it just clicked," she said.

The Emma-Rose Fund, she explained, will raise awareness of MPS diseases and donate its proceeds to the SickKids Foundation and the Canadian MPS Society.

"Like all childhood diseases, MPS is not only physically and emotionally draining, but it is also a financial nightmare," Ms Pietrolungo said.

"Parents are continuously searching for funding to help support their expenses for medical equipment, medication, child care, medical appointments and hospitalization."

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Premier McGuinty visiting hospital, Sun-Tribune today

Dalton McGuinty's trip to the riding of Oak Ridges-Markham today includes a stop at the offices of the Stouffville Sun-Tribune.

The Ontario Premier will meet with editors and reporters from the York Region Media Group this afternoon at The Sun-Tribune on Main Street.

Details are being kept under wraps, but the Premier's office confirmed he'll be at Markham Stouffville Hospital this morning to make an announcement, joined by Oak Ridges-Markham MPP Helena Jaczek.

On Wednesday, Ms Jaczek said we'll have to wait and see what the announcement is about.

It's no secret the hospital has been anxiously awaiting an announcement for funding for its long-awaited and much-needed expansion.

The hospital was built to serve a catchment area of 110,000. It's now serving 300,000.

The proposal is to build a new addition to the south and the west of the existing building. It will double the size of the current facility. Numerous areas of the existing building will also be renovated.

When all is said and done, the hospital would have a new emergency department, improved and expanded ambulatory care clinics, more inpatient beds and operating rooms, a new diagnostic imaging department, maternal child area and mental health unit.

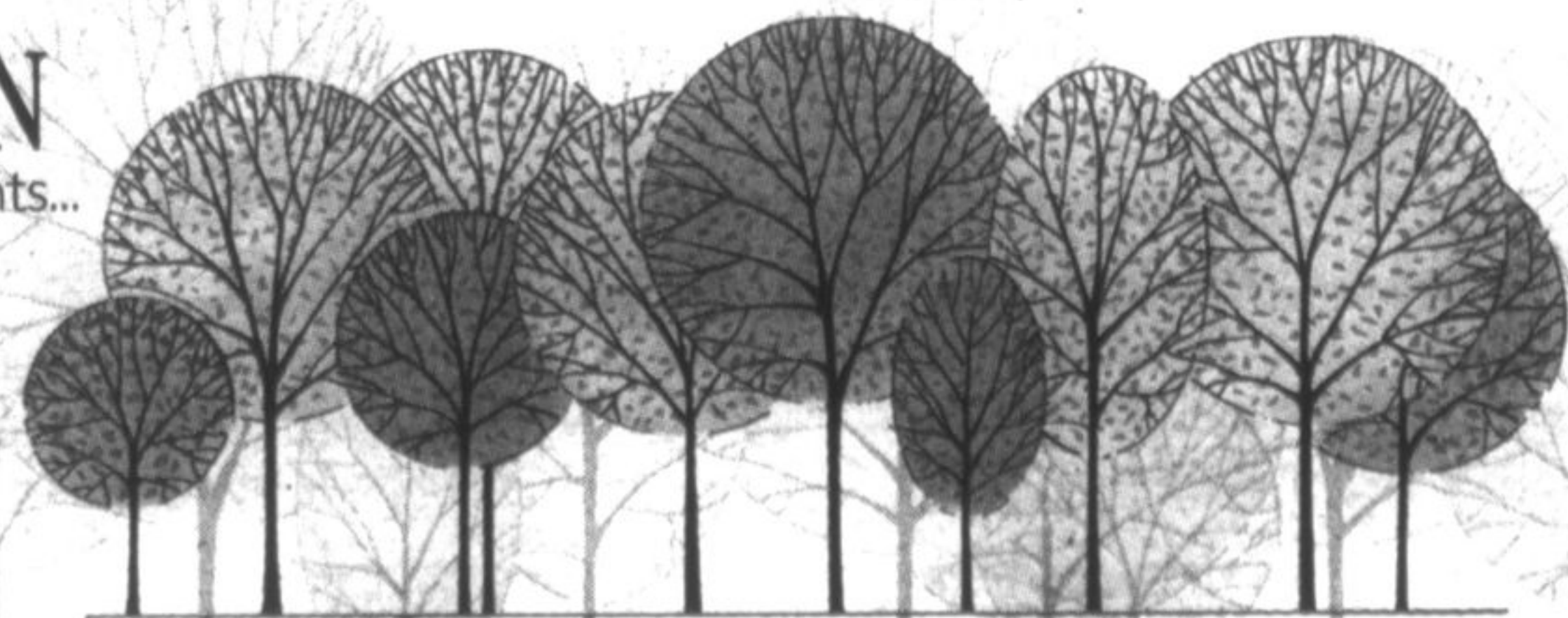
Other details of Mr. McGuinty's visit were not released as of yesterday. Members of the Stouffville Lions Club were told to expect a possible visit during their annual beef barbecue in Memorial Park tonight.

SOUND OFF

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