

Recession, rain hit fair hard

The r-word can have several meanings.

For the 2009 Markham and East York Agricultural Society, better known as Markham Fair, it had but two — recession and rain.

Last fall's four-day event was hit by both, with telling effect. The combined misfortunes dropped the attendance to 42,677, the lowest in 10 years. As was expected, revenues also took a beating, ending with a deficiency of \$19,098.

While the double whammy could have cast a pall of gloom over the annual meeting Jan. 13, such was not the case. Ninety-eight buoyant members packed the office quarters to elect a new president, executive and 11 directors.

"It was a great fair despite the rain," outgoing president Karen Murphy told her audience before passing the gavel to her successor, Kevin Hollands.

The first vice-president is Rob Miller. The second vice-president is fellow Stouffville resident Phil Redshaw.

Lesley English, the fair's finance chairperson, pulled no punches in addressing the crowd.

"The inclement weather had a dramatic impact on our financial position," she said. "There's nothing else to do but roll up our sleeves and try again."

The Stouffville chartered accountant praised various committees for having the courage to reduce expenses by over \$50,000 from the previous year.

The challenge, she said, would be to put on a good show for less money. She recommended this juggling act as a top priority in the months ahead. She also hinted an increased admission charge would undoubtedly be on future agendas.

"We need to make hay while the sun shines," she said.

Mrs. English described as "outstanding", the work of fair general manager Michelle Irwin, secretary Lynda Goodwin and site superintendent Mickey Erskine.

Auditor Jeffrey Greenfield echoed those words, noting attendance had dropped 32 per cent from 2008. Rentals, he said,



Roaming Around

with Jim Thomas

also decreased by 22 per cent, a result he attributed to the economic slowdown.

"Cost control must be your watchword," he said.

Mr. Greenfield said that while fair operations in 2008 showed a profit of \$138,224, a litigation settlement, dating back to 2004, extracted \$234,070 from this total, resulting in a deficit of \$95,846.

The lawsuit related to a fair volunteer suffering serious injury when struck by a stunt motorcyclist during racetrack manoeuvres.

Five senior directors were elected for three-year terms. They are Doug Van Wolde, Brett Cosburn, Scott Paisley, Marsha Lipsius and Gordon Deacon.

Six junior directors were elected for one-year terms. They are Bianca Mondino, Chris Reesor, Cameron Allan, Wendy Harris, Brad Hulshof and Braden Todd.

Karen Lewis of Uxbridge is the 2010 homecraft president.

In accepting the position of fair president, Mr. Hollands said he's ready to take on the challenge "with a full head of steam".

Formerly of Markham and now living in Goodwood, the 35-year-old signmaker has served on the board for 18 years.

Kevin and wife Pamela have three children, Shannon, 8, Caitlin, 6, and Devin, 2.

"It's a great honour," he said, "but nothing would be possible without the support of volunteers."

He promised to keep agriculture front and centre during his presidential year.

Jim Thomas is a Stouffville resident who has written for area newspapers for more than 50 years.

C — SMOKED — CHICKENS

These are our air-chilled chickens that are brined and then slowly smoked over oak until they are fully cooked. There are many ways to use them, the first being to warm and portion it at the table as you would a B.B.Q. chicken — then serve it with red pepper jelly as the condiment — along with perhaps, scalloped potatoes. — Another is to section one and cut it into a pasta dish. The smoke flavour will really enhance it. Now, the deal this week is that you get a jar of **Red Pepper Jelly Free** when you get one of our smoked chickens — the chickens are \$12.95 each. The red pepper jelly is \$4.99 each and there are two or three brands to choose from.

S ~ APPLE ALLSPICE ~ SAUSAGES

We make these with coarsely-ground fresh pork, some peeled and diced Granny Smith apples, salt, pepper, enough allspice to notice and some apple cider. These are nice grilled or done in a fry pan, but equally nice oven-roasted. **25% OFF THIS WEEK** Reg. \$3.99



Cream of Shiitake Mushroom Soup — we use a combo of fresh and dried shiitakes, chicken stock and cream. I find the texture like velvet and the flavour amazing, a really great soup. **\$5.99** A CONTAINER

MACARONI & CHEESE

To me this is Comfort food with a capital "C" — the adult version of K.D! Our secret here is my mother-in-law, whose recipe this is. There's nothing like a farm girl in the kitchen if comfort food is on the menu. From our frozen kitchen we supply about 50 other stores around Ontario (— and one in Quebec) and we publish a "Top 20 List" for their ordering convenience. Our Mac and Cheese is #2 on the list, which won't surprise you once you sit down to a bowl of this. **25% OFF THIS WEEK** Serves 2-3 Reg. \$10.95 container

CHICKEN NOODLE SOUP

Our feature in the soup department will be our Chicken Noodle. You might be forgiven for thinking that, since it's just soup, we could get by using the cheap chicken to make this — and that we would save lots of money because we use lots of chicken — but we use our really nice air-chilled chicken that we pay a premium to get. The result will be proof enough of our quality thinking. **25% OFF THIS WEEK** Serves 3-4 Reg. \$6.49

HANKERING for SPRING? To my mind, nothing holds the promise of spring quite the same as a vase or two of tulips in your home. The availability of all the different varieties is currently improving, and it will continue to do so for the next while. Many colours and some of the different styles are now available. A couple of care tips that I use are: (a) I never trim the bottoms like I do with other bouquets unless you wish them to open quickly, which sometimes you do, and (b) take your vase(s) and place them in a cool area in the evening, even your cold room, and they will close up a bit....and extend their longevity, and (c) don't put them in a lot of water, but don't let them run out of water either. (d) add floral preservative. Fresh tulips will actually continue to grow and you may want to cut them down when they get too long.

WHAT'S BLOOMING?

With the more temperate weather we've been having, thoughts of spring come naturally. If you're craving some colour, we've got just what you need. We have plenty of beautiful spring bulbs and bulb gardens as well as a nice selection of seasonal cut flowers. This week, to help get you in the mood for spring, our beauty tulips are on special for \$3.99 a bunch.

PACIFIC SNAPPER

This snapper (or rockfish) has a delicate, nutty sweet flavour. The meat is lean and medium firm in texture with a fine flake. These are suited well to baking rather than grilling, and will remain moist when cooked in this way. Recipes will be available as usual. **\$8.95** LB THIS WEEK

WHAT'S COOKIN'?

Firstly, the salad of note this week is **Artichoke Hearts**. It's made with marinated artichoke hearts, sun-dried tomatoes, red onions — and green too, extra virgin olive oil and balsamic glaze. **1/2 PRICE THIS WEEK** Reg. \$1.69/100g

Also We'll be making some **Tempura Shrimp**. They are a nice size (hard to eat whole) which have been peeled, deveined, tempura-dipped, then deep-fried. **99¢ EACH THIS WEEK** Also

O ~ CALIFORNIA ~ ORANGES

We've received a nice amount of new crop California Navel Oranges of the Washington variety. They're big (size 48) and juicy and pretty easy to peel. The reward is how refreshing they are. **99¢ LB THIS WEEK**

~ ANDY BOY ~ BROCCOLI

We'll have a feature price this week on great Broccoli. By grabbing one of these as you go by, you'll mitigate any extravagances that might occur at the bakery counter. From California **99¢ LB THIS WEEK**

WHAT'S BAKING!

It's Jelly Roll week in our bakery. Whenever I see these (which is often) I think of Kimmo, the tall Finnish cook who worked here so long ago. He was the one that started all this — and he's back for another tour of duty — but not in the Jelly Roll department, in the kitchen. We'll be making..... **Mixed Berry.....** This is with sponge cake, freshly whipped cream, and fresh blueberries, raspberries and strawberries — all rolled up comfy. **Chocolate Hazelnut.....** This time the cake portion is chocolate. It has a layer of chocolate ganache, and a layer of chocolate whipped cream along with a layer of chopped toasted hazelnuts. **Fresh Raspberry.....** We use sponge cake for this, raspberry mousse cream and lots of fresh California raspberries and **Lemon-Strawberry.....** This is a new one using sponge cake, lemon cream and lots of freshly diced California strawberries. All our jelly rolls serve 6 to 8. Reg..... \$15.95 each **Cathy's Cranberry Squares:** After what seems like an eternity, my wife has finally relented and we now have her cranberry square recipe in production. Like all really good things in life, it has been well worth waiting for. Made with a shortbread crust, pecans, dried cranberries, thompson raisins. Reg..... \$2.99 each **Wild Blueberry Pies.....** These are the heavy deep-dish ones, with either a lattice or a crumble top, but inside are loads of the little wild blues from Ontario, all spiced up just right. Reg..... \$17.95 each — and all these will be featured this week at..... **25% OFF THIS WEEK** While supplies last!



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