

## LEARNING: Paws to Read at Stouffville library



STAFF FILE PHOTO/NICK IWANYSHYN

Mitchell Parcels reads to Eneida in a program where children read to dogs to help with reading skills at the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library last fall. A new program is starting.

# Four-legged book buddies inspire confidence in kids

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Reading out loud in front of one's classmates can be such a paralyzing experience for some children that even the most basic words can become garbled.

The child then feels even more embarrassed than before and their self-confidence takes a hit that knocks it down to the depths of despair.

But reading aloud doesn't have to be a humiliating experience.

Three years ago, the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library introduced the Paws to Read program to children aged seven to 14 who were either shy or lacked self-confidence when it came to reading out loud in front of others.

The premise behind the program, which is run by the non-profit organization Therapeutic Paws of Canada, is that children read a book of their choosing out loud to a specially-trained therapy dog.

"When reading to a dog, the dog doesn't judge you, doesn't care if you make a mistake — it builds their confidence," said Anne Houle, co-ordinator of children and youth services at the library.

The child is not, however, completely alone with the dog; its handler is nearby to offer assistance in choosing books as well as

in helping sound out words, which may aid in lessening the frustration of aloud reading for these children.

In Stouffville, children read to a German shepherd named Eneida.

"(She) just lays calmly and quietly beside the child," said Ruth Love, Eneida's owner. "The dog is a presence to give them confidence."

While there are no statistics available indicating the program is a success, both Ms Houle and Ms Love have seen first-hand the changes it makes in children, which means to them, the program is working.

Ms Love noted one child who came to the program terrified to read aloud to people and even Eneida. But by the end of the eight-week session, this child was confident and readily reading out loud to a group of people.

Ms Houle also recalled one child who was adamant that he would not participate, no matter what.

"Now he loves it," she said. The program runs on Thursdays from 4 to 5 p.m.

"We would like another dog, but it's a long process to get them qualified," Ms Houle said.

For more information or to register for a session, contact the library at 905-642-7323.

## United church helps in Haiti

Stouffville United Church's Living Waters for Haiti fundraising campaign has surpassed the \$5,000 mark.

The money will be sent to Global Medic to pay for three treatment systems that will provide water to up to 3,000 people per day, said Cap Cowan, chairperson of the church's world and community outreach program.

For more information, go to [www.globalmedic.ca](http://www.globalmedic.ca)

## Christian school students chip in

Stouffville Christian School recently raised \$1,291 for Emmanuel International Canada's Haitian relief fund.

Students raised the money by wearing a hat to school one day, for the price of a loonie or more, buying extra recess time, a bake sale and with a casual dress day for a loonie or more.

For more information, go to [www.eicanada.org](http://www.eicanada.org)

## your PLANNER

THURSDAY  
FEBRUARY

11

### PLAYOFF HOCKEY

The Stouffville Spirit opens the Jr. A hockey playoffs against Peterborough tonight at 7:30 p.m. at the Stouffville Arena. Game 3 is in Stouffville on Monday at 2:30 p.m.

FRIDAY  
FEBRUARY

12

### WESLEY MUSIC

Wesley United Church, Woodbine Avenue and Aurora Road, hosts its annual music night at 7:30 p.m. Vocals and instrumentals. Tickets are \$12 at the door. Pancake and sausage luncheon on Sunday at 12:30 p.m. Tickets are \$5.

SATURDAY  
FEBRUARY

13

### WINTER FUN

The seventh annual Whitchurch-Stouffville Winter Carnival is on from 1 to 4 p.m. with indoor and outdoor activities at Cedar Beach on Musselman's Lake. Funds raised go to the Ballantrae Scouts.

SATURDAY  
FEBRUARY

13

### WHAT A LAUGH

Stouffville Secondary's rugby team is hosting a Yuk Yuk's fundraiser for its British trip at the Markham Fairgrounds from 7 to 11 p.m. Tickets are \$25 from the school or 905-640-4204.

SUNDAY  
FEBRUARY

14

### DINNER'S SERVED

Family Pasta Dinner at Stouffville United Church begins at 6 p.m. Pancake supper on Tuesday. All are welcome. Call 905-640-1163 for more information.

TUESDAY  
FEBRUARY

16

### PLEASED TO MEET YOU

A networking drop-in for business people will be held every Thursday at 10 a.m. starting today at the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library.

SUNDAY  
FEBRUARY

21

### TEEN WRITERS

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library hosts a workshop for writers aged 14 to 17 from noon to 5 p.m. Cost is \$20. Instructor is Charlene Jones. For more information, call 905-642-READ.

MONDAY  
FEBRUARY

22

### SOUP AND SONGS

A soup lunch for seniors will be held at the Silver Jubilee Club, 6297 Main St., at noon. Cost is \$7. Entertainment by the Stouffville Secondary Choir.

For more community events, visit [yorkregion.com](http://yorkregion.com) and click on POP personal online planner.

To add an event to this listing, e-mail Jim Mason at [jmason@yrmg.com](mailto:jmason@yrmg.com). Event organizers can also register with POP at [yorkregion.com](http://yorkregion.com) to have events listed free online.

MS Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada

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END MS.

Markham - Stouffville  
Sunday April 18th, 2010

MS WALK  
EVERY STEP MATTERS.

Register at [mswalks.ca](http://mswalks.ca) or 1.888.822.8467

STUDENT WORKS  
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