

**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,
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OPINION

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Rink users unimpressed

Re: Stouffville's new arena no winner: visitor, Feb. 20.

At a gathering of novice A Clipper minor hockey parents one of the topics discussed was your cover story.

We could certainly empathise with Cheryl Parker's point of view. We all agree that our new Stouffville Clippers Sports Complex is sorely disappointing. We wonder if anyone involved in the planning has ever had children involved in the sport?

Poor visibility is the obvious downfall of the new arena but as the mother of three in hockey, I can't help but wonder why the change rooms are designed in such an inconvenient fashion? We all but stand on top of one another in the cramped rooms.

Why were no stairs put at the other end of the building? Penalty boxes cannot be seen from the stands either. If you choose to stand close to the pad at the upper level you will hear it from the viewers whose precious little view you will be blocking.

One distraught mother complained of how her toddler's foot became stuck in the gap between the glass and concrete.

Where is the seating in the unnecessarily spacious main entrance way? And the town could have put up signage.

With so many shortfalls that could have been easily corrected we ask Mike Richardson and the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville to accept suggestions from those of us who spend countless hours in our facilities in the future.

We are "baffled" how Mr. Richardson has not heard "any negative" comments. Perhaps he should sit in the stands and listen to parents and visitors.

With proper planning, this complex could have generated more income. As it is I am happy to leave the building. Let's just say I won't be making a washroom break on the way out. Chances are there will be a line-up.

DENISE KOVAC
STOUFFVILLE



Are you ready to embrace the new normal?

We take it for granted we're OK...until life's challenges teach us otherwise.

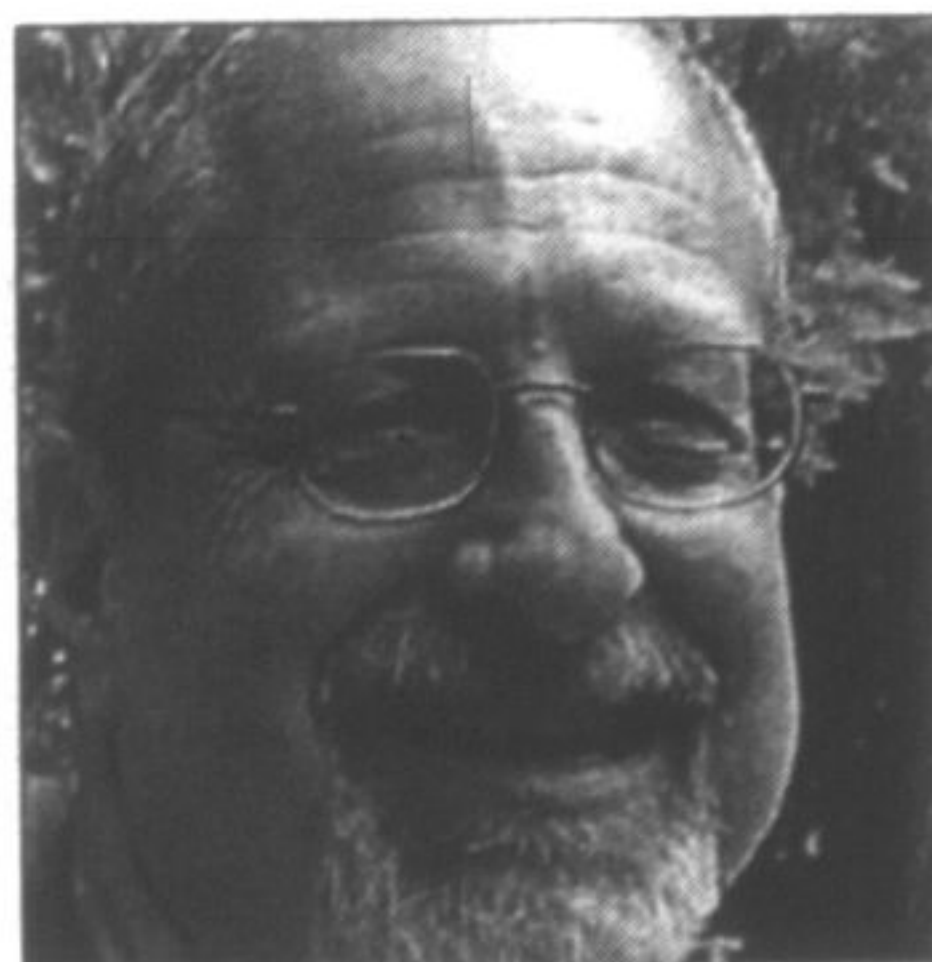
Then, experiencing our own limitations, we confront our disabilities. This realization profoundly changes how we see, and manage, disability.

Renaissance Humanism gave us Leonardo's "Vitruvian Man". Cosmopolitan Magazine gives us "Woman's Woman". One thing is clear: we prefer to stress the positive over the negative. Yesterday, psychologists said we were all neurotic, today they say we are all "able".

While comforting, this rosy picture is false, because perfect folks like you and me are so rare, even in our wonderful community. It is also misleading because it prevents us from addressing our own flaws.

Saying everyone is "able" not only creates a "false normal", it also identifies the disabled as "abnormal". Only when individuality is understood as a unique mix of ability and disability, can we stop identifying persons with disabilities as "exceptional". Let's admit it: The more common attribute - among our kin, friends and neighbours alike - is our imperfection.

This idea is as old as the Bible, where Adam and Eve reached for



Sal Amenta

divine knowledge, only to get turfed from Eden. Starting with this less flattering picture of ourselves, gives us a useful starting point for social change because admitting universal disability is the first step in making society more truly "inclusive".

This kind of inclusion is envisioned by the Community Living movement, not just locally and nationally but also internationally - as with the UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, soon to be ratified by Canada. In Ontario, with the closure of "large institutions", and passage of the Accessibility Act (AODA, 2005), we see the campaign for inclusion promoting the accommodation of persons with disabilities. It advocates their full acceptance into local life, and asserts that all Canadians, bar none, enjoy the

same rights and privileges.

This is a bright, new vision. It includes people with all kinds of disabilities, both visible and invisible, and does not make invidious comparisons between "us and them". Since true inclusion excludes no one, it requires acceptance and accommodation of all individuals, in their infinite diversity.

This vision also implies that disability is a matter of degree, and that we have a duty to care for each other according to our needs. If we are all needy - in one way or another, at one time or another - then care and support must be proportionate to our relative disabilities. Justice addresses needs, not wants.

Not surprisingly, this picture flies in the face of statistics. Officially, only about 12.4 per cent of Canadians - 3,601,000 - have disabilities that prevent them from participating in community life. This figure, however, does not include mental disorders, which afflict one-quarter of us every year, and double that during our lives. Nor does it include the dramatic increase in such conditions as Autism Spectrum Disorder or Fetal Alcohol Syndrome.

When all of these disorders are included - anxiety, mood, social, impulse control and substance use - the overall figure jumps to even more than 50 per cent. True, this number is fluid, since we move in and out of ill-

ness, physical and otherwise, throughout our lives. But surely our aging population will only inflate this figure in the coming decades.

Clearly then, official statistics vastly under-estimate the number of Canadians afflicted by disability. Arguing whether the true rate is 25, 50 per cent or even higher is like debating how many angels fit on the head of a pin. Answer: all of them - or us - because disability, in its diverse forms, is the "new normal"!

Utterly dependent in infancy and senility, totally disabled in dying, we all experience disability. We cannot escape giving or receiving care during our lives. We are all "challenged" by physical, emotional, intellectual, moral, spiritual, or even perceptual disability - as in a willful blindness to this fact.

Accepting this will be hard for the gifted among us, until we see the light. Only by Divine Grace, or Blind Chance, are we "able"...for the time being... Appreciating universal disability promotes tolerance and accommodation for those less fortunate than we are.

So let's embrace the new normal.

Salvatore Amenta PhD is a vice president for Community Living - Newmarket/Aurora District Regional Director, on the board of directors for Community Living Ontario, a family leader in the Canadian Association for Community Living and a member of The Sun-Tribune's Community Links panel.