



STAFF PHOTO/STEVE SOMERVILLE

Lifeguards from across the province whoop it up at fundraising event during National Drowning Prevention Week in Richmond Hill last month. Area guards will be promoting drowning prevention during a cross-region run from Stouffville next weekend.

PUBLIC SAFETY: Regional road relay starts in Stouffville

Guards climb out of pool to help fight drowning

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York Region lifeguards are taking drowning prevention to the streets.

On Aug. 21 and 22, more than 160 lifeguards from Whitchurch-Stouffville, Markham, Vaughan, Richmond Hill, Aurora, Newmarket and Georgina will take part in the Lifesaving Society's Rescue Tube Relay, in which lifeguards will run 120 km in two days.

Each lifeguard will run with a rescue tube, which is a foam flotation device used to support a victim during rescue.

The purpose of the relay, which is being organized by the York Region Aquatic Council, is to raise awareness of drowning prevention.

"We want to educate, especially parents, to stay within arms reach of their children and wear the (personal flotation devices)," said Yorick Tong, aquatic programmer for the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville.

"They think shallow water is OK, but it just takes a split second and they're not looking" and the child is in trouble.

So far this year, there have been four drownings in York Region, according to York Regional Police. There were six drownings all of last year.

There have been 81 drownings in Ontario this year, compared to 79 at the same time last year, said Barbara Byers of the Lifesaving Society.

Parents need to also be realistic about their child's swimming abilities.

"A lot of parents are overconfident in what they think their kids can do," Mr. Tong said.

Case in point. When children aged six to nine want to swim without a parent at the Lebovic Leisure Centre in Stouffville, they have to first pass a swim facility test, which consists of the swimmer jumping into the

shallow end of the main pool, swimming on their front, in any manner, to the middle of the pool, turning around and swimming back without stopping, to the satisfaction of the lifeguard on duty. The swimmer must take at least one breath and not appear to be struggling.

Many children fail the test, according to Mr. Tong.

'A lot of parents are overconfident in what they think their kids can do.'

Drowning is the second leading cause of preventable deaths for children under 10 years of age, according to the Lifesaving Society, with children under five years of age most at risk.

"They're often very curious about the environment so they wander off from their parents," Mr. Tong said.

"That's the age where most of them don't know how to swim."

The purpose of the relay is not only to increase drowning prevention awareness, but to also raise funds for the society, a non-profit organization that works to prevent drownings and water-related injuries through training programs.

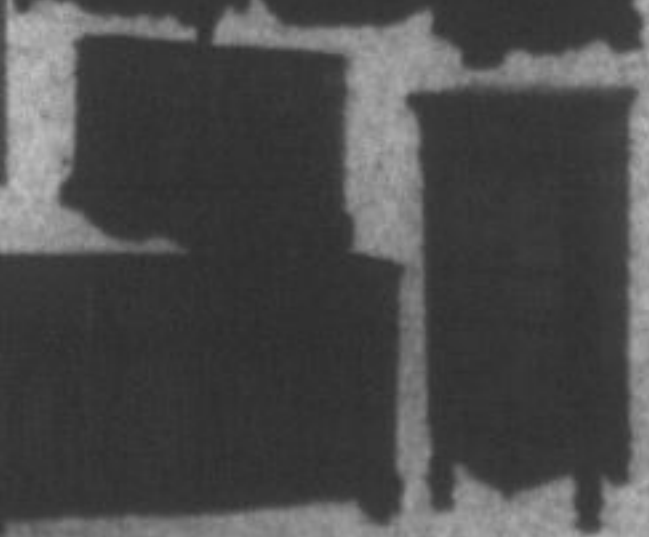
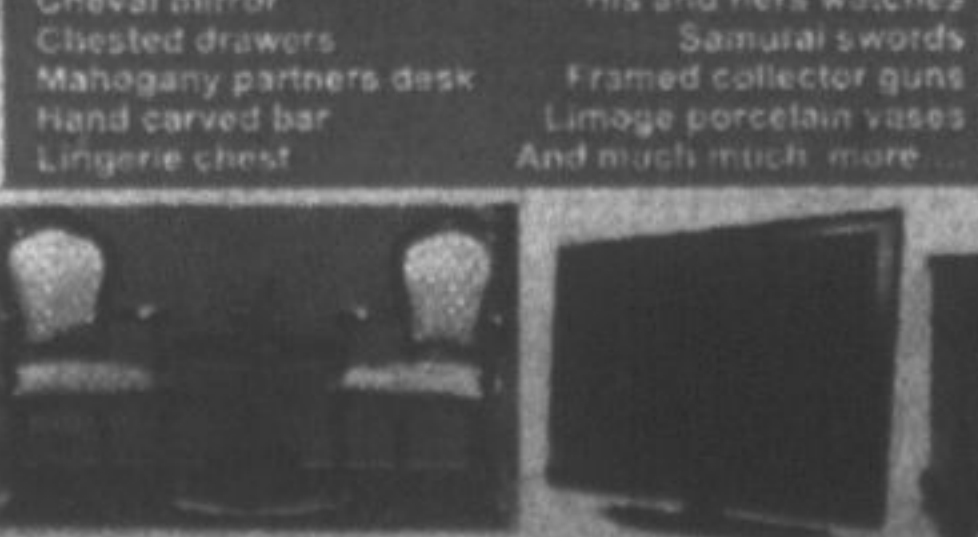
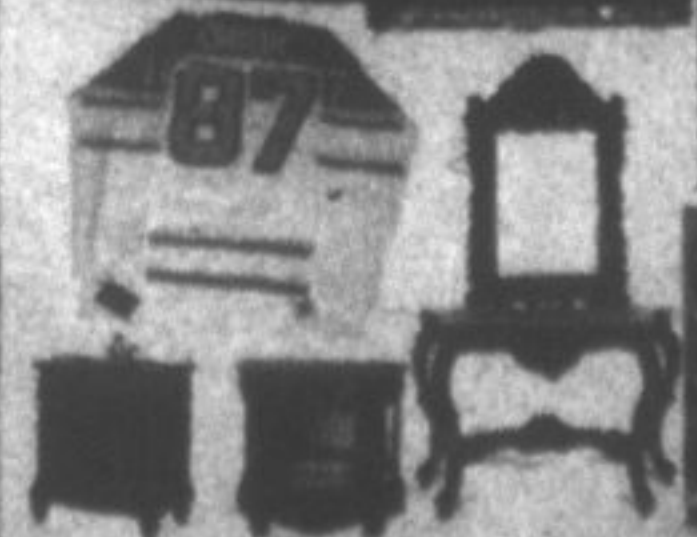
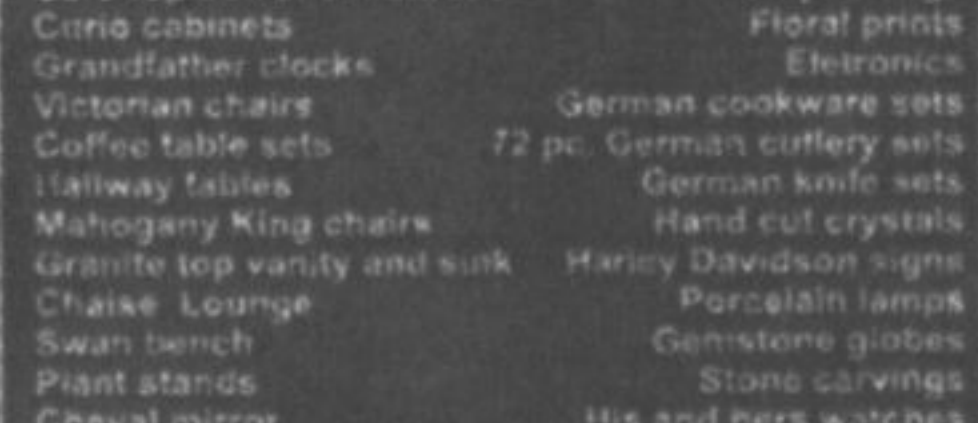
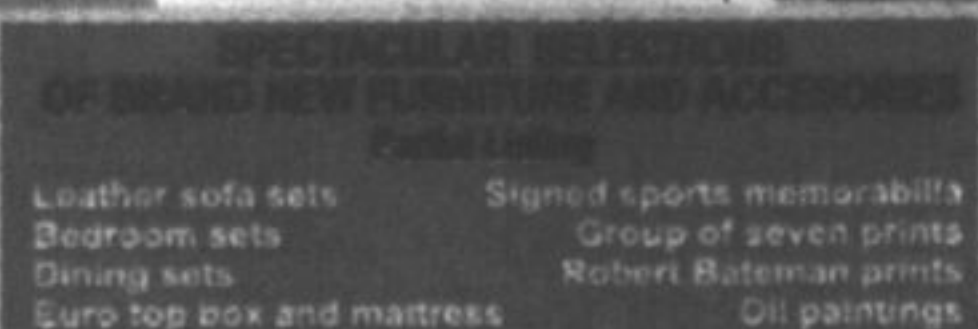
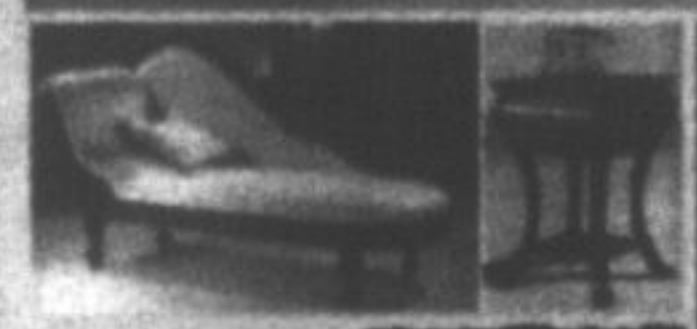
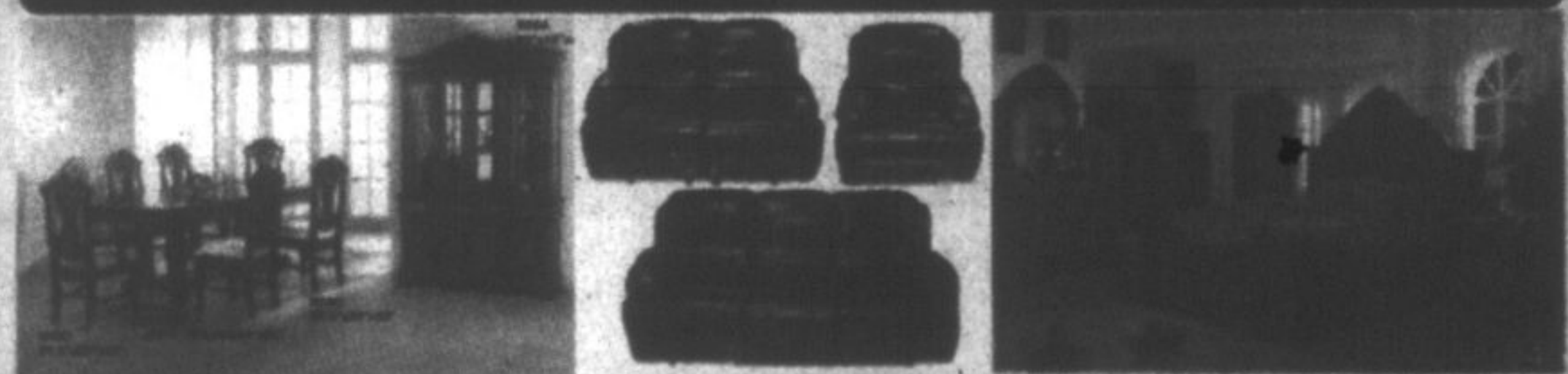
The relay starts at 9 a.m. at the Lebovic Leisure Centre and will go along Stouffville's Main Street to Kennedy Road, then head south to 19th Avenue, where lifeguards from Markham will take over. It will move into Vaughan and Richmond Hill.

The next day, the relay will start in Richmond Hill and move through Aurora, Newmarket and Georgina.

Donations can be made at the Lebovic Leisure Centre.

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14001 WARDEN AVE (WARDEN & BLOOMINGTON) • STOUFFVILLE, ON
PREVIEW: 12:00 PM • AUCTION: 1:00PM

MONDAY AUGUST 16, 2010
THE PRINCESS BANQUET HALL
3330 PHARMACY AVE (CORNER OF PHARMACY & MCNICOLL) • SCARBOROUGH, ON
PREVIEW: 6:00 PM • AUCTION: 7:00PM

Tai Chi society opens new home

Enjoy a Chinese dragon dance, demonstrations of the 108-move Tai Chi set, a ceremonial ribbon cutting and a public lunch tomorrow.

These presentations will mark the grand opening of a newly-purchased clubhouse of the Taoist Tai Chi Society of Canada at 124 Dickson Hill Rd. located between Markham and Stouffville on Sunday.

The events start at noon. Call 905-640-

0117 for a detailed program.

Founded in Toronto in 1970 by the late Master Moy Lin-shin, a Taoist monk who immigrated to Canada from Hong Kong, the International Taoist Tai Chi Society is the world's largest nonprofit Tai Chi organization with branches in 26 countries.

The society is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year.

Visit www.taoist.org for more information.

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