

WELLNESS: Sports, snacks part of non-profit program

Dad has healthy after-school plans for Stouffville kids

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Jim O'Donnell has played hockey for most of his life, has been a coach for 10 years and thought he and his wife were raising their three children to live a life as active as theirs.

That is, until one day when Mr. O'Donnell stepped out of his home office to see his children shortly after they had come home from school and found one of them playing a video game, another one watching TV and the third at the computer.

"When I came home from school when I was young, we'd do our homework, get a snack and be outside with our friends," he said.

Mr. O'Donnell changed his kids' after-school routine to get them more active and now he wants to do that for other Stouffville children.

Starting Sept. 7, Mr. O'Donnell, who owns and operates the not-for-profit company Atlas Fitness for Youth, in conjunction with the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville, will be offering an after-school program at EastRidge Evangelical Missionary Church designed to provide kids aged nine to 14 a holistic approach to developing lifelong habits of active and healthy living.

"It's designed at teaching kids how to live a healthy, active lifestyle through sports, get them off the computer, get them off the video games," he said.

The after-school program is not for athletes. It is for anyone, no matter their athletic ability or lack thereof.

"To live an active lifestyle doesn't mean

you have to be a sports professional," Mr. O'Donnell said.

Along with Mr. O'Donnell, there will be high school students on hand to assist the younger students in learning how to manoeuvre the basketball or volleyball courts, as well help introduce them to baseball, running, mountain biking, golf and any other sport the kids have an interest in.

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What makes the program unique is there is no set goal for the end.

"I really like the personal-best focus because they're just competing with themselves," said Micole Ongman, manager of recreation for the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville.

Snacks will also be provided, which will include fruits and vegetables.

"No unhealthy snacks," Mr. O'Donnell said. "I'm not going to say don't eat any chips ever. It's about eating a healthy, balanced diet, all the food groups."

And because EastRidge is a bit difficult for

kids to walk to after school, a free shuttle service will be available for participants. Parents will have to make arrangements to pick up their children at the end of each day.

In preparation for the after-school program, Mr. O'Donnell ran a March break camp as well as a five-week summer camp, in which he lost 15 pounds.

"I'm the kind of guy who likes to get involved, do the sports, do the activities with the kids," he said.

The after-school program runs from 3 to

6 p.m. at the Tenth Line church. The monthly cost ranges from \$230 for two days a week, to \$330 for all five days a week.

The program runs for the entire school year, but space can be booked on a monthly basis.

"It's flexible because kids are doing different things after school," Mr. O'Donnell said.

Registration can be done through the town at the Lebovic Leisure Centre.

For more details, go to www.atlasfitnessforyouth.com/pages/programdetails.htm



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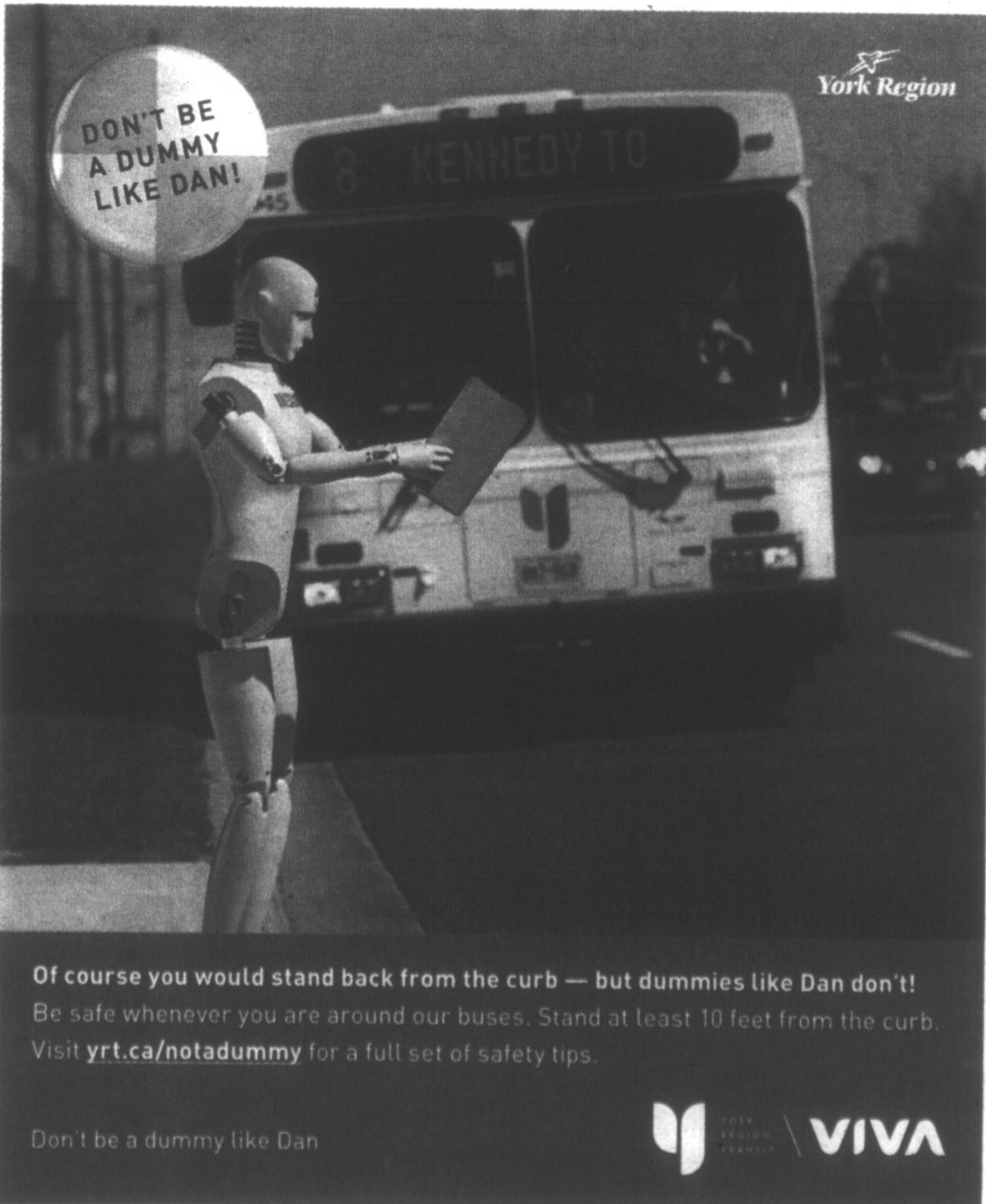


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