

### Stay off ponds, rivers, lakes: police

After responding to two close calls on Lake Simcoe last weekend, the York Regional Police marine unit is reminding residents that mild weather has made the ice extremely unsafe on most bodies of water. Despite issuing many warnings, York

police fear the message is not being heard. They say, as a result of a mild winter, bodies of water have not frozen over to the point where they are safe to travel on, including ponds, rivers and streams.

Residents should "stay off the ice as it is dangerously unsafe and the water is still extremely cold," Const. Rebecca Boyd said.

<p><b>HAMLET (SOLO)</b> March 1 / 8pm</p> <p>"Shakespeare lives again!" Halifax Chronicle Herald</p> <p><b>THEATRE</b></p> <p>This adaptation focuses on the essential elements of theatre. It is "bare bones" in its presentation but complex in its telling, with actor <b>Raoul Bhaneja</b> playing every part!</p> <p><b>TICKETS: \$25-regular / \$18 student</b> REGULAR PRICE NOW \$20 - PROMO CODE "TORE"</p>	<p><b>CLASSICAL MUSIC</b></p> <p><b>POTATOES</b></p> <p><b>FAMILY EVENT</b></p>	<p><b>TORQ PERCUSSION QUARTET</b> Wednesday, March 7 / 7pm</p> <p>Formed by four musicians looking to add new energy to percussion performance, <b>TorQ's</b> music ranges from lyrical mallet quartets to high-energy show pieces.</p> <p><b>TICKETS: \$25 regular / \$13 student</b></p>
<p><b>CHRIS PATTERSON'S SMALL POTATOES</b> Sunday, April 1 / 2pm</p> <p><b>Small Potatoes</b> spans musical genres - from rock to hip-hop to country to jazz to dance music. It's all there and it's a lot of fun - for kids and parents alike!</p> <p><b>TICKETS: \$20 regular / \$10 student</b></p> <p><b>STARLIGHT CINEMA SCREENINGS</b> Mar. 14/7pm - The Debt (14A) TICKETS \$7.50 REGULAR / \$5 MEMBERS Mar. 28/7pm - Life Above All (PG13)</p> <p>The BEST in Arts &amp; Entertainment in Downtown Stouffville Call (905) 640-2322 www.nineteenonthePark.ca</p>		

# World music festival added to downtown schedule

BY SANDRA BOLAN  
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There will be no shortage of events in downtown Stouffville this year, including the annual Easter egg hunt, another girls' weekend and round of outdoor movie nights, as well as a new music festival.

"The key is to get as many people down here," said Anna Rose, downtown co-ordinator for the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville.

Last year, a handful of new events took place in the core, including Stouffvilicious and Stouffville Street Scene, which both return this year.

"I think no matter what business you're doing, we can get creative to get people there," Ms Rose told the smattering of merchants who attended the Thursday morning meeting.

New activities scheduled for this year include Jane's Walk, May 5.

The national event commemorates urban planner Jane Jacobs and encourages people to explore their neighbourhoods.

There will be two walks led by local historian Fred Robbins, according to Ms Rose. One walk will focus on public and institutional facilities, while the other will be about bridges and water.

The event is also in partnership with the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library.

"We're still developing that but it should be a lot of fun," Ms Rose said.

Also new to the calendar is September's Stouffville World Music Festival. The event will focus on the town's diversity and showcase dance, song and lifestyle.

This replaces Culture Days, which were held for the past couple of years at the same time as the Markham Fair.

"We don't want to compete with them," Ms Rose said of the popular fair.

Shoppers have not been forgotten.

"Canadians have jumped all over" the United States' Black Friday shopping, so

downtown stores will be offering door crasher sales for the bargain hungry, according to Ms Rose.

"We want to take advantage of people being in that mind frame to shop," she said.

Concentrated efforts to improve the downtown have been an 18-month long project for the town.

The municipality is undertaking a commercial policy review that not only includes the downtown, but all commercial areas of Whitchurch-Stouffville.

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The study will help local retailers better understand residents' shopping and spending patterns, according to Andrew McNeely, director of planning and building services for the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville.

As part of the review, a telephone survey of 800 completed interviews will take place between April and May to help the town determine which dollars are leaving the community, identify gaps and provide a move-forward plan, according to Mr. McNeely.

Over these same 18 months, the downtown occupancy rate has increased, according to Mr. McNeely, despite the sluggish economy.

There are currently only three vacant properties downtown - Barthau Jewellers' former location, a space beside BJ Gift and Variety and another one beside Stouffville Florists. Come the beginning of May, Scotiabank's location will also become vacant.

Mr. McNeely also noted many of the establishments within the downtown are owner occupiers and "that means there's a larger commitment in the downtown".

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