

Kids get taste of police work

BY JOE FANTAUZZI
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Earnest, Neha Farooqi stood in the hall of her school, describing how she enjoyed a forensics demonstration by York Regional Police officers.

The York officers were in Markham at Cedarwood Public School Tuesday with their Royal Canadian Mounted Police colleagues running, among other activities, drills, a forensics lab, and an obstacle course as part of a junior police academy.

A first for York Region, similar academies have been held in Hamilton and Western Canada.

Neha, 10, and her classmate John Ramos, 11, are among the people with whom police are trying to connect.

They're suburban youths and representative of Canada's future.

"I know they're here to help," Neha said when asked about the role of police officers, her principal, Lisa Stover, beside her. "They're trying to keep us safe."

Connecting young people with police is important — especially members of communities that may not have been comfortable dealing with police in the past, several people involved the academy noted.

"It's good for them to see what the police actually do," said Juanita Nathan, the local York District School Board trustee and vice-president

of the Canadian Tamil Congress. "When they grow up, they should be able to approach them without fear."

It's also important that young people learn to call the right people for support if they encounter problems — especially if they need to translate for family members, Ms Stover noted.

And while employing fun as a learning technique, the junior police academy also had edges of seriousness jutting from its corners.

On one side of the obstacle course, for example, was a large RCMP sign proclaiming, "National Security is a Shared Responsibility".

It's often not students who have had the bad experiences with police, but their parents and extended families, according to Sgt. Derek McDonald, a community outreach officer with the RCMP's integrated national security enforcement team.

It's his hope young people will take home their positive experiences from the academy.

That said, having officers in schools with a diverse student population — specifically national security officers — is not about digging dirt, he insisted.

Cedarwood, for example, has a large South Asian population.

"This is absolutely not an intelligence-gathering exercise," Sgt. McDonald said. "We are not asking kids to go home and rat out their neighbours."

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IN OUR COMMUNITY

Young local boy gives from the heart!

In a Town where it seems there are always hands outstretched asking for your hard-earned money to support many worthy charities, along comes one that literally tugs at your heart. In 2007 a young Markham boy was saved from a life threatening heart disease by the efforts of doctors at Sick Kid's Hospital and to show his gratitude he created his own charity called: "Austin's Cardiac Kids". All proceeds from this charity go directly to their Cardiac Care Division.

The story starts when 12-year-old Austin Mansz was admitted with a severe fever. Doctors began chest x-rays and blood cultures and diagnosed Austin with Bacterial Endocarditis, a type of super bug that was destroying his heart. Austin wasn't responding to the antibiotics and an Echocardiogram was ordered. The results showed that Austin's condition had deteriorated to a point where he was given just a 50 per cent chance of survival.

It took hours for Sick Kids Cardiac Surgeon, Dr. Calderone, to rebuild his heart and a lengthy recovery period followed, but survive he did. He is quoted as saying: "Sick Kid's is the reason I am still here and the reason I am healthy. I saw all the children and babies in the hospital and realized even though I had survived, many of them would not." He wanted to do something to help increase the survival rate of the others... So the charity was born and it has continued to grow thanks to the generous support of local residents, businesses and especially "Hockey with Heart".

One of the many ways that funds are raised for this worthy cause is through his annual "Austin's Cardiac Kids" golf tournament. Now in its fourth year, hopes are high to raise even more for the Cardiac Division of Sick Kids Hospital. This year's tournament is at Glen Cedars Golf Club on Friday, June 22. For \$150 dollars the tournament includes: 18 holes of golf with power cart, lunch, dinner and a silent auction.

If you want to be a part of this tournament or find out more information on how you can support Austin in his quest to help the children at Sick Kid's, visit www.austinscardiackids.com

(From an interview with Austin by Amanda Sherwood)

4th Annual Charity Golf Tournament
Austin's Cardiac Kids
Supporting the Sick Kids Cardiac Division
Friday, June 22nd, 2012
For more information or to register contact Chris Mansz at 416-388-8514
email - info@austinscardiackids.com
www.austinscardiackids.com
18 holes with cart
Lunch & dinner
Prizes & giveaways
\$150.00
Glen Cedars Golf Club

IN OUR COMMUNITY

The Garden Basket owners (pictured from left to right): Joseph Comella, Robert Comella and Paul Comella have opened their authentic Italian café and coffee bar, **espressamente illy**, on June 11th in the Yorkdale Shopping Centre. Stop in and enjoy the **espressamente illy** experience on your next trip to Yorkdale.

