

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

Editorial

Toast this, Stouffville

What are your birthday plans, Whitchurch-Stouffville?

How will you mark Canada's 145th birthday this weekend?

Many of you will be in Stouffville Memorial Park Sunday, enjoying the Strawberry Festival with friends and family.

You'll top off the day with the traditional Canada Day cake and fireworks.

As you raise that dessert fork or admire the pyrotechnics, let's toast some things truly Canadian for which we should be thankful:

- Our new-look Whitchurch-Stouffville. One of the fastest-growing communities in Canada, the population boomed by 54 per cent, from 24,000 to 37,000, between 2006 and 2011.

You may not like the added congestion and the endless construction, especially in urban Stouffville. But we should appreciate being more multicultural, more a reflection of what this country is all about. Thanks to our fledgling municipal multicultural association for pushing this agenda.

- Our veterans. There might not be a Canada without the waves of men and women who served in our armed services over the decades, voluntarily.

From Afghanistan back, Canadians have stood up and served this country.

As the bumper stickers say, Thank a veteran, Canada.

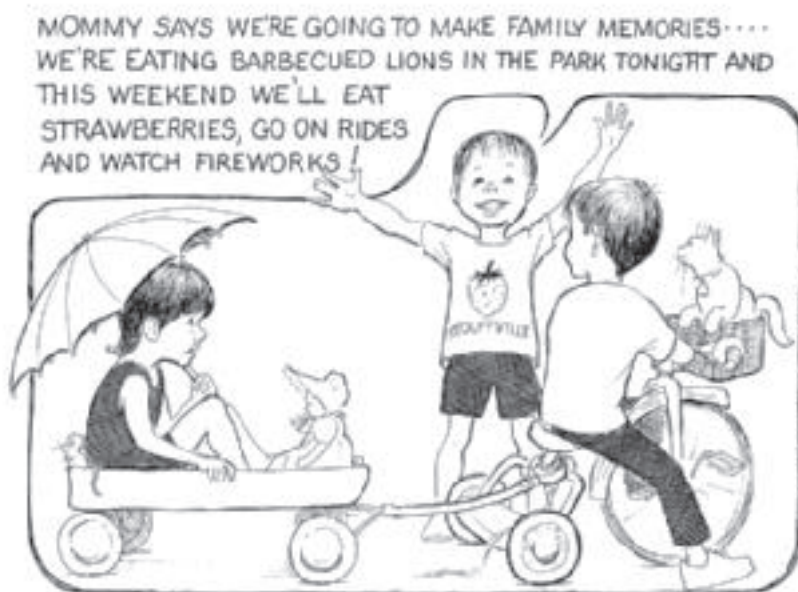
- Karen Cockburn. Less than one month from now, the eyes of the world will be focused on London and its Olympic Games.

Folks in Stouffville will be pulling for one of our own, Ms Cockburn, just as they did four years ago during the Beijing Games.

Ms Cockburn adopted Stouffville as her home town, just as her neighbours took her in as one of their own. She showed up at community fundraisers and a parade in her honour.

She'd like nothing more than to cap her extraordinary career by winning a record fourth straight Olympic medal for Canada. Her haul to date includes two silvers and a bronze from three Games — and the hearts of residents of Stouffville.

- Hockey. It's one of the ties that binds this nation. Whitchurch-Stouffville may not officially be Hockeyville, but this is a hockey town, complete with the 2012 Ontario Hockey Association Jr. A champion Spirit. Its new banner joined a host of others decorating our arenas last week.



Comment

Museum 'links' us to our past

BY FRANK VAN VEEN

This year, Canada celebrates its 145th birthday.

At the same time, the former Township of Whitchurch celebrates its 220th birthday and the Village of Stouffville its 135th birthday.

I was recently fortunate enough to have a private tour of the renovated and expanded Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum and community centre in Vandorf.

The Sun-Tribune's Community Links panel also met at the facility and took a tour during its June meeting.

I was pleasantly surprised at what a terrific resource this is for the community. The museum has a one-room cabin, fully furnished, dating back to the late 1700s through to items from Stouffville's centenary in 1977 and everything in between.

If you have not already been, take a few hours and visit this wonderful new addition to our town.

The folks that run the museum, full time and volunteers, have a passion for their work. They will spend as much time as you would like to explain the segments of the museum.

The one-room log cabin, originally built in Ballantrae and moved to the museum grounds on Woodbine Avenue, is fascinating.

The upper-class, three-bedroom farm house with servants quarters is completely restored and fully furnished with period furniture and staffed by volunteers in period costumes. It's originally from Stouffville.

The barn has implements used with only man and horse power.

The one-room school house has also been completely restored to appear as

it was in the mid 1800s.

Take time to use the research room and discover we don't really own the land on which our homes sit, we are merely custodians until the next generation comes along.

Our family's 10-acre farm was originally part of 200 acres granted to the Ferguson family by John Graves Simcoe.

There are also numerous photographs of locations throughout Whitchurch-Stouffville.

Looking back on how folks lived in the 1700s and 1800s, I wonder who was better off.

We live in an age where we now communicate more through social media, e-mail and texts. Face-to-face communication is waning.

Looking back on how folks lived in the 1700s and 1800s, I wonder who was better off. They may not have had running water, electricity or indoor toilets, but they did have much closer family and community connections.

Take the time to visit the past and appreciate some of the things that have fallen by the wayside.

Be sure to take your kids. A member of our group said he took his teenaged daughter to the museum and she said to him: "I never knew that this was here. Thanks for taking me, Dad".

Frank Van Veen is a member of the Sun-Tribune's Community Links panel. If you're interested in joining the panel, e-mail editor Jim Mason at jmason@yrmg.com



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

No guarantee of festival fun

Try to mix a little thinking with your drinking, eating and other tomfoolery this weekend.

The occasion, should you require one? The 28th annual Whitchurch-Stouffville Strawberry Festival.

Your annual chance to, amongst other things, walk down the middle of Main Street Saturday afternoon while inhaling a Kielbasa or admire fireworks with a few thousand of your closest friends and neighbours the following evening.

It's party time. The kids are through school. The cottage and open highway beckon. Throw out the usual routine for a couple of months.

Enjoy.

Our festival, from its humble roots as a pancake breakfast, ball tourney and short parade in the early 1980s, is mega. Thousands attend.

But it doesn't happen by itself. You'll see a long list of directors and other volunteers, including a wave of newcomers to the event, in the official festival guide put out by The Sun-Tribune. (Extra copies will be available at our office and event sites this weekend.)

Thank them and the festival pioneers, including Ged Stonehouse, Bill Kamps, Jim Heideima and Jim Kidd, who laid the groundwork for our fun.

It's not an automatic. A similarly popular summer festival from the 1980s in neighbouring Uxbridge was cancelled.

Also ill-fated? Our own magic festival of the 1980s and a one-day fall fest that only lasted two years in the mid-1990s on Main Street before folding its tent for good.

Enjoy the festival? Thank a festival volunteer or sponsor this weekend.

Better yet, offer to chip in yourself.

Jim Mason is editor of The Sun-Tribune.