

Sun-Tribune

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**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

**Stouffville
Sun-Tribune**

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Andrew Patterson continuing tradition

Re: Tribute to our doctors
delivers, Oct. 25.

That was an excellent report on the dinner to honour the six doctors as "Pillars of Markham Stouffville Hospital and our community".

I would like to add my thanks to Dr. Patterson, now head of palliative care at Markham Stouffville Hospital. He is certainly carrying on the wonderful heritage of personal, family care with a caring personal touch as he graciously continues to make those all-important house calls.

While my Aunt Jean was living with us she became palliative and, for the last eight months of her life, Dr. Patterson and his wonderful team of nurses consistently visited our home and gave personal encouragement and advice to her.

Together with the support

HAVE YOUR SAY, WHITCHURCH- STOUFFVILLE

► What do you think of these issues or others? E-mail letters to the editor to jmason@yrmg.com

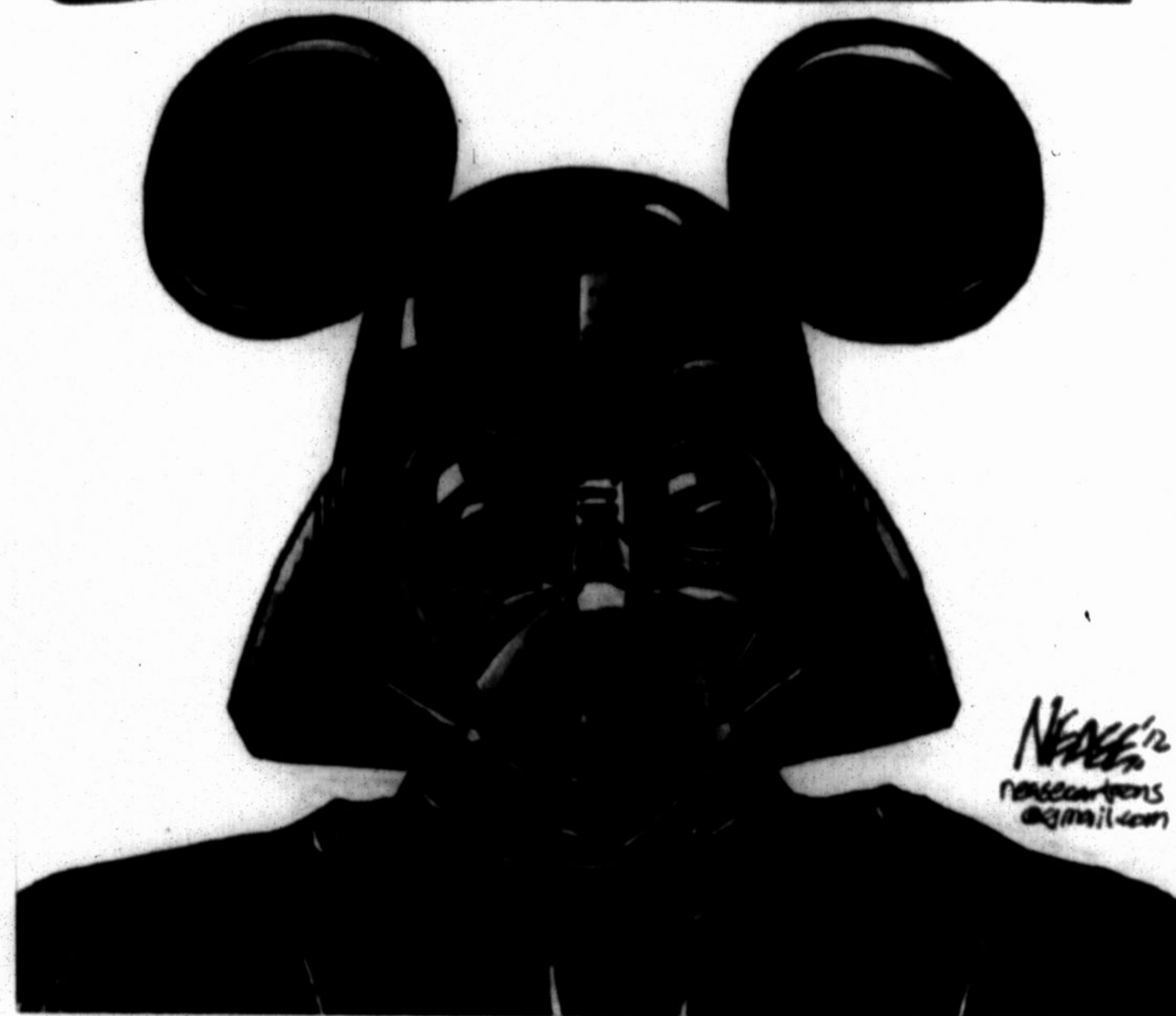
of Community Care Access teams, Aunt Jean received all the medical attention and equipment she needed to live comfortably in our home.

I am deeply thankful Dr. Patterson lives in Stouffville and we are blessed to have him amongst us.

WENDY BACOLA
STOUFFVILLE

You can read letters, columns
and stories from The Sun-Tri-
bune on yorkregion.com

DISNEY BUYS 'STAR WARS' FRANCHISE...



Newcomers deserve our patience, admiration

I have never really thought much about literacy since I grew up, went to school and loved to read books once I discovered Nancy Drew.

I just took reading for granted.

I could read the signs, find the bathroom and thankfully read any warning signs along the way that were keeping me out of danger.

Have you stopped to take note of just how much information you read around you in a day without even thinking about it?

I was not aware of the flood of information I take in each day until I stepped out of an airplane in Moscow and suddenly, in an instant, I was illiterate.

Not only were the words posted everywhere illegible to me, but the letters were completely foreign.

To think that all my life I grew up thinking of a letter P as a P and now, in Russia, it was the letter R.

This bewilderment I felt was in addition to the symbols in the Cyrillic alphabet that seemed not only alien to my eyes, but unpro-



Melony Teague

nounceable to my tongue.

If you have ever tried navigating the subway system in a foreign city, then you will know what I mean when I say that the Moscow Metro is rather daunting.

When you can't read the Cyrillic alphabet and the Russian language is not familiar to you, it is frightening.

The Moscow subway system is many times larger than our own Toronto subway system and has a

circular layout that spans much of the city and goes down deep into the Earth. If you get lost, you could literally be going around in circles in the bowels of the Earth for days without seeing daylight.

Thankfully, I had an interpreter and guide with me all the time or my anxiety level would have been unprecedented.

That travel experience, for the first time in my life, gave me a taste of what it would feel like to be illiterate.

My empathy increased for immigrants who land on our beautiful Canadian shores, from shining sea to shining sea, and cannot read or speak English.

Having spent a little bit of time volunteering at conversational English sessions at Richmond Hill Christian Community Church, I know how much confidence is required for a beginner to speak out and learn an unfamiliar language.

Knowledge of English (or French) is essential for smooth integration into Canadian culture and English is not an easy language to learn.

I am reminded of the value of my English comprehension classes and will not take my mother tongue for granted and will also be patient with those who are learning.

Having had the experience of being misunderstood, feeling illiterate and not being able to communicate in my travels, I have a newfound respect for those who attempt to learn a new language.

I feel for those who are faced with the fear that comes with not being able to read signs and understand announcements every day.

To those who brave the grocery stores, the transportation systems and who attempt to learn and improve, I salute you.

To the rest of us, determine along with me to be respectful and understanding of those who may be struggling with language in this diverse community of York Region.

Freelance writer Melony Teague is a mother of two living in Oak Ridges and an active member of Gormley Missionary Church.