

COMMUNITY

# Children's co-op group at play since 1980

BY SANDRA BOLAN  
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Sending your young child off to day care or school for the very first time can be traumatic for everyone.

One group bridging the gap is Tot Spot. The not-for-profit co-operative play group enables parents to interact with their children, up to age 6, as well as its teacher and each other.

"It develops those (social) skills in a safe environment," said teacher Liana Hrynewich of the children.

Caregivers are responsible for their children, however, they are encouraged to play independently.

As a co-op, members provide daily snacks and activity equipment like Play dough.

They also have input into how the group is run, according to Tot Spot co-president Lesley Elliott.

"My opinion matters," she said.

Ms Elliott, who has a two-and-a-half-year-old and a newborn, moved to Stouffville three years ago and said Tot Spot "made a huge difference for me to feel a part of the community".

The group, which started in 1980, meets Mondays to Thursdays 9:15 to 11 a.m. from September to June in the Stouffville United Church basement.

*Tot Spot 'made a huge difference for me to feel a part of the community'.*

The cost ranges from \$165 for unlimited visits of one child, to a \$100 registration fee and \$2 per child drop-in rate.

There are 29 families with 47 children enrolled this year.

Tot Spot is holding free drop-ins Feb. 19 to 21. Stouffville United is at 34 Church St.



Chelsea, a seven-year-old terrier mix and Kobi, a two-and-a-half-year-old maltese/poodle, went missing while their owner, Shelley Pearce, was in hospital in her final stages of brain cancer. Ms Pearce died Jan. 30. The dogs remain missing. Her daughter, Marlee Brooks of Stouffville, hopes someone knows where they are.





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### Open House: Saturday, February 23

11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Pre-School to Grade 1  
905.474.3434

Grades 2 to 12 and University Prep  
905.470.1200

**TCMPS.com**

# Dogs vanish just before owner's death

BY SANDRA BOLAN  
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Marlee Brooks is grieving the loss of her mother to brain cancer and now the disappearance of her mother's dogs.

It was Jan. 19 and Ms Brooks was spending every waking hour with her mother, Shelley Pearce, who was in her final stages of glioblastoma. She died Jan. 30.

The dogs were being walked by a family friend in Ajax's Greenwood Conservation Area, when for some unknown reason, Chelsea, the seven-year-old terrier mix and Kobi, a two-and-a-half-year-old maltese/poodle, bolted. They were leashed and wearing collars. They were not microchipped.

"It's heartbreaking," said the 27-year-old Ms Brooks, through tears. "It's hard. I live in her house and the dogs aren't here."

"Two little dogs. It's winter time. I hope they're OK," the Stouffville resident said.

Ms Brooks called shelters, checked ads on Craigslist and Kijiji, but she knew more had to be done. She enlisted the assistance of the volunteer group coincidentally called Looking for Chelsea the Bernese Mountain Dog.

People have been scouring Greenwood Conservation's approximately 280 acres, handed out 800 flyers and put up posters.

The winter elements, according to the

**'It's heartbreaking. It's hard. I live in her house and the dogs aren't here.'**

Marlee Brooks  
Stouffville

organization, are perfect for tracking and the snow-covered ground brightens up the night sky, which also helps. The snow itself also acts as an insulator for the dogs.

What has complicated the matter, however, is the search was delayed because Ms Brooks did not know the dogs were missing for three days.

"It's a really upsetting situation," she said.

Looking for Chelsea the Bernese Mountain Dog started Jan. 13, 2011 when a group of Whitby residents banded together to find two-year-old Chelsea, who went missing from an area kennel.

To date, the organization's claims to have caught 171 dogs and cats, along with three goats, two cows and one horse. Ninety-five per cent of them have been re-united with their owners.

If you have information on Kobi and Chelsea's location, call 905-666-4676 or 647-629-1969.