

# OPINION

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## SATURDAY FORUM

# Hockey tryout season teaches tough life lessons to our kids

Stouffville is a hockey town. Those were the words shared with me, when I moved to Stouffville six years ago. At the time, my oldest had just finished a stellar season of Tim Bit hockey in Halifax, having played on the same ice surface as Sidney Crosby in Dartmouth, N.S. My son thoroughly enjoyed his first season of tyke hockey in Stouffville but I was not prepared for rep team tryouts that followed shortly after the season was over.

There were dozens of kids vying for 17 coveted spots on the Stouffville Clippers novice A team. The on-ice sessions included lots of skating and drills, carefully evaluated by coaches trying to determine the best of the best, at least at the eight-year-old level. I was travelling on business when I received the news my son was selected as one of two goaltenders. I confess I had to choke back tears of joy as I checked on to my flight. The stress had been almost unbearable.

Since then, he — or more precisely “we” — has endured the weight of tryouts for five seasons. The stress was magnified when his younger brother joined the ranks of rep hockey three seasons ago. Tryouts can be high pressure. For the kids. For the parents. And for the coaches who have the difficult decision of selecting the team.

The process? All kids registered to play the next fall are welcome to tryouts, typically held in the spring. There is usually a small fee but it's a small price to pay for supporting a potential future NHLer. Tryouts were on all week for this area's AAA (the highest level of minor hockey) regional club, the Markham Waxers. Stouffville's AA auditions begin Tuesday.

For each on-ice session, the kids are given a numbered jersey and then run through a series of drills by on-ice instructors. The drills are designed to assess skills, from skating speed and agility to puck handling and shooting.

Coaches usually sit in the stands, getting a bird's eye of the ice, carefully watching, assessing and taking notes.

How you (and your hockey



Atsushi Yasuda

player) prepare for tryouts varies. I know many will treat it simply as an opportunity to get some skating time. But as the kids become more ingrained in the sport and accept the competitiveness, it requires a bit more planning.

Securing a spot in a pre-tryout camp to ensuring equipment is checked and skates sharpened are just the basics. For my boys, proper rest and meal planning have also become part of our ritual — I make a pretty mean pasta dish.

But for us, the game and tryout process are an opportunity to learn valuable life lessons. That includes the concept of teamwork and idea you win and lose as a team and that every member has a role.

In addition, the discipline and time management needed to balance the on-ice time with school and other non-hockey events becomes a very real challenge.

And perhaps the biggest lesson is about dealing with both victory and defeat and when it comes to tryouts — the disappointment of not being selected is a very tough lesson to learn at such a young age.

Last season, more than 10 goaltenders vied for the two spots. My son was fortunate to have been selected, but there were eight other kids who weren't.

As parents all we can do is to support our kids — a hug also helps — and help them understand the lessons. It's about effort. And with that effort will come victory in whatever form.

For my boys (and their sister, who is a pretty understanding hockey supporter), hockey has become a big part of their lives.

This is definitely a hockey town.

Atsushi Yasuda is a technology executive and avid hockey (and dance) dad who can be reached at [atsushi.yasuda@gmail.com](mailto:atsushi.yasuda@gmail.com)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Book sale still popular

*Re: Less need for book sale, letter to the editor by Colleen Hunt, April 13.*

I am not sure where Ms Hunt buys her books, used or otherwise, or if she even does. Why does she think \$3 for a hardcover and \$1 for a paperback is overpriced? The prices at the sale have not increased recently.

I do agree our library is well equipped. But Ms Hunt might not be aware some of the newer items have been purchased using book sale revenues and might not otherwise be there without the added funding. It is not used strictly for the summer reading programs.

As in other municipalities, library funding is one of the first things to be cut in a budget.

But I think Ms Hunt is missing the big picture. The sale is not just about the library making extra cash to cover the expenses of the summer reading program. It is also about community involvement. Starting with those who make the donations of books and yes we get our share of dusty, mouldy books.

But on a whole the dona-

tions we receive are in very good shape. Also by those of us who volunteer not only to sort but work on the days of the sale.

And finally by attending and buying books. The three times I was at the sale last weekend, it was packed. I am glad a lot of people do not feel the books are “overpriced”.

As for the volunteers putting their time to better use running the summer reading programs, I am one of volunteers who sort books and I work full time.

Working in the library, as you suggested, “as a better use of my resources” is not an option for me and, actually and more importantly, I am not qualified.

KATHY WILKINSON  
STOUFFVILLE

### Wrong comparison

*Re: Are we becoming autistic?, guest column by Sal Armenta, April 13.*

I was really disappointed to read this opinion piece. Autism should never be used as a descriptor for or as a comparison to society's ills.

DAWN CONNOR  
STOUFFVILLE

### Condo project will aid decaying downtown

Those who are opposed to the PACE/Geranium condo development describe Stouffville's Main Street using words such as “historic” and “rural”. Unfortunately, as a resident for 23 years, I would use words such as “dying” and “decaying”.

Please, let this development proceed and bring some much needed life back into the centre of town.

WAYNE KERR  
STOUFFVILLE

### Sign return reassuring

While driving on Ringwood Drive to open our store last Saturday, I noticed our sign board was missing. Thinking that it had blown away, I drove around the area with no luck.

Before Tuesday morning the sign re-appeared. To whoever found it and returned it, we thank you.

It reminds me of why I choose to live and work in Stouffville. It's the people. We take care of each other.

SHELLEY MAITLAND  
MISSING PIECES

I GOT THIS MINI BREWER AND ALL THESE FLAVOURS FOR MY BIRTHDAY!



FAT WHEELER in SUN-TRIBUNE

I SPENT MY WHOLE BIRTHDAY PARTY MAKING SINGLE CUPS OF SPECIALTY BREWS FOR MY FRIENDS.

