

Andy used 8 lives in coyote fight

Snatched from the jaws of death. This is how Stouffville's Karen Rae describes the heroics of neighbour Kristen Payne following the rescue of her cat that was about to be devoured by a prowling coyote.

"A minute later would have been too late," said Karen, owner of the four-year-old pet.

It was quick action by Kristen, a mother of two, that saved the life of Andy, one of two cats obtained by Karen when kittens.

Kristen recalls hearing loud squealing sounds in their Manitoba Street neighbourhood during the early morning hours of June 8.

"The window was open and I heard a commotion," she remembers. At first, she thought it was only a couple of raucous raccoons. However, when the exterior motion light came on, she received the surprise of her life – a coyote on a lawn across the street, holding a cat in its mouth.

"I clapped my hands and stomped my feet," she said. The coyote dropped the cat but didn't run.

"I knew he was still close by and would eventually return, so I sat for a while on the ground and comforted the cat. Then I bundled him up in a blanket and carried him to the laundry room of my basement apartment."

Later the same morning, she drove the injured feline to the Stouffville Veterinary Clinic.

"The entire veterinary team was wonderful," said Kristen, particularly Dr. Gerry Thomson. "They all did everything they could."

Diagnoses indicated several broken ribs; a punctured lung and two twisted legs.

"It's amazing a single bite could do so much damage," clinic staffer Carole Averill said, "how he survived is nothing short of a miracle."

Karen, an admitted pet lover,



Roaming Around

with Jim Thomas

acquired Andy and a sister cat, Bandit, from Donna Busato, a close friend, after her own cat, Smokey, became ill and had to be put to sleep.

Although an in-house cat during the day, Andy often insists on night-time tours that can extend into early mornings, Karen said. However, when 24 hours passed and he hadn't returned, she began to worry.

After a search of the immediate area proved unsuccessful, Karen made up several "lost" posters for distribution along the street.

She also taped one to a local mailbox. It was there she discovered a "found" poster with a name and phone number attached. She was



Karen Rae (back) with Kristen Payne and her children, Sadie and Phoenix, and Andy the cat.

immediately told Andy was already being cared for at the veterinary clinic.

"He looked better than I thought he would," Karen said following an office visit, "but his back legs were dragging."

In the four days that followed "he had more visitors than many hospital patients," said Karen. He enjoyed all the attention, she noted, especially having his stomach rubbed. On June 14, Andy was released from the infirmary and returned home.

Because of his size, Karen believes he put up a gallant battle with his larger adversary. She admits, however, he would never have survived had Kristen not found him when she did. The veterinarian discovered coyote fur under his claws.

"I think he used up eight of his nine lives," she said. "He better be careful with the one life he has left."

For the treatment received, Karen felt the \$762 veterinary bill was very reasonable, much less than expected.

"It was worth it. We love him. He's part of the family," she said.

Kristen, accompanied by children Sadie, 7 and Phoenix, 5, made the search for Andy's owner a "pet project". In addition to putting up posters, they went door-to-door along two streets.

Following Andy's return, Sadie and Phoenix paid him a visit, carrying hand-made get-well cards.

While pleased with the way everything evolved, Kristen holds no grudge against coyotes or any wild animals whose habitats have been disturbed or destroyed by development.

"Their space is becoming smaller," she said, "they're fighting to survive."

Jim Thomas is a Stouffville resident who has written for area newspapers for more than 60 years.

Fast-growing community still has plenty of heart

If "I love Stouffville" T-Shirts were available, Ramsey Debaissi would be wearing one.

Maybe full time. At least this week.

You'd probably never heard of the south Stouffville resident last month. He was a household name only in his own household.

That was before he decided to organize a car build, something motorheads apparently do on weekends to bide their time and bond over a set of Snap-on tools and an AC/DC soundtrack.

And, in this case, collect cash for charity.

As Sun-Tribune writer Sandra Bolan first reported, Mr. Debaissi's then 14-month-old son Adrian was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) in February.

Between hospital stays and doctors' appointments, Mr. Debaissi got busy. He picked up one of the sweetest rides ever, a 1969 Camaro – think *2 Fast 2 Furious* – got some of his buddies on board and launched Build For a Cause.

They'd re-build the Chevy in his Hoover Park Drive garage over a weekend and sell it. There might be someone at a picnic table in the driveway accepting donations. Small change.

Then it went nuts.

Mr. Debaissi looked like he was organizing a miniature Woodstock Saturday morning, directing some of the hundreds of classic cars past the town-issued road blocks to their spots.

Food vendors were cooking. Cartoon characters were en route to greet the kids. So



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

were media crews from the big city south of us.

A neighbour's front lawn and porch were transformed into a stage, set to host the bands that volunteered to play all weekend long.

Mr. Debaissi lived in Markham and Scarborough before moving into one of Stouffville's new neighbourhoods two years ago.

His in-house project turned block party wouldn't have happened at one of his previous addresses, he said.

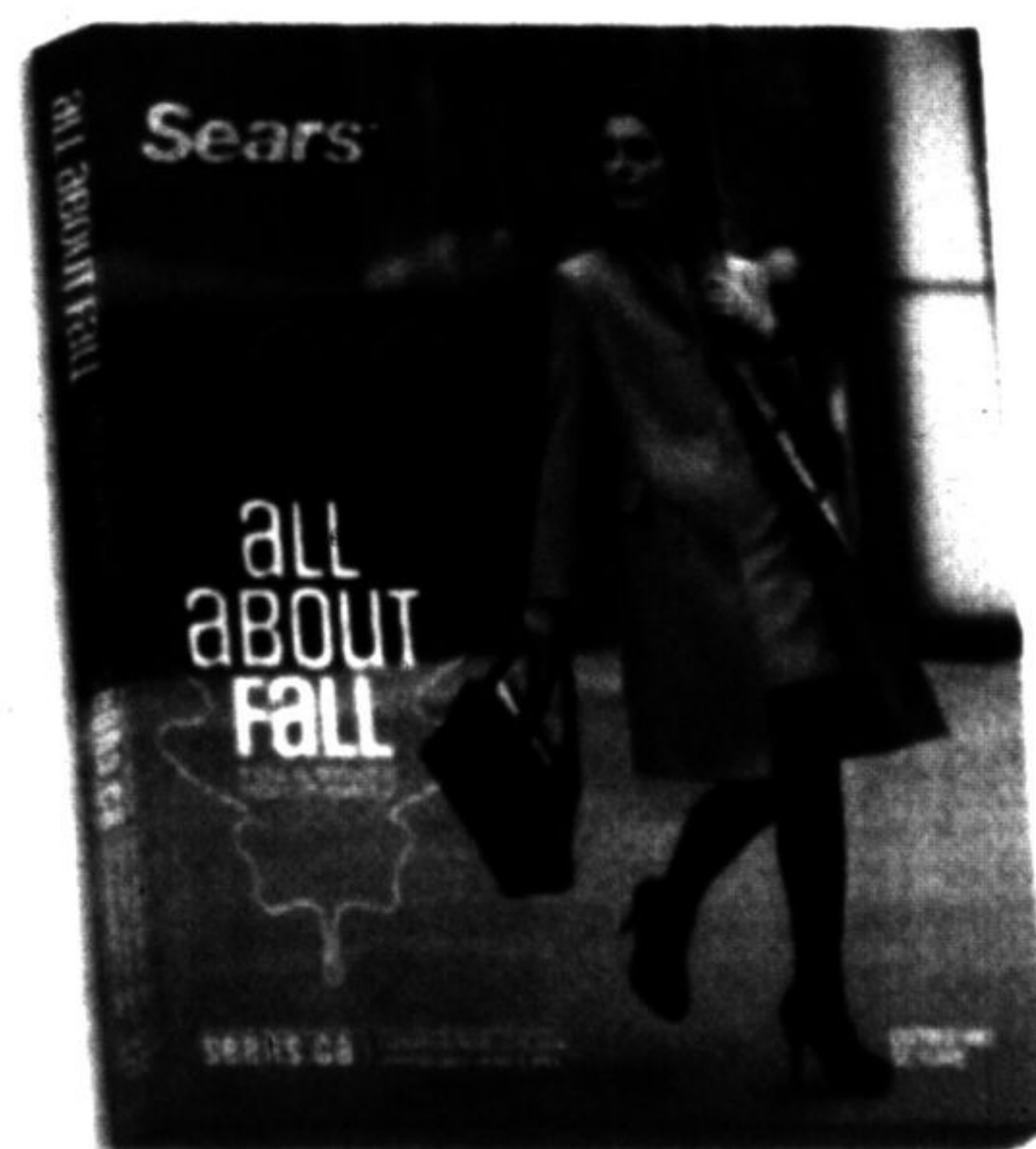
"I'm not leaving Stouffville, even if I win the lottery," he said. "I guess I'd have to buy a street."

Fast-forward to this week, on the eve of our town's biggest party, the Strawberry Festival, it's a cool reminder.

One of the fastest-growing communities in Canada still has heart.

Stick that on a T-shirt and wear it.

Jim Mason is editor of The Sun-Tribune. Follow him on Twitter @stouffeditor



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