

Kings of coffee pouring it on 20 years later

After 20 years and 20 million cups of coffee, Stouffville's Main Street Tim Hortons continues to brew up an abundance of business.

The fast-food eatery that opened May 27, 1993 is operated by Rodney and Jan King in close co-operation with wives Margaret and Heather. All are native residents who, for close to half a century, have called this community home.

"We feel fortunate to operate this kind of establishment in this kind of town," Rodney, 51, says. "We know so many of the customers we serve."

Rodney and Margaret have two daughters, Jennifer, 16, and Cassandra, 14. Jan and Heather have three sons, Mitchell, 19, Devin, 17, and Carter, 15. In addition to four Hortons franchises, two in Stouffville and two in Uxbridge, they cash-crop 1,000 acres in a partnership known as King Enterprises.

It was two years previous to the first Stouffville opening that Rodney and Jan learned the likelihood of an outlet coming here. They immediately contacted Hortons head office in Oakville and expressed an interest. Interviews followed and the choice was made.

"The decision was something of a surprise," Rodney says. "At that time, we knew little about the restaurant business." They would soon learn through enrolment in a six-week training course and even more eight months later when the doors finally opened.

To cope with long customer lineups, 10 full-time counter staff were employed plus two bakers. Today, the four outlets require 190 full and part-time people.

The director of operations is Stouffville's Jessica Smith, an employee who, during the past 14 years has earned the brothers' confidence.

"She's the glue that holds everything together," Rodney says. Each outlet also has its own manager and



Roaming Around

with Jim Thomas

assistant manager. At the same time, Rodney and Jan are equally praiseworthy of assistance provided by their wives.

"They're our partners," says Rodney. "They run the show." In addition to assisting behind the counter, they take charge of all administrative duties.

While it wasn't supposed to be, the Uxbridge Hortons actually opened five months in advance of Stouffville. The Hoover Park outlet followed in 2008 and the Uxbridge Walmart kiosk in 2012.

While walk-in traffic continually increases, 60 per cent of the Main Street store's business comes via the drive-thru

Is a fifth King Bros. fast-food restaurant a possibility?

Rodney's non-committal. "If a site appeared likely within this area, we'd consider it," he said.

The no smoking policy launched by Tim Hortons several years ago stirred mixed customer reaction, Rodney admits.

"The decision was trend-setting within the industry and deep-down I knew it was right," he says. "Because of it, we lost some patrons but gained many more. All-in-all, the adjustment went smoothly."

Every year, Stouffville's Main Street Tim Hortons will receive more than 300 worker applications. In dealing with these, three specific areas are addressed: natural smiles, customer eye-contact and thank-you responses.

"We strive to be the employer of choice in Stouffville," says Rodney. In return for acceptable work-related performances, the company provides benefit packages, flexible scheduling, paid training and uniforms.

While walk-in traffic continually increases, 60 per cent of the Main Street store's business comes via the drive-through, says Rodney. It's here that service promptness is vital and it's here that Stouffville's Tim Hortons has received several awards.

While as important as this is, Rodney's quick to point out cleanliness always will be a top priority. This requirement is strictly enforced by head office as well as the Region of York, Rodney explains.

Although hesitant to detail community involvement, funding of worthwhile projects and events range from the Terry Fox Run and the Children's Camp Foundation to the Whitchurch-Stouffville Food Bank and Markham Stouffville Hospital.

Also, they host a free skate during Christmas holidays and a free swim during March break.

During the past 20 years, they've sponsored more than 2,000 Whitchurch-Stouffville Tim Bit hockey and 2,500 soccer players.

For Rodney and Jan, the most appreciated repayments come when former employees who have gone on to establish permanent careers express appreciation through letters of thanks and bouquets of flowers.

"That's made the past two decades extremely worthwhile," Rodney said.

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

Uncomfortable dance wheels along

It was a dumb move that could have gone totally sideways.

Thank God it didn't.

I'd successfully parallel-parked on trendy Queen Street West in Toronto, where I surprisingly found myself on a Saturday night and discovered the spots are shorter than on Main Street in Stouffville.

I didn't brag about my work like a George Costanza — "How I wish you could make a living parallel parking" yadda yadda — just checked my rearview, let the last car in the line of traffic pass and opened my door.

And bingo.

I was greeted with a string of expletives flying by on two wheels.

I'd come *that* close to dooring a cyclist, as they say. Bottom line, I was wrong but I was far happier to learn a few new words than to be helping someone out of the streetcar tracks.

It didn't help that, as my passenger son, an avid big city cyclist, pointed out, the bike had been weaving in out and out of open parking spots. Plus, it was dusk and the bike didn't have a light, making it even harder to spot.

Back on our quieter main drag a few days later and it appeared the cycling gods were looking for revenge.

Far from my four wheels, I was now on



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

two feet and exiting The Sun-Tribune office in search of coffee. With one foot off the threshold, there was that familiar sound of fast-spinning bicycle wheels and the swoosh of clothing hitting air. Again. I looked up in time to see a bicycle zip by my nose and head eastbound — on the sidewalk.

But once wasn't enough.

It's been my own *Groundhog Day*, all summer long. Bikes, skateboards and even a motorized scooter, with which I have no quarrel, have haunted my steps. Repeatedly.

As oversized as Main Street's sidewalks may be, it seems to always be hosting an uncomfortable dance between pedestrians and all things wheeled.

We don't want our youngsters trying to share the narrow main road with the far too many big trucks that end up downtown, but we don't want them running over a senior or a stroller either.

The kids can either walk their bikes or take a back road.

Adult cyclists should be on the road, period.

And motorists of all ages must give them their space.

Especially, this driver.

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

We are looking for applicants to participate in Celebration of the Arts 2013!

Arts

WIN up to \$3,000!

DEADLINE EXTENDED UNTIL JULY 31!

See website for details, dates & applications.

www.newmarkettheatre.ca or www.celebrationofthearts-yorkregion.com

Thanks to our Bursary Sponsors, without you we could not make dreams come true! Since 2001 we have awarded \$340,000 in bursaries to 237 winners.

To inquire about becoming a sponsor or donating to a bursary please contact Debra Weller at dweller@ymmg.com

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

Newmarket, STEPHEN LEATHE'S, Markham, STAR, YMMG