

Library rolling out welcome mat for teen readers, gamers, artists

BY SANDRA BOLAN
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Step through its doors. Peruse the aisles. Pull a book off the shelf because the cover looks intriguing or because it's by an author you don't know and the title caught your attention.

Or surf the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library's website for e-books, back issues of local newspapers or a variety of databases for information on anything from chronic disease to cooking.

Seek the Unknown is the theme for the library's first-ever Teen Read Week, Oct. 15 to 20.

"It's not just a place you have to be to do your work," said Faith Shergold, the newly appointed co-ordinator of young adult and electronic services at the library.

It's also a place to meet up with fellow book club members, do some gaming or arts and crafts or take part in music and creative writing programs.

Part of the impetus to dedicate a week to teenagers is to let them know they are welcome and wanted in the library.

The position of co-ordinator of young adult and electronic services was created because, according to CEO Carolyn Nordheimer James, by connecting with teenagers now, the library board hopes to get their input when the library gets expanded.

Ms Nordheimer James also noted libraries play a greater role in student education because the provincial government no longer funds research databases in schools, but they still do in libraries.

Whitchurch-Stouffville isn't the only public library trying to broaden its appeal to teens.

In 2003, 20 per cent of libraries had a separate budget for young adult materials. In 2012, it was 100 per cent of the libraries that participated in the Ontario Public Library Association (OPLA) Child and Youth Services Committee Teen Services Benchmark and Statistical Report 2013.

Last year, an online book club for teens was launched in Whitchurch-Stouffville. But surprisingly, its members preferred to connect face to face once month to discuss their books, according to Ms Nordheimer James.

Through the formation of a teen advisory group, which Ms Shergold is currently working on, she hopes more programs will be created and made available to them.

However, one thing that cannot be added to teen programming right now, is space.

"It will be easier to provide more programming once there's more

space available and it will also, I hope, be one more potential barrier to teens using the library that we'll eliminate," she said.

The OPLA's study revealed 74 per cent of libraries that participated in the study, now have a leisure/lounge area for teens, compared to 29 per cent in 2003.

'It's not just a place you have to be to do your work.'

As part of Teen Read Week, patrons aged 12 to 18 with overdue books can have their fines forgiven. All they have to do is bring back the overdue material and fill out a questionnaire.

If books are lost or damaged, the fines are still applicable.

Teens also have a chance to win a \$15 gift card to Chapters or iTunes by correctly completing a guessing game or puzzle.

Following Teen Read Week is Ontario Public Library Week - Oct. 20 to 26.

This year's theme is Libraries

Connect — to information, books, databases and third and fourth parties, according to Catherine Sword, co-ordinator of adult services.

"We are a part of the community," she said and thanks to e-books and e-services "we are right there in your home" now, too.

Kicking off LibraryWeek is another edition of Scripts and Scores at Nineteen on the Park. The event is a fundraiser for the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library and Whistle Radio.

Regional authors and musicians will come together for an afternoon of spoken word and music.

The show runs from 2 to 4:30 p.m. Oct. 20. Tickets are \$20 each and available at the library and <http://nineteenonthePark.com>

If you have an overdue book in your possession, you can bring it in and pay the fine with a food item donation to the Whitchurch-Stouffville Food Bank.

There will also be a number of brain puzzles to be completed.

"It just appeals to that mind that wants to figure out the logical," Ms Sword said.

Online, advanced poll voting recommended by staff

To vote online or via the telephone, or not, during next year's municipal election — that is the question to be finally answered Tuesday afternoon.

Whitchurch-Stouffville council was expected to decide on the voting method(s) for advanced polls back in September, but opted instead to defer it.

If approved as recommended by staff, residents would be able to vote online or over the phone, as well as in-person, during the advanced polls.

Come election day, only in-person voting via the count optical scan tabulators would be utilized.

Enabling online/phone voting would cost approximately \$90,000, bringing the total municipal election price tag to about \$290,000, according to the Oct. 15 council report.

Election day is Oct. 27, 2014.

The council meeting begins at 3 p.m. in the town hall, 111 Sandford Dr.

You can view council agendas, reports and other documents online at townofws.ca

— Sandra Bolan

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(including elections)

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