

Schell family sure loves a parade

An array of plaques that line a staircase leading to a second-floor gondola, inaudibly tell the story of Schell Lumber Home Building Centre's commitment to this community.

Some are for sponsorship of sports teams, both boys and girls. Others relate to Santa Claus parades dating back more than 60 years and through four family generations.

In addition, generosity related to other town projects and programs has known no bounds.

"My dad, Wes Schell, started it all," says son Harry proudly of Christmas parades. "We're happy to continue the tradition."

Commemorations are outstanding, including best theme awards in 1982, 1986, 1994, 2000 and 2008. They won for most humorous in 1991, 1995, 2007 and 2009.

The most original plaque was received in 2011 and the Mayor's Best Overall Award, for a fantasy Christmas float, in 2002.

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In 1992 and 1994 the Schell firm extended itself, receiving best business awards at Santa parades in Uxbridge.

Albums and newspaper clippings dating back more than half a century are treasured family keepsakes including a photo of Steve Schell, then age 7, riding atop Dino the dinosaur.

The year was 1967. The comic book replica was constructed of wood strips and covered with paper mache perfected by Stouffville's Edith Sanders.

Steve's headpiece was made of similar material. The 30-foot-high reproduction was hauled along Main Street atop Bill Malloy's boat trailer. It was also trailed to Uxbridge and highlighted the Christmas procession there.



Roaming Around

with Jim Thomas

Other eye-catching entries to follow included the The Little Old Lady Who Lived in a Shoe, Humpty-Dumpty and more.

Saturday's float, entitled Polar Express, was suggested by Jocelyn Bangay and Sarah Schell in keeping with the parade's overall theme of storybook Christmas.

...including a photo of Steve Schell, then age 7, riding atop Dino the dinosaur.

Fifteen Schell family members and friends spent close to a week working on the float inside the confines of a heated storage shed on the company site.

The finishing touches were completed Friday. To add a personal touch to the entry, several climbed aboard and travelled the one-mile route from Cam Fella Boulevard on the east to Weldon Road on the west.

They included Ben and Sammy Partridge, Janet Partridge, Jeremy and Judy Schell and Max and Melissa Harper. Others walked alongside, handing out candy along the way.

Kyle Schell piloted one of the firm's heavy-haulers.

Both Harry and brother Percy admit that while it's nice to be recognized through awards, that's never been their motivation.

"We don't look on it as a competition," says Percy.

"We do it for the kids," adds Harry. "It even makes me feel like a kid again."

He says Schell Lumber is privileged to have been part of the business community for so many years and the Christmas parade is a way of giving back. He's hopeful children and grandchildren will continue the tradition.

"I think a lot of Stouffville," he says. "There's no place I'd rather live."

Both he and wife Barbara along with Percy and wife Dorothy joined thousands in watching Saturday's procession.

Despite proficiency at selecting blue ribbon entries, judges Sue Smith, Bonnie Gribbon and Leslie Huke had their expertise taxed to the limit due to float excellence.

The following topped the five classes:

- Best Overall – Forsyth Farms
- Most Original – Stouffville Academy of Music and Dance
- Best Theme – Betz Pools
- Most Humorous – Todd Bros. Contracting
- Best School – Stouffville Christian School.

Parade chairperson Aaron Marshall described the Kinsmen-sponsored parade as one of the largest in club history.

"Thanks to assistance provided by York Region police, everything went smoothly," he said. He praised the co-operation of everyone involved. "Without the support of local businesses and the help of so many people, an event of such size would not have been possible."

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

Changing face of our town out there — virtually

A community group to which I belong officially meets three times annually.

That's in-person. That's it. And there are no fines or other reprimands for missing a meeting.

But we communicate year round, mostly via email, sometimes over the phone or by texting.

And work gets done. Funds are raised. Events are planned and run successfully.

Good times. Good work. Not that I created it, but it may be a template for others, too.

These aren't your parents' or grandparents' times.

Commuters have long, gruelling days.

Both parents often work and when they're home, they're often chauffeuring their children to soccer games, tutoring sessions and dance classes. Homework and meals are squeezed in.

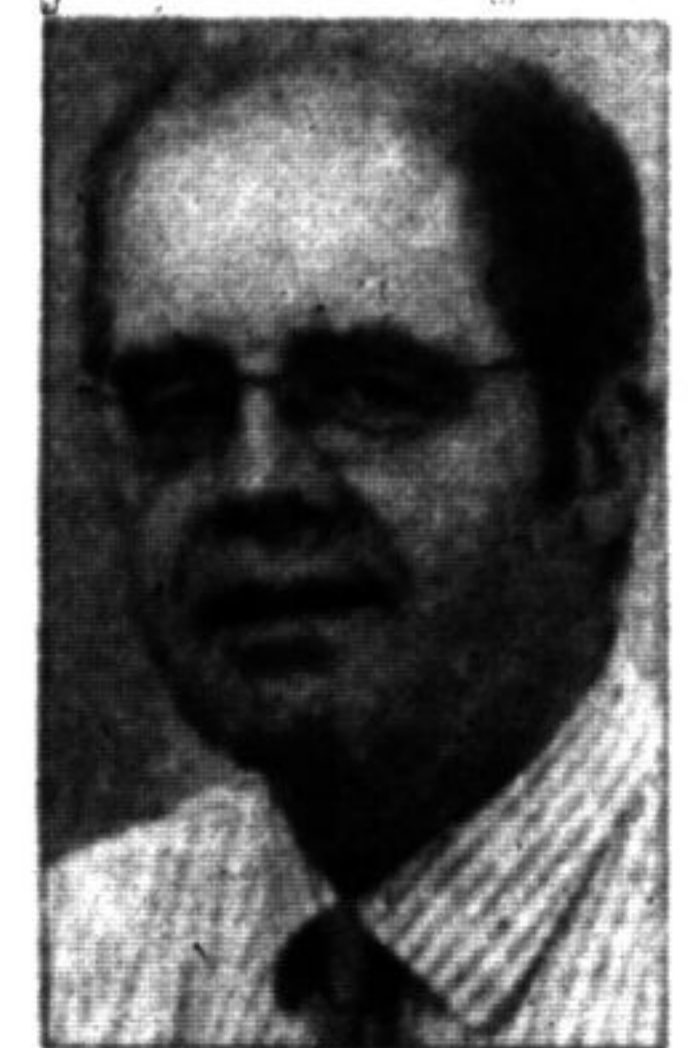
There have been casualties.

At least four Whitchurch-Stouffville service clubs – including two generations of one organization – have disappeared during the last 25 years.

There are success stories, but many mainstream churches have seen their attendance plummet, while the average age of parishioners heads in the opposite direction.

Many of us have trouble committing, especially in a bedroom community.

Weekly or bi-monthly din-



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

ner or breakfast meetings may have been do-able in the 1970s. But not now.

Exhibit A? The Stouffville Buy and Sell group.

What started off "as a little community page where members could sell a new or gently used item to someone else in Stouffville ... has grown in a short time to over 2,600 members and has become much more than just a place to sell your old and unwanted household items," Rob Dougald, the group's 16-year-old spokesperson, told me.

The group, founded by Alysha Mclean, has become a social community, he said. Six formerly lost cats, including one that had been missing for more than nine months, have been reunited with their owners.

Community isn't dying in Stouffville. It's just reorganizing itself around the new technology and lifestyles.

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

York Region District School Board
French Immersion Registration
January 17th, 2014 – February 14th, 2014

York Region District School Board's French Immersion program begins at Grade 1 and is based on the curriculum prescribed by the Ontario Ministry of Education.

Registrations will be accepted in French Immersion school locations between January 17th and February 14th, 2014.
A school locator can be found on the Board's web site.

French Immersion schools will host an Information Session during the last two weeks of January for interested parents/guardians considering enrolling their children in French Immersion. For information session dates and locations and further details, please visit the Board's website: www.yrdsb.ca.

If you do not have access to the internet or require additional assistance, please contact your child's current school.

Note: Space at some program locations is limited, students may be required to attend a school other than the one designated for their attendance area

www.yrdsb.ca

Kindergarten Registration

Unique, creative, curious and capable – eager to learn and make friends. The best you have to send us – your child – deserves a quality program to support the early years and meet the needs of all our children. In York Region, that means attending a York Region District School Board kindergarten program.

Kindergarten registration begins January 17, 2014.

Children born in 2010 are eligible for junior kindergarten this September. Children born in 2009, and currently not attending public school, are eligible for senior kindergarten.

Documents required for kindergarten registration include:

- Proof of child's age (Birth Certificate/Passport)
- Proof of residency

Where space is limited, children may be required to attend a school outside their neighbourhood.

Please call your local public school for full details about required documents and kindergarten orientation sessions. Visit our web site for a full listing of our elementary schools and kindergarten registration information at: www.yrdsb.ca

We want to welcome your child and family as you begin the process to enter school!