

OPINION



Stouffville Sun-Tribune

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COLUMN

Helping our marginalized more than seasonal work

We live a pretty
 charmed exist-
 ence here, east
 of The 404, 30
 minutes north
 of Canada's

biggest city.

We self-park our Escalades
 and Bimmers at hot yoga classes
 and meetings at the newest
 hot spots over lattes or all-you-
 can-eat sushi.

The kids have busier sched-
 ules than Stephen Harper in
 pre-election mode. The private
 power skating sessions will
 supplement the rep hockey
 practices. Tutoring is on top of
 school. Language lessons will
 surely give them that leg up.

Sprawling rural estates
 aside, regular subdivision home
 prices force many a young per-
 son to look north, way north,
 of Stouffville, further extending
 our massive carbon footprint.

And while we scramble
 to out-do the friends and
 neighbours with last-minute
 Christmas gifts that will never
 be used or worn, don't kid
 yourself.

There is an uglier side to
 Whitchurch-Stouffville. Uglier
 than any Christmas sweater
 you can mock.

They don't talk about it in
 sales offices for new homes or
 at tastings of the latest vintages.
 But we're talking about the
 marginalized among us.

The people who scramble to
 pay \$900 a month for a low-end
 apartment above a downtown
 store or in the basement of
 a home on your street. Your
 neighbours who, for a variety
 of reasons, can't work, at least
 all year.

The single parents. Under-
 employed. Mentally ill. Physi-
 cally challenged. Seniors with-
 out a retirement plan. All with-
 out a dental plan.

We can brush by them on
 Main Street and ignore their
 illegal apartments on our
 streets.

But they aren't going away.
 They, too, deserve a place to
 live.

And in Whitchurch-



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

Stouffville they also receive love.

Tom Brown's CTV Toy
 Mountain isn't being built in
 Stouffville.

The Stouffville Lions created
 their own mound of kids' play
 things, thanks to your generos-
 ity and the Town of Whitchurch-
 Stouffville's annual toys for
 parking tickets campaign.

In another Stouffville tradi-
 tion, more volunteers will pre-
 pare and deliver hundreds of
 turkey dinners to the needy and
 lonely out of Stouffville's East-
 Ridge Evangelical Missionary
 Church on Christmas Day.

Stouffville schools, business-
 es, service clubs and families
 have all chipped into The Sun-
 Tribune's York Region Media
 Group Santa Fund this month.

My SUV has been filled
 multiple times with your new
 clothes, toys, household items,
 cheques, cash and gift cards.
 They'll all go to families being
 helped by Yellow Brick House
 or the Canadian Mental Health
 Association in this corner of
 York Region this week.

Year-round, volunteers at the
 Whitchurch-Stouffville Food
 Bank and the Emergency Care
 Fund come to the rescue of
 the need and desperate every
 month.

Thank you.
 Merry Christmas.

Jim Mason is editor of The Sun-Tribune
 and a member of the Whitchurch-Stouffville
 Emergency Care Fund board. Follow him on
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LETTER OF THE WEEK

Must be Santa, eh?

I have often wondered if the guy in the
 red and white suit at the end of the just-
 happened Stouffville Kinsmen Santa Claus
 parade is the real Santa.

So, I decided to read *The Night Before
 Christmas* by Clement Clarke Moore, who
 was a professor of divinity and Biblical
 learning at the General Theological Semi-
 nary of the Protestant Episcopal Church.

I mean, he wrote the description, so why
 has nobody used it before to check that guy
 out? Let's do it.

Merry old man with a white beard wear-
 ing red and white clothes – yep, that is what
 he looked like.

Eight flying reindeer – indeed, there were
 eight of them and their feet did not touch
 the ground.

Home located near or at the North Pole
 – well, I think it is likely he lives north of
 Stouffville dressed like that. I did not see
 him at the Strawberry Festival; so he is defi-
 nitely not from around here.

Fits down chimneys and high efficien-
 cy furnaces – well, he is kind of magical
 according to the description, so I guess I
 have to give it to him there.

Fills socks or stockings with presents – I
 always get stuff in my stocking and no one
 has owned up to doing it. It could be him.
 Is it a crime to enter someone's house and
 leave good stuff?

He shows up near Dec. 25 – that is defi-
 nitely the day Christmas happens, well ...
 unless you are Ukrainian.

Miniature sleigh and eight tiny rein-

deers – it did look kind of small to carry
 all the presents. But it is supposed to be a
 magical sleigh, so maybe the size doesn't
 matter. And I must confess that since I
 believe Dr. Who is a real person, it is likely
 the sled is bigger on the inside.

*I did not see him at the
 Strawberry Festival, so he is
 definitely not from around here.*

He whistled – did not hear a whistling,
 for sure no. But of course all those annoy-
 ing happy children were yelling.

A pipe – ah ha, no sir, no pipe. Well,
 maybe he gave it up. Makes sense. Smok-
 er, overweight, 200 years old. Those are all
 health risk factors.

Belly like a bowlful of jelly – it did kind
 of bounce around when he laughed; a
 little like mine, actually.

Alright then, I admit that guy has a
 pretty good score on the test.

And intellectually I have to admit that
 even if you do not believe in Santa Claus,
 Saint Nick or Père Noel or whomever, that
 does not mean he is not watching you,
 and tracking who has been naughty or
 nice.

This Christmas I am staying indoors
 where I cannot be watched and I am clos-
 ing the curtains.

Bah Humbug.

RON BOYD
 STOUFFVILLE

Street numbers in wrong places

For a long time I have been driving and
 trying to see the street numbers on buildings.
 The number is either in an odd place or it's so
 small you cannot read it.

Two eyes are no good, you need four. No,
 six as you have to watch where you are driv-
 ing and what the other vehicles are doing.

DOROTHY WAGG
 STOUFFVILLE

Reindeer light up intersection

I would just like to thank whomever is
 responsible for the lighted Christmas rein-
 deer at the corner of Park Drive and Main
 Street. They are beautiful!

HEATHER BERGMAN
 STOUFFVILLE

Weight loss group feels welcome

Re: *Group Has Taken Off Pounds for 45
 Years, Nov. 20.*

TOPS ON716 Stouffville would like to

thank The Sun-Tribune for this article.

Although not many visitors attended our
 open house, it was quite interesting and fun-
 filled. As a non-profit weight loss support
 group, we appreciate the exposure you gave
 us with this article.

We attempt to keep our costs to a mini-
 mum in order to provide an affordable pro-
 gram to members in the community. As well,
 we would like to take this opportunity to
 thank St. James Presbyterian church, which
 opens their doors to us every Monday and
 makes us feel quite welcome.

MEMBERS OF THE TOPS ON716
 STOUFFVILLE

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 comments and/or suggestions to
 jmason@yrmg.com



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