

There's no place like home to shop

By Nancy Hopkins
Stouffville This Month

My sister was due to arrive at my house by 9:30 a.m. to start our day of Christmas shopping in Whitchurch-Stouffville.

When the phone rang a few minutes after 9:30 I knew something was up. "I'm running a little late," she announced, "but I'm nearly there. There was a big turkey on the road."

Naturally I chuckled. I'm a transplanted Torontonian and my sister is a big city girl too, so my next question was, "Are you sure it was a turkey?" "Yeah," she said. "It had that big flabby neck. I had to wait a couple of minutes while the farmer came down his road and moved it."

Our day was already starting out to be more fun than sludging through the shopping malls and that was the whole purpose. You see, I adore Christmas and searching out those special gifts for the people I love but I face a conundrum - I love shopping, I hate shopping malls. The thought of sloshing my winter-pale, exhausted body through the mall anytime past Dec. 1 drains the joy of the season out of me.

When the traditional north of Highway 7 blizzard hit us Nov. 5 my thoughts immediately turned to Christmas preparations. I decided there had to be a way to avoid my annual "mall-itis" and set out to prove that Whitchurch/Stouffville had what I needed. I was going to enjoy a day with my sister travelling through this lovely community, loading up the car with goodies at each stop.

A little preparation was required so I drew up a list of names. Next to each name I placed categories appropriate to the person -- sports, books, gardening, electron-

ics, and so on. I decided we would start at the west side of town and work our way through to the other end.

Despite my sister's delay we were too early for Stouffville's Baker Hill so our first stop was Frontier Saddlery on Highway 48. "You have to buy this for Parker," announced my sister, referring to my two-year-old niece, as she squeezed a purple,

one of her gifts and the stockings got well on their way to being filled. We were gaining momentum with each bag-full but this adrenaline high was draining our energy and it was time to refuel. With so many eating establishments to choose from, we were quickly able to find a spot for lunch and soon regained the strength to continue.

I was surprised at the how many gift ideas I found at Canadian Tire. I bought numerous boxes of paper whites and amaryllis flowering bulbs. These all-in-one boxes of bulbs, earth and a pot are a great way to brighten up someone's winter.

Then it was on to downtown Stouffville. Even though there are few people I would buy second-hand Christmas items for, we still had to make the regular stop at the Care and Share, and it didn't disappoint! Next was Candlelight and Memories, where a couple more names were scratched off the list.

I was excited about my first visit to the Book Connection. While it isn't a large store it has plenty of variety. I was thrilled with the hard cover children's books I purchased and hubby got the usual Christmas sports book.

Time was running out as my sister had to return to her children and her life in the city. But was there time for that one last stop? "It's on the way back to your car," I pleaded. "Okay, if it's not too long," she said.

Our final destination was Willow Springs Winery on Bethesda Road. While

wine tasting we picked up a number of goodies. I was pleasantly surprised at the amount of merchandise for sale. The winery even does gift baskets - a wonderful idea for those folks who have everything! It was a beautiful and tasty end to an action-packed day of shopping.

While I didn't complete all my purchases, I do possess a large Sears catalogue. One phone call and a pick-up at Ann's Fabrics and I am done!

Although I didn't have time to visit all the merchants in Whitchurch-Stouffville, they'll be seeing me come through their door one day soon. Meanwhile, here are some wonderful things I discovered about shopping in our community:

1. You can find a sales clerk.
2. If they don't have what you need, they will try their best to get it for you. (More than one merchant made this offer)
3. The stores are lovely, with new stock coming in all the time.
4. Parking is never a problem.
5. The countryside is beautiful.
6. The stores aren't so large as to be overwhelming.
7. It feels great to support the local businesses and I enjoyed visiting some for the first time.

And now the dining room is packed with the fruits of my labour. On a wintery weekend in the near future I will put up the Christmas tree, sip a glass of my homemade Bailey's Irish Cream, sit cross-legged on the floor surrounded by my purchases and declare, "That's a wrap!"



wobbly-legged stuffed horse and it neighed three times.

As we left we entered our names in a draw for a gift certificate and Diane, the store clerk, handed us each a cute gingerbread Christmas tree ornament. Then it was along Stouffville Road to Radio Shack, where I planned to knock a few names off the list. How hard could it be buying CD Walkmans for the niece and nephew?

Then again, how do you get two sisters to make a relatively easy decision quickly? We changed our minds twice and even after purchasing were still saying, "Well, if Haley doesn't want this she can change it for a home CD player."

I couldn't wait to see the new Shopper's Drug Mart, where sis picked out

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