

Close-Knit Community Offers Warm Welcome

By Kinjal Dagli-Shah

Mina and John Mercer believe they have a lot to thank their friends for, and top of the list is convincing them to move to Stouffville.

"We lived in Markham before and were looking for a bigger home. I really wanted to stay in Markham, but our friends who had moved to Stouffville convinced us otherwise." It was last October that the Mercers moved, with a baby and a Great Dane in tow.

"I did move to Stouffville with a chip on my shoulder, but it vanished when I fell in love with our home and neighbourhood. Two of our close friends live just up the street, and the town is full of young families. Besides,

my daughter Miya is just 20 months old, so we didn't have to move her school. But we did find many programs for her that she loves," said Mina, a stay-at-home mom.

Her expectations were high but the town exceeded them all. "We loved our home in Markham. It was a bungalow with a lot of property, so we wanted something similar. We found a corner house that backs onto a mature neighbourhood with big mature trees, so we have our privacy despite being in a new area."

That wasn't all - Mina was impressed with the community's multiculturalism, the festivals they enjoyed and the young families they interacted with. "We enjoyed the Strawberry Festival and the Santa Claus parade. We can walk up to Main Street from our home. It's like a big party in the summertime," said the first-generation Korean Canadian.

"The best part is that I haven't experienced road rage in this town, I feel safe on the roads and a welcome part of this close-knit

community." That close-knit feeling is only going to multiply for the Mercers, who are expecting their second child in June.

"If all goes well, our plan is to raise our children in Stouffville and stay here at least as long as they are in school," said

Mina, who has visited her country of origin three times.

"I'm very family oriented so I enjoy the closeness. My parents are from Sang Ju in Korea and I was brought up to embrace my roots and the feeling of familiarity they bring. I don't speak Korean as much as I used to but I can read and

write in the language. I don't remember my first two visits to Korea, but the third time I went there was when I was 18. I went to Sang Ju, Seoul and Busan and ended up working

as a translator for the Famous People Players of Toronto, who were staging performances at an expo there."

Even in Stouffville, Korea doesn't seem too far away for Mina. "I only have to head south to find a bunch of Korean restaurants or land up at my mom's to find the best Korean food."

Write to Kinjal at kinjal.dagli@gmail.com



John and Mina Mercer with daughter Miya in their Stouffville home.

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Just For The Joy Of It

By Shelagh Damus

For a recent art project, my daughter was assigned the task of creating a 'book' that comprised of three 'pages' with the stipulation that it could not be made of paper or resemble a traditional book.

The 'book' had to tell a story; that is it required a beginning, middle and an end. She settled on three figure skates of varying size. On the smallest she painted images of helmeted tots listing on the ice, faltering and falling when attempts at maintaining

balance failed them. The middle skate was festooned with images of wounded bird spirals, hunched over sit spins and barely airborne jumps. The larger canvas of the final skate displayed images of elegant skaters with long lines and streamlined positioning. It is a story; it is her story and the story of so many other young skaters across the country.

There are no Olympic rings on her final skate. But it is still a worthy story. The story of most hockey players does not culminate in a NHL contract or them hoisting the Stanley Cup over their head, but that doesn't take away from the value of the experience.

Regardless of whether one's skates are white or black, for the vast majority of skaters it is enough to skate for the challenge and the joy of it. Rinks are full of kids on blades enjoying themselves on the ice, of adults coaching, teaching, playing and cheering on their charges.

There is a learning curve to everything. The story illustrated in my daughter's 'book' is a visual representation of the learning curve as applied to figure skating. It is a

path of ups and downs, literally and figuratively, as the children progress through the CanSkate badges of the Learn to Skate program.

The hurdles are bigger in the early STARSkate program but so too is the satisfaction of on ice success. In the latter stages of the program, the basics are mastered and the work is an exercise in fine tuning and taking jumps and spins to the next level. The process is a journey; one that takes an amazing amount of determination, dedication and resolve.

These are life skills that can't be bought or sold, only earned. They are the true providers of self-esteem. And isn't that the story we all want for our children?

The Stouffville Skating Club offers a full range of skating programming. They can be contacted at stouffvilleskate1@bellnet.ca or at 905-642-8651.

Shelagh Damus is a freelance writer who loves the art of finding unique sequences for the 26 letters of the alphabet. She may be contacted at getaholdofshelagh@gmail.com.

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