

Making The Most Of Winter

By Kinjal Dagli Shah

Winter in Stouffville might seem like a good time to hibernate indoors but there's a lot to do even in the sub-zero temperatures. Be it art, history, sports or a winter carnival, there's plenty to choose from to spend those long winter months productively.

"People are looking for things to do and to keep active. That is the main thing for us - to offer a variety of options for the community," said Nicole Ongman, recreation manager for the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville.

"Skating and swimming are drop-in programs and many people take advantage of the preschool indoor playground at the Stouffville Arena. Swimming lessons are always popular and we get a high level of participation in our other programs listed in the leisure guide."

The next big thing in Stouffville is the Winter Carnival at Musselman's Lake on Feb. 9. "Hundreds of people have attended this event in the past and it is full of outdoor activities such as hay rides, ATV rides, outdoor skating, a bonfire, beaver tails, hot dogs and hot chocolate to support the local cubs/scouts. There's indoor entertainment as well at the event," said Nicole.

At the Whitchurch-Stouffville museum in Gormley, the year starts off with a special event attended by many visitors. "History Hands On, or H2O in Winter, is all about finding out what life was like for the first settlers," said Stephanie Foley, curator, culture division.

"Attendees can practise knitting and corking in the Brown House parlour, learn how candles were made in the log cabin and help cook treats on the wood stove in the Brown House kitchen. The folks that come to this event usually stay for a long time because they want to try out all the activities."

While the museum sees more visitors during the summer, winter gets its share of patrons. On Family Day, Feb. 18 this year, the museum offers a family membership that will get discounts on events throughout the year.

"People can also create some heritage crafts to take home," said Stephanie.

The month of March too is a busy time for the museum, as staff get ready for the 'Defining Moments Exhibit: Discovering our Canadian Stories'.

"This travelling exhibit, created by TakingITGlobal and supported by Canadian Heritage, is a national digital media arts and citizenship project aimed at engaging youth across Canada to explore, express and showcase their diverse perspectives on Canadian identity," Stephanie explained. "These works are the 26 winning pieces, representing eight provinces/territories across Canada. Visitors can also participate in an on-site art activity that expresses their Canadian identity."

The Latcham Gallery on Main Street sees a large footfall of art enthusiasts during the winter months as well, said gallery coordinator Rima Puteris. "We offer Winter Break Art Camp Days and March Break Art Camp Days, full day art camps that include drawing, painting, sculpture or collage projects that introduce children to a variety of art materials and techniques taught by experienced art instructors."

"We have had a great response this winter to our art classes - with our Budding Artists morning session and adult Life Drawing session filling up to capacity. To accommodate our waiting list and to offer classes to artists as young as 4, we added an afternoon session to our Saturday Budding Artists class for ages 4 to 8."

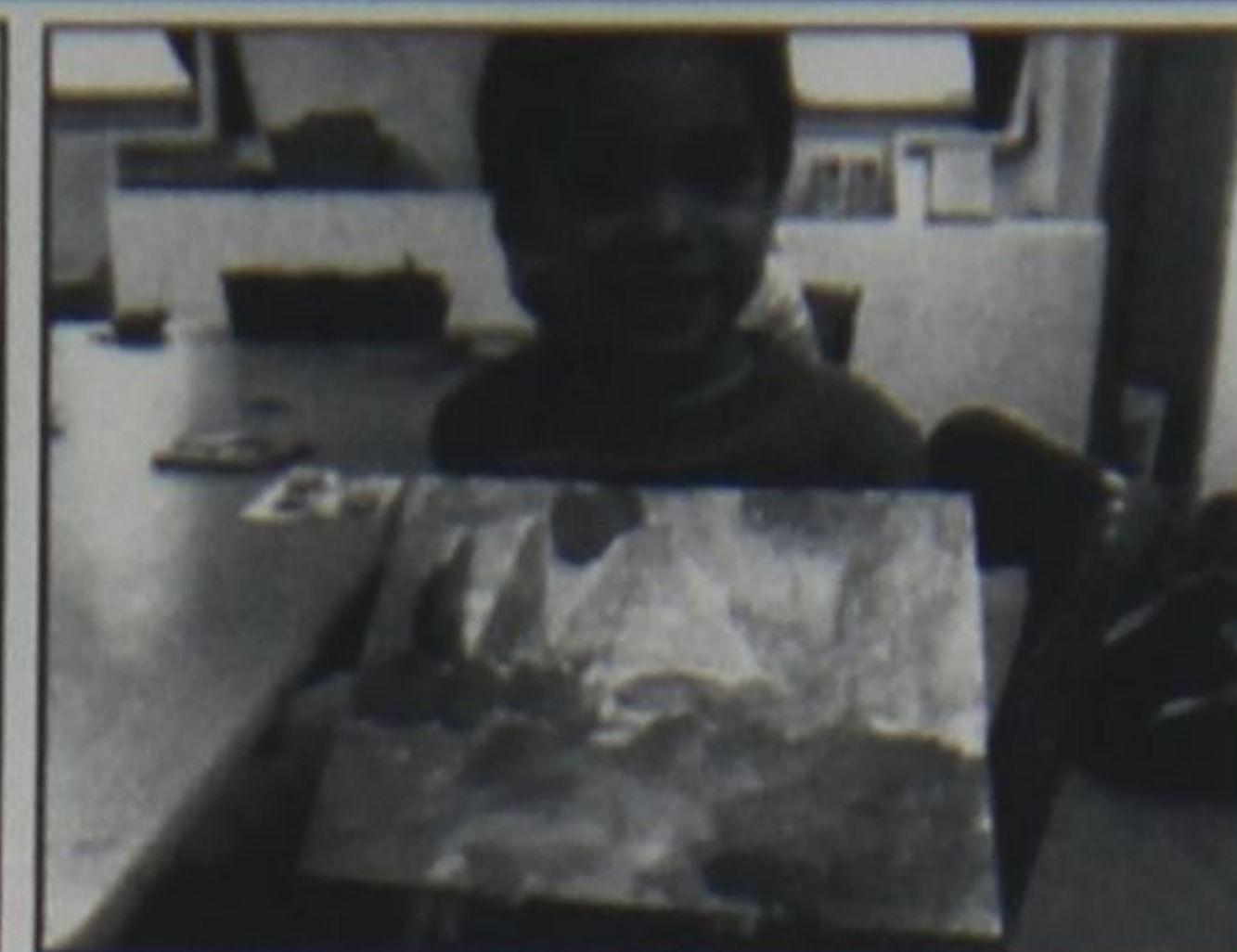
Art seems to be a popular hobby among Stouffville residents, judging by the response to the classes at the Latcham Gallery. "We have a number of returning registrants who enrol in our classes to develop their artistic skills and to continue to explore their creativity. We also have new students at varying experience levels join our classes," explained Rima.

So while we all wait for spring, there are many that take advantage of winter by spending their time constructively at a variety of local venues.

Further details for winter activities can be found on www.townofws.com, www.latchamgallery.ca, and www.townofws.com/museum



Quilters demonstrate their skills at the Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum.



A young artist displays his work during a Latcham Gallery class.



Lions Club of Stouffville

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