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STOUFFVILLE SENIOR OF THE MONTH

FREDA FOCKLER
 AGE: She'll be 80 in April
 NUMBER OF YEARS IN STOUFFVILLE: 51

Freda was born in Moose Jaw Saskatchewan and raised in Spring Valley Sask. before moving to Stouffville.

CAREER: Freda worked at a hospital in Moose Jaw for 2 years in the 1950s, she worked on the family farm while in Saskatchewan, she worked at what was then the Homestead Restaurant on Stouffville Rd. for a few years in the 1980s, she has also done babysitting.

HOBBIES: Freda enjoys playing cards, especially euchre. She helped her husband coach Stouffville women's softball teams that won 2 Ontario Championships and 1 South Lake Simcoe title in 3 years in the 1980s and 90s.

FAMILY: HUG! Husband David, 5 daughters - Millie, Bernice, Irene, Sheila and Janice, 3 sons - John, Larry and David Jr. All 8 children live in the Stouffville area. Freda has 8 grand kids and 5 great grand kids. She has 13 brothers and sisters, all from Saskatchewan. She visits them every year.

PET PEEVE: "People who don't pick up after themselves!"

FAVOURITE EXPRESSION: "Gimme a break!"

LIFE HI-LITE: "Too many to mention!"

WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF YOU WON THE LOTTERY? "Share it with my family, and go on a vacation to Saskatchewan to see my brothers and sisters."

IF YOU KNOW A SENIOR THAT IS WORTHY OF SENIOR OF THE MONTH
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A Promising Move

By Kinjal Dagli-Shah

Taz Ratanshi looked out of her window the evening of the February snow storm and could see only piles of white. Behind those piles, however, she spotted four of her neighbours carefully shovelling the snow off her driveway.

"They went from one house to another and helped clean each other's driveways. It was such a wonderful feeling to see that camaraderie. I feel very safe here," said Taz, a proud Stouffville resident.

The Ratanshis - Taz and her husband Zahir - moved to Stouffville four years ago from their rented condo at Harbourfront. "We were wondering how we would adjust. It seemed like a big change. We would see cows and horses driving up on Ninth Line and it felt so far away from Toronto. But it's not - this town has everything we need," she said.

"Earlier, we would wake up each morning and look at the water. Now, we look at each other," added Zahir, laughing.

The couple have not only become acclimatized to being in Stouffville, but have fallen in love with it. Their son, Ethan, now two and a half, was born here.

"We entered him in the baby contest at our first Strawberry festival in 2011 and he won first place in the six to eight month category. It's such a beautiful memory," said Taz, who has taken a break from her marketing career to be with her baby and focus on family.

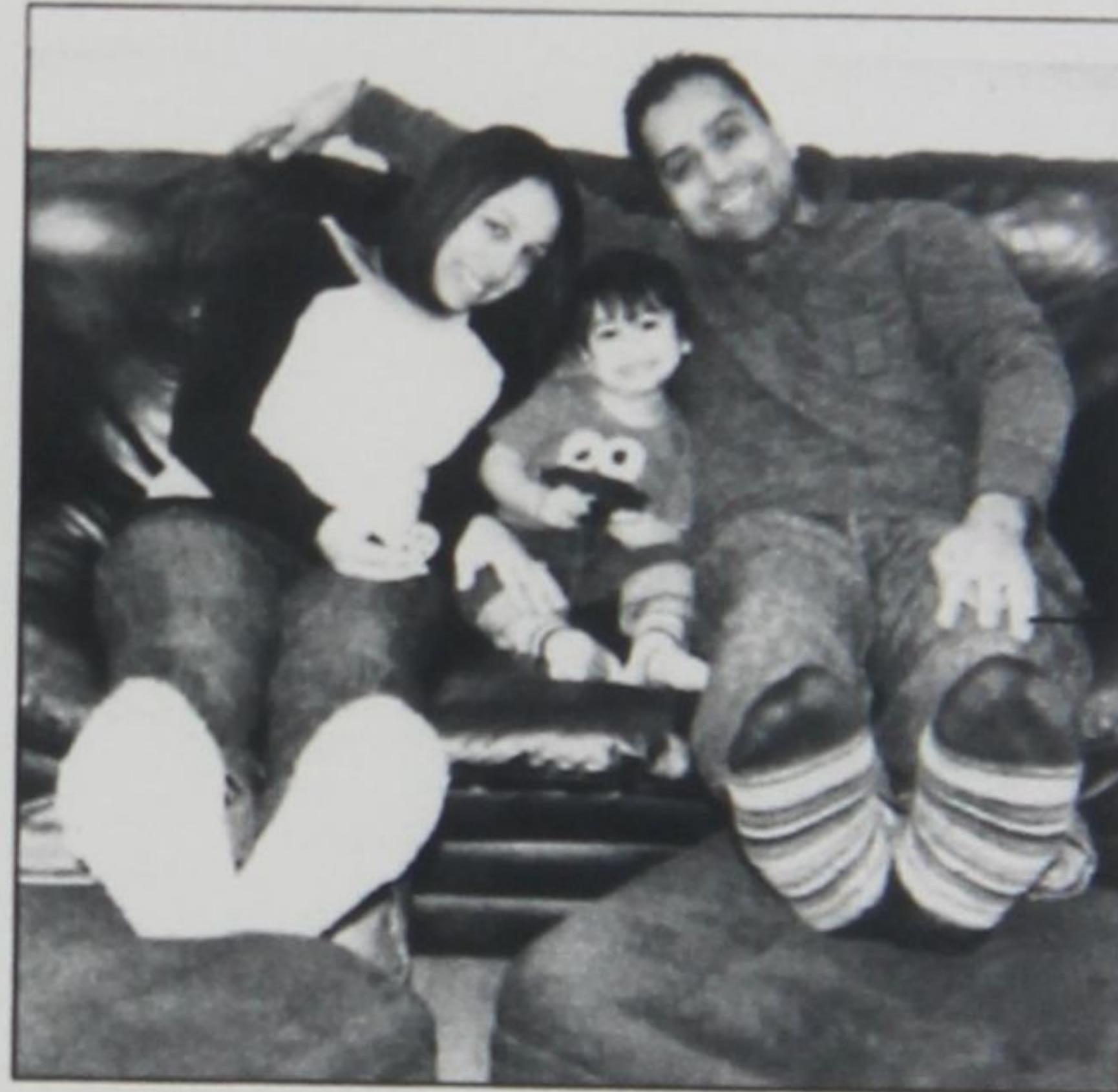
The couple were born and raised in Toronto but trace their origins to East Africa. "Both Taz and my parents incidentally hail from East Africa and immigrated to Canada in the 1970s. I visited Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda a few years ago and had a chance to see the place where my parents grew up," said Zahir, who runs his own management consultant company and feels they made the right decision by moving to Stouffville.

"We didn't know anybody that lived here but we've met so many great families and most of them are young families. The town holds a lot of promise too - it's a developing town but isn't overcrowded, it has grocery stores, a good school district and lots of space. Besides, it's not too far away from downtown."

The 35-year-old dad, who grew up in Scarborough, remembers playing hockey outside, walking to school and interacting with his neighbours. He wants the same for his son and believes they will find it in Stouffville.

"Ethan will have a lot of people on the street growing up with him. It's a prospering neighbourhood, listed as Canada's No. 3 city. That kind of recognition is amazing and will only lead to better school systems and efficient transportation systems. You don't need to be downtown for this kind of convenience - you've got everything right here."

Send your feedback to Kinjal at kinjal.dagli@gmail.com



Taz, Ethan and Zahir Ratanshi relax in their Stouffville home.



Phantom Limbs

The Latcham Gallery's current exhibition, Phantom Limbs, features new collaborative works by Kristin Bjornerud and Erik Jerezano.

Working in watercolour, gouache and ink, Toronto-based Erik and Ottawa-based Kristin send each other freshly started fragments of artwork through the mail, beginning a process which produces finished drawings that delicately conjure up the

surreal and the fantastical.

Each artist explores contemporary political themes, ecological motifs, personal narratives and myth making through the lens of folk tales, dreams and magical realism. Their work displays an ethereal quality that draws the viewer and evokes a child-like wonder. The exhibition continues at the gallery until March 30.