

## Gallery Welcomes Molly Johnson

On Saturday, Nov. 14, Molly Johnson will lend her stunning vocal talents to a special Latcham Gallery fundraiser at the Lebovic Centre for Arts and Entertainment – Nineteen on the Park.

During her stellar career, Ms Johnson has performed for Nelson Mandela and Quincy Jones, as well as singing at a private command performance for Prince Charles and the late Princess of Wales. Her album LUCKY won the 2009 JUNO award for Best Vocal Jazz Album.

She is the host of CBC's weekend show, Radio 2 Morning. She is founder of the Kumbaya Foundation

and Festival, raising awareness and funds for people living with HIV/AIDS, and works with countless other charitable organizations.

The Nov. 14 fundraising gala, which starts at 7 p.m., will include an art auction and silent auction to raise much-needed funds for the gallery as it celebrates its 30th anniversary. Tickets are \$75 each can be purchased at the Latcham Gallery, 6240 Main Street. A tax receipt for \$35 will be issued for each ticket.

Contact the gallery at 905-640-8954 for more information.

## The Language Of Flowers

Florist celebrates 25th anniversary

By Kinjal Dagli-Shah

From her dainty little flower shop on Main Street, Kim Everson has seen change. The gradual transformation of Stouffville, the simultaneous growth of business and competition, and the metamorphosis of a largely Mennonite town into a more inclusive population.

"My daughter used to call our shop 'The Meeting Place' because it was a hub where people would run into each other and chat," recalled Kim. "Now the business is more spread out, and technology has enabled people to order online."

But through a quarter of a century of change, one thing has remained constant – her love for flowers. This month, she is celebrating 25 years of Stouffville Florist, a business that speaks the language of emotions.

"We're still like the traditional florist you would have found years ago. More flowers, less gimmicks," said Kim, who wakes up at 4 a.m. twice a week to drive to flower auctions so that she can bring back the freshest flowers.

For someone so passionate about flowers, you won't find a single plant in the Everson home, except at Christmas. "I'm surrounded by it all day in my shop so I guess I don't feel the need for it. Besides, the real joy of flowers is in giving," said the mother of three.

In her 25 years in Stouffville, even regulars sometimes don't remember her name. "They call me 'The flower lady' and I'm fine with that," she said, laughing. "I'm synonymous with flowers because that's what I love doing. You invite me to dinner, and a bouquet comes along. If I'm part of a potluck, I offer to do the table arrangement instead of cooking a dish."

As with the town, Kim's business has undergone transformation, but not the freshness of her flowers. "My flowers come from countries as diverse as New Zealand, Thailand, Africa and Holland," she said, her global sourcing perhaps symbolic of the multiculturalism that has taken root in Stouffville.

Kim used to live above her shop on Main Street to enable her to bring up three children and run her business. "My first husband left when the kids were still very young, so it was a rough time. But the town continued to generate business for me, and the hard work paid off," she recalled.

"Being a florist is tough, and it takes a toll on you. Special days like Mother's Day mean little to my kids because I was always delivering flowers. Family holidays like Christmas and Easter are busy times for florists."

But that admission doesn't dilute her passion for flowers. "I'm grateful to flowers because they gave me a living and brought up my children," said Kim, now happily married to her second husband.

Her connection with Stouffville dates back to 1984, and her time here has created some special memories. She relates an analogy she came up with spontaneously, when one of her customers expressed surprise that a bunch of flowers cost \$30. "I said to her, 'You spend \$50 on a dinner, and you're hungry the next morning. At least

you still have the flowers."

On a more serious, and slightly philosophical, note, Kim summarized what flowers mean to her. "Flowers are often the first and the last things that people receive. We're there to welcome a newborn and at funerals to say goodbye."



Kim Everson has been selling flowers in Stouffville for a quarter of a century and has seen many changes during that time.

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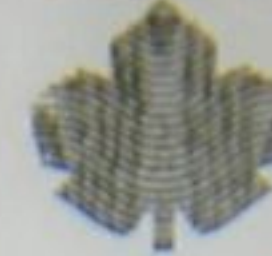
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