

Stouffville Free Press

Whitchurch-Stouffville's Independent Community Owned Newspaper

Editorial ...
... Kate Gilderdale
Advertising Sales ...
... Bruce Stapley
Graphics Dept. ...
... Travis Merrick

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P.O., Box 125, Stouffville, Ontario L4A 7Z4 • Phone: 905-640-FREE (3733)
Editorial email: withwinkles@hotmail.com • Advertising sales: bstapley@sympatico.ca
Graphics department: travis.merrick@sympatico.ca

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What about the walkers?

We applaud the installation of new traffic signals which allow more time for pedestrians to cross intersections and provide visual and audio assistance for people with poor eyesight and hearing.

What we object to is the length of time it takes for the signals to respond when the lowly pedestrian pushes the button just after the lights have turned green for vehicles. Since cars far outnumber pedestrians, perhaps the rationale is that the former should be given precedence over the latter. But if we're serious about environmental concerns, why not set the timing in favour of walkers, who are actually responding to the never-ending torrent of health and fitness advice dispensed by government gurus?

On its website, www.walkinginfo.org, the Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center, a US organization which addresses the concerns of pedestrians and cyclists, offers insight into how different systems effect the flow of pedestrian traffic. "In general, shorter cycle lengths and longer walk intervals provide better service to pedestrians and encourage better signal compliance. For optimal pedestrian service, fixed-time signal operation usually works best," it notes.

"Pedestrian pushbuttons may be installed at locations where pedestrians are expected intermittently. Quick response to the pushbutton or feedback to the pedestrian should be programmed into the system." The region's new system gets a thumbs-up for providing longer walk times, but falls short when it comes to responding to the pushbutton, which appears to have no effect on decreasing wait times for pedestrians. And unlike the old system, it operates in favour of pedestrians only when the button is pushed.

York Region traffic operations technologist Len Wells explained that owing to increased traffic volume, intersections have become wider and more complex, which has led to the requirement for pedestrians to push the button for clearance, allowing more time for safe crossing. "Pedestrian wait time varies by time of day and the area of the city since there may be different signal plans by time of day," he noted.

"Some people think that if they push the button several times or hold the button down for an extended period, they will make the signal change quicker. This does not work since the detector mechanism does not react any quicker." He can say that again.

But it does work for the pedestrian in one sense, by allowing her to take out her frustration at the seemingly interminable wait for a walk signal.

FREE THOUGHTS

Following last year's big success, Stouffville's "Toys for Tickets" campaign is back!



Readers Write

Igoma dinner raises \$40,000

To the Editor:

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Stouffville Igoma Partnership (SIP) we would like to extend our sincere thanks to the many businesses, residents and volunteers who contributed to the success of the 3rd annual SIP dinner & auction held at the EastRidge Church.

Special thanks to MC Sandy Schell Kennedy, auctioneer Terri Ness, soloist Nichole Strawbridge and the Summitview School Drum Band under the direction of Randy Cross and Anne Wilde for their participation. The event raised over \$40,000 which will go a long way in providing the needed health care in Igoma for 2008.

We are grateful for the ongoing support this project has received since its inception by the Town Council, Chamber of Commerce and residents of Stouffville. Our motto is "joining hands and creating hope" and thanks to Stouffville, this has become a reality in Igoma.

Peter Neufeld
Chair, Stouffville Igoma Partnership

CHRISTMAS CRACKERS:

This happened last December when the radio station WHLD called up the British ambassador in Washington and said, if you could have anything for Christmas what would it be? And he thought, 'I'd better be careful here. It could be a big scandal - 'Ambassador Accepts Bribes etc.' - I'd better ask for something really small.' So he said he'd like a pair of slippers and some aftershave. Then on Christmas Day the ambassador turned on the radio and heard the announcer say, "WHLD asked some of the world's leading ambassadors what they would like for Christmas. The French ambassador asked for peace on earth and goodwill to all men. The Chinese representative asked for an end to all wars and the British ambassador asked for a pair of slippers and some aftershave." *Kenny Everett, BBC TV.*

The worst gift is a fruitcake. There is only one fruitcake in the entire world, and people keepsending it to each other.

Johnny Carson

I have always thought of Christmas time, when it has come round, as a good time; a kind, forgiving, charitable time; the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of people below them as if they really were fellow passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys.

Charles Dickens

Aren't we forgetting the true meaning of this day - the birth of Santa?

Bart Simpson

Once again we find ourselves enmeshed in the Holiday Season, that very special time of year when we join with our loved ones in sharing centuries-old traditions such as trying to find a parking space at the mall. We traditionally do this in my family by driving

around the parking lot until we see a shopper emerge from the mall, then we follow her, in very much the same spirit as the Three Wise Men, who 2,000 years ago followed a star, week after week, until it led them to a parking space.

Dave Barry

When Christmas bells are swinging above the fields of snow/We hear sweet voices ringing from lands of long ago/And etched on vacant places/Are half-forgotten faces/Of friends we used to cherish, and loves we used to know.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

I stopped believing in Santa Claus when my mother took me to see him in a department store, and he asked for my autograph.

Shirley Temple