

Discover The Treasure

Springvale Baptist Church will present its popular annual musical drama, *The Treasure*, on Dec. 15 and 16 at 7 p.m. at the church on Stouffville Road at Kennedy.

This family-focused Christmas production features a large cast of talented thespians and everyone is welcome to attend. Discover the matchless mystery, the timeless miracle, the holy moment. Discover *The Treasure*!

For tickets and information visit springvale.org or call 905-887-5651.

See Santa on line

York-Durham Heritage Railway invites families to take the train on Dec. 2 and hang out with jolly old St. Nick.

Santa will visit every child on board the Christmas special, which will depart from Stouffville GO Station on Main St. at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. Tickets are \$20 each, or four for \$70, and can be ordered at tickets@yhdr.on.ca or by leaving a voicemail message at 905-852-3696.

See you at the station. Ho, Ho, Ho.



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Ramblin' Ruth

All Dogs Go To Heaven

By Ruth LeBlanc

Dogs are not only man's best friend, but woman's too. We are right up there at the top of the pack in loving and being loved by these most loyal of all companions.

If I could, I would empty every shelter and pet adoption centre and find loving and good homes for all the inhabitants. If that failed, I would love to have at my disposal millions of dollars to build lifelong animal housing so that no dog died before its time.

One thing my late husband and I cherished was our relationship with animals. Over the years we shared our lives with a variety of four-legged friends. Buried in our flower garden is a family of feline and canine buddies that left behind nothing but furry and warm memories.

Visions of stained rugs and hairballs the size of Mount St. Helens are mere memories as the furry faces appear in my mind. The one problem about pets is that we get so attached to them that when it is their time to go to the big park in the sky, we realize we are losing a family member.

Still shell-shocked over losing my husband to cancer I am now faced with another loss, my dog Roxy. When Rick died, Roxy was by his side in those last horrible hours. The power was out that evening and it was nightmarish to tend to Rick and afterwards to realize that he was dying in those dark, early morning hours.

Roxy was not the same after Rick died and her health has declined over the past months. Whenever she hears the sound of metal clicking she panics, and it was just recently that I realized the sound resembled the machines that were keeping Rick alive. With the power out, the beeping sound has haunted my dear old dog as she clings to life.

Animals are treated better in some respects than people. When disease rampages through a pet's body, we are told to do the humane thing and put them out of their misery. People do not get the same

respect when faced with a terminal illness and must endure endless days of pain and despair with no end in sight.

Euthanasia is a good word where animals are concerned. Say it about people and jail is the answer to anyone who would take steps to end the pain and suffering of a loved one. Rick asked not to be left to suffer and it ate my soul to see him deteriorate rapidly and in physical torture that no person should have to endure. I could not do what he asked me to do so many times. The guilt was intense and it was painful not to be able to end his suffering. Rick did not understand my allowing him to suffer but I had no choice.

Poor old Roxy will be spared the last days of suffering when I see that no better days lie ahead for her. This year will forever be etched in my memory with the death of Rick. Now, our faithful friend is getting ready to join him in a better place where Rick is walking and happy and able to eat once more.

Life is not fair but as Forrest Gump said, "Life is like a box of chocolates; you never know what you are going to get." It's a good thing we cannot see our book of life. If we knew what we were up against, it would take all our energy just to make it through a day.

I look back and shake my head, thinking of the horror that started with the words, "Rick has cancer, a bad cancer." When the time comes to lay my Roxy to rest, I will hang on to the only thing I have now, hope.

I hope that there is a better place and that somehow, when Roxy closes her eyes for the last time, Rick will be there to take her to a place filled with forests and streams and other masters reunited with their best friends. One day I will join them and we will live forever in a field of dreams. Until then I will do as everyone else does who suffers a loss, I will carry on.

Within an hour of writing this column my best friend Roxy went to Rick with my love.

Leisure Centre offers school break fun

By Micole Ongman

Our holiday hockey camp is back by popular demand this year and participants can opt for full or half day

programs.

The camp is open to players aged 6 to 12 who are currently enrolled in house league hockey. Activities include puck handling, drills and power skating, interspersed with games and movies. A pizza lunch will be offered to full day campers. For details, call Jen McEachen at 905-640-1910 ext. 288.

Other school break activities at the leisure centre include public skating, stick and puck, and shinny, which will be offered during the day on Dec. 28 and 31 and Jan. 2 and 3. Shinny is ideal for players aged 14 and up and runs from 10:45 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. CSA approved hockey helmets must be worn. Stick and Puck is a fun way to practise shots on goal, puck drills and stick handling with no goalie in the net.

Public skating is another great way to keep active with family and friends. Free skating, sponsored by Tim Hortons, will be offered Dec. 30 and Jan. 2 from 1 to 3 p.m.

You can also enjoy a refreshing winter dip; public swims will be held Dec. 28 from 6:35 to 8 p.m., Dec. 30 and 31 from 2:05 to 4 p.m., and Jan. 2 and 4 from 1 to 2:30 p.m. Parent and tot, senior swims, lane swim, therapy jets, aquafit and arthritis aquafit will also be running over the holidays.

Visit www.townofws.com or call the leisure centre at 905-642-7529 for program times.

Micole Ongman is program aquatic supervisor, leisure services, Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville.



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