



STAFF PHOTO/SUSIE KOCKERSCHIEDT

DASHING THROUGH THE STREETS

Youngsters leave the starting line at the third annual Stouffville Dash for Diabetes, which featured a kids' 1K plus 5K and 10K run/walks from the Stouffville Clippers Sports Complex Sunday. The event, which attracted 700 participants, surpassed its goal of raising \$30,000 for the Canadian Diabetes Association. See additional photograph on page 40.

Nineteen on the Park 'too pricey' for theatre group

BY ALI RAZA
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Would Shakespeare perform at the Lebovic Centre for Arts & Entertainment – Nineteen on the Park?

Pricing at the Stouffville theatre has made it nearly impossible for the Stouffville Theatre Company to perform at the downtown hotspot.

After town council rejected its grant request in February, the company was scrambling to find alternative venues.

Though the fledgling amateur theatre group is not affiliated with the town or Nineteen on the Park, its members are all from Stouffville.

The local thespians requested a grant of \$4,000 from town council in

January to cover costs of rehearsals, but soon found themselves rethinking their theatre strategy.

“We’ve either got to come up with some sponsors or find a different venue,” board member Patrick Lannigan said this spring. “We can’t afford Nineteen on the Park as it stands.”

The theatre company was quoted the price of \$6,700 for the week to conduct a performance. They consider it a high price tag as the Uxbridge Music Hall – which has 300 seats as opposed to the Park’s 112 seats – charges \$1,900 for the week.

But Nineteen on the Park has no trouble filling their calendar with performances from other theatre

and dance companies, according to cultural facility and programming coordinator Ashley Chappell.

“We’re lucky to have so many talented companies that call Stouffville home and utilize Nineteen on the Park on a regular basis,” she said in an email.

MOVED TO PARKVIEW

The theatre group performed at Nineteen on the Park in May 2015. It was the last fully staged performance they had at the venue in accordance to a partnership deal between the company and the Nineteen on the Park board.

“We had a partnership agreement with the board, which meant we shared half the costs and we

share the revenue with 19 on the Park,” said theatre board member Marianne Lannigan. “We were denied partnership after the first couple shows because they said they were losing money.”

“For Nineteen on the Park to cover its costs, it needs to sell out every night. Which isn’t the case at other theatres,” she added.

Other theatres include Uxbridge Music Hall and the Parkview Village seniors’ complex auditorium, where the theatre company is now performing. Their performance at the Ninth Line facility Friday included a cameo by Mayor Justin Altmann. (See photograph on page 34.)

Whether it’s a matter of an

expensive venue or an underfunded theatre company, theatre company members say the town needs a theatre strategy.

With two per cent of the town’s operating budget allocated for arts and culture and a 20 per cent set aside for leisure services, the disparity is clear says Patrick Lannigan.

“Markham, Newmarket, these towns support their theatres,” he said. “Theatre brings people with disposable income to town, looking to eat and shop.”

Patrick explains a theatre strategy can boost the town’s economy and revitalize the downtown area. He argues entertainment will give people a reason to be on Main Street.

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