

Community Rallies Around Local Family

Gofundme page set up for donations



The community is rallying around Brooklyn Gilbert, who was recently diagnosed with a rare form of childhood cancer. A special fundraiser will be held April 18 at Hair Villa in Uxbridge to support her family.

By Kinjal Dagli Shah

In a heartwarming show of what community is all about, Stouffville residents have come together to rally around a little girl diagnosed with neuroblastoma, a rare form of childhood cancer.

Third-generation Stouffville resident Brooklyn Gilbert was a couple of months short of turning three when her parents noticed she looked rather pale.

"They were going away on vacation but her parents decided to get her checked up," said Kim Gunther, who grew up with Brooklyn's mother Chastity and remains a close family friend.

"The doctor noticed her stomach was bloated so she was referred to Markham Stouffville Hospital for further investigation. It turned out Brooklyn had a large tumour in her stomach. The CT scans revealed that the tumour is spreading from the left side of her stomach to the right, as well as to the bone marrow. Brooklyn is currently at Sick Kids Hospital in Toronto where she is undergoing chemotherapy and the doctors have told her parents she has a long road ahead of her."

The diagnosis, received in February, is still shocking for the family but friends, neighbours and local residents are walking that extra mile to be of whatever help they can. While Kim is busy planning a fundraiser for Brooklyn's third birthday, she also set up a crowd funding page which passed the \$10,000 mark in 24 hours.

"I believe most of the donors have been from Stouffville. Among them are people we don't know and have never met," said Kim, adding that small businesses, mommy entrepreneurs and individuals have all come forward with donations in cash and kind.

"My friend Andrea Altomare owns Hair Villa, a salon in Uxbridge. I was talking to her about Brooklyn and she immediately said we must have a fundraiser, and offered her salon. On April 18, the day Brooklyn

turns three, we will be holding a cut-a-thon at Hair Villa. People are welcome to make appointments or just walk in for haircuts or styles. Colour takes too long so in order to get the most people in the shortest amount of time, we will only be doing cuts and/or styles. They are based on the salon price and proceeds from the day will go directly to the family."

Kim also wrote on Mayor Justin Altmann's Facebook page challenging him to match the funds raised at the cut-a-thon, or shave his head. Others joined in, donating money to have him shave his head. It has now become a hair-raising issue for the Mayor, who has good-naturedly accepted the challenge.

"I've never shaved my head before and my hair is already thinning out so I am going to work overtime to earn some money and match the donations. Maybe I will start my own fundraising team," he said.

On Brooklyn's page at gofundme.com/0f8770, more than 200 people have already made donations along with messages of hope, love and prayer, the latter perhaps as valuable as the monetary help in a little one's battle with cancer.

Write to Kinjal at kinjal.dagli@gmail.com



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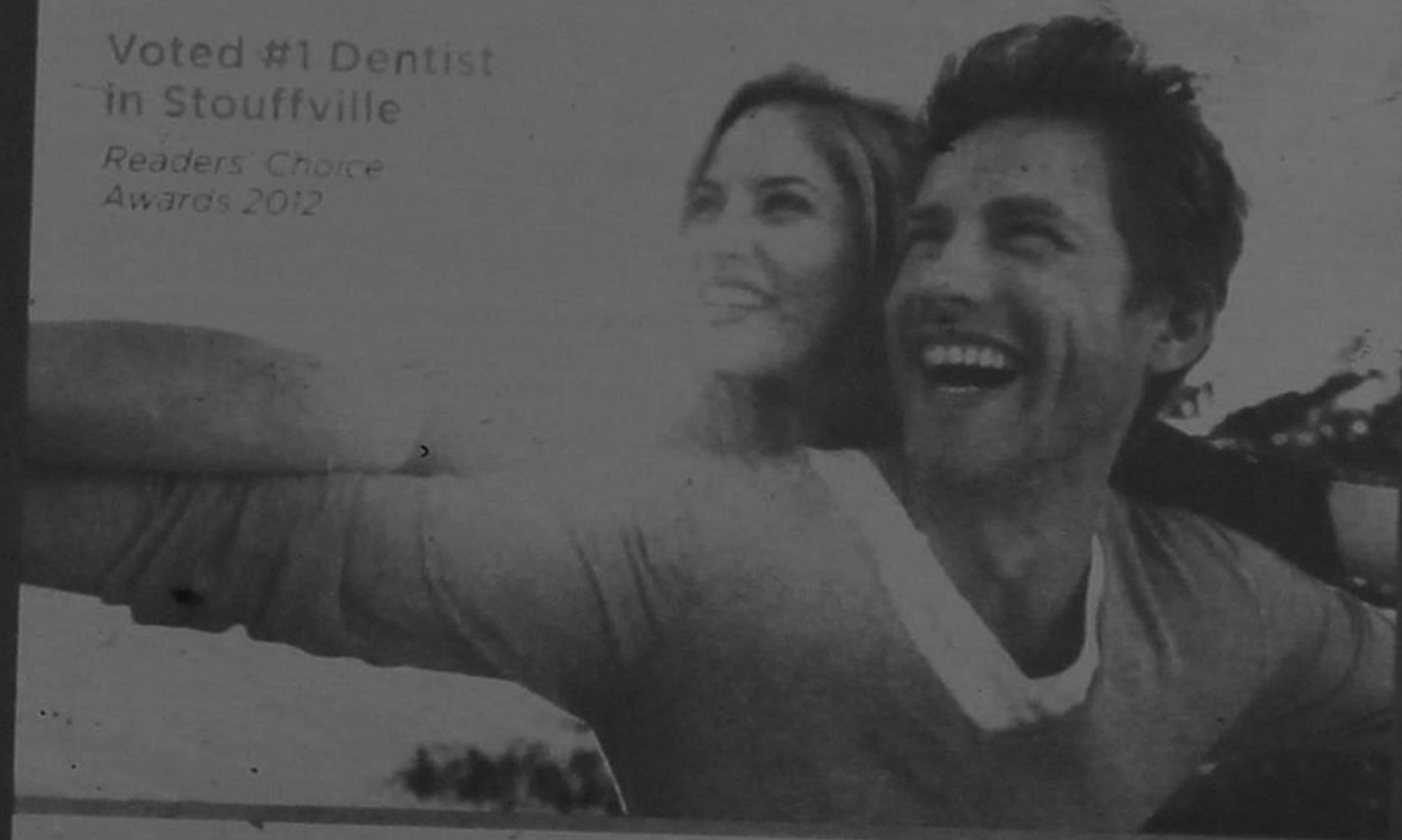
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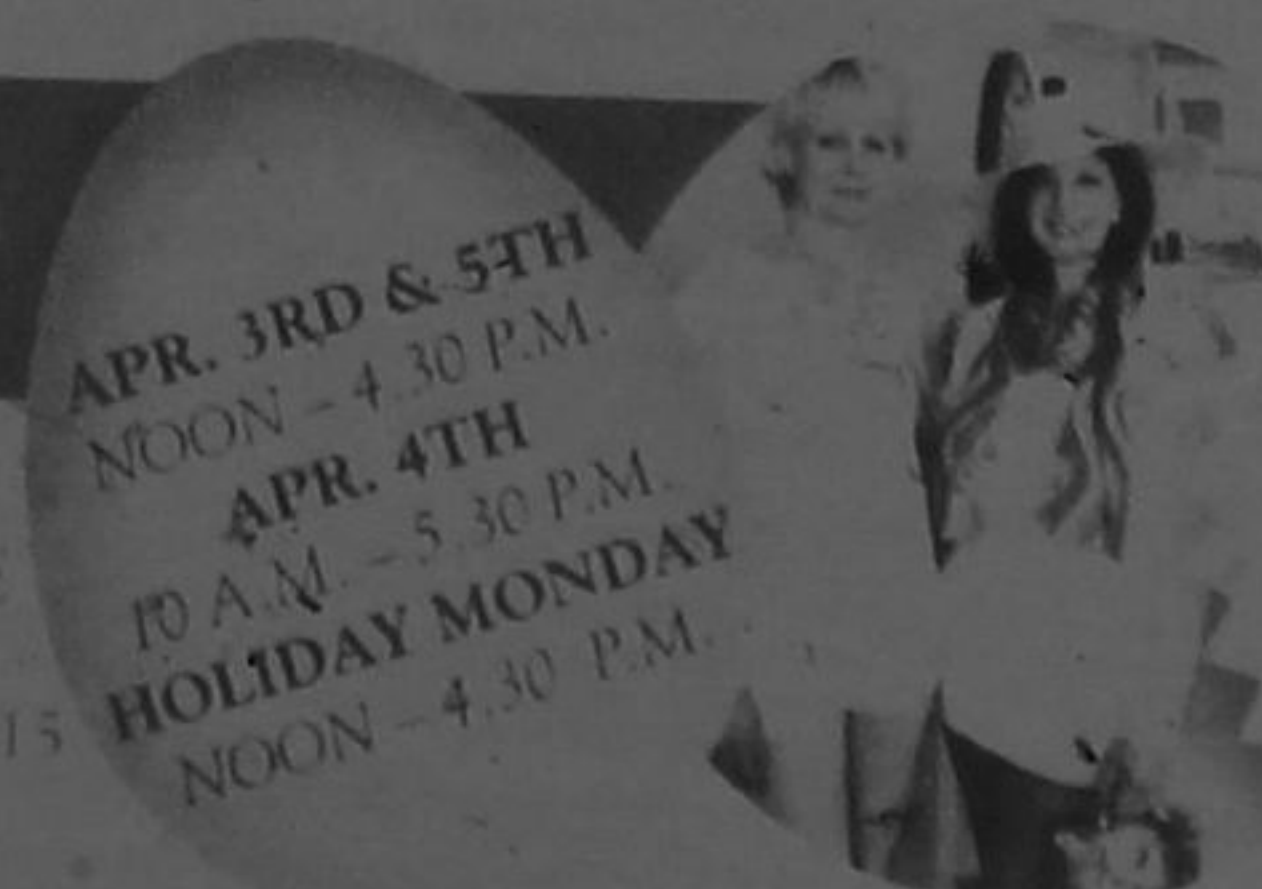
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