

Crisis Pregnancy Centre Opens Stouffville Site

The Markham Crisis Pregnancy Centre has opened a Stouffville satellite site for local clients and will hold an open house at 36 Alderwood St. Nov. 17 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. for anyone who would like to learn more.

The centre offers free counselling and practical support to women struggling with unplanned or teen pregnancy, single parenting, adoption and post-abortion concerns or other challenges they are facing.

"Stouffville families have been so generous with their donations in preparing for the site to open that we wanted to open our doors for the community to check us out," said volunteer Teresa Maskery. "Anyone is welcome to stop by our open house for a snack and a chat. It's an opportunity to hear what we do and see where we do it."

Teresa is a doula who renovated her living/dining room into one big classroom to teach prenatal courses. "I have been a volunteer with the Markham pregnancy centre for 14 years now, so when discussion of a satellite location came up I was more than happy to share my space," she explained.

When she started a page for the new centre at facebook.com/stouffvillecpc she received over 100 'likes' in one day. "Stouffville families have donated baby and children's clothing, equipment, strollers, car seats, bassinets, breastfeeding pillows, baby bath tubs, bottles, formula, baby food, diapers, wet wipes, care

products... and the list goes on."

The Stouffville centre is only open Monday nights at present, but will offer more hours as the need grows. Teresa noted that the catalyst for establishing a local site was winning a donation from the 100 Women Who Care in April, which allowed the organization to buy furnishings and supplies needed.

"We also offer presentations in the school that can complement the school curriculum," she said. A list of topics can be found at crisispregcentre.org.

Organizers hope that the open house will also encourage local businesses to donate basic supplies such as diapers, wipes and creams to the centre on a regular basis.

For more details visit crisispregcentre.org or facebook.com/stouffvillecpc or call 905-472-4357 to talk to someone or book an appointment at either location.



Stouffville's Smartest Person

By Kate Gilderdale
Stouffville Free Press

Stouffville's Alisia Bonnick has achieved more in her 21 years than most people manage in a lifetime.

She started writing her first published novel, *A Perfect Crime*, while she was a student at Étienne-Brûlé, a French high school in Toronto. The book has since been used as part of a grade 8 English curriculum and is available from the Whitchurch-Stouffville Library.

"It was actually the fourth book I'd written, and it took me about 10 months to finish," said Alisia, who writes under the pseudonym A.A. Smith. Her second novel, *Diaspora*, is now going through the editing process and will come out next year. Meanwhile, she is taking her Bachelor of Science degree in psychology, with a minor in English, at the University of Toronto, where she is also a teaching assistant.

Around the middle of May this year, she was offered the opportunity to audition for CBC TV's new interactive television series, *Canada's Smartest Person*. "A casting agent sent me an email with details of the show," said Alisia, who still doesn't know

how the agent found her.

"When I asked her, she said, 'I'm just that good' and told me she thought I would be a good fit."

The show focuses on not one, but six, categories of intelligence: musical, physical, social, logical, visual and linguistic, and challenges participants to demonstrate their prowess in each category, live on television. Alisia was among 32 people selected from 4,000 applicants to take part.

She had to fill out a form and create a YouTube video explaining why she felt qualified for the role. "Then there was a Skype interview with one of the producers and an interview with the casting director asking why I wanted to be on *Canada's Smartest Person*."

Alisia was pitted against a firefighter, a stay-at-home mother and a cheese salesman. She almost made it through to the final, but was defeated in a last-minute cliffhanger between herself and the firefighter.

Her ability to accomplish many different tasks so effectively is mind-boggling. "I have very good time management skills, and I make time for what's important to me," she explained. "Everything I do is what I love to do. I love psychology and English, and those are the courses I'm taking, so it doesn't feel like work."

What came across during the show and on her YouTube video were her coolness under pressure, her delightful sense of humour and her ability not to take herself too seriously. "When I was younger I was really shy, but I have to do a lot of presenting as a teaching assistant at U of T. I am used to speaking in front of people and at job interviews."

While being in front of a studio audience would be extremely daunting for anyone, Alisia clearly relishes the opportunity to stretch herself, and views every experience as a chance to learn and grow. She is an exceptional young woman with a bright future, both in her chosen field of clinical psychology and as an accomplished author and publisher.



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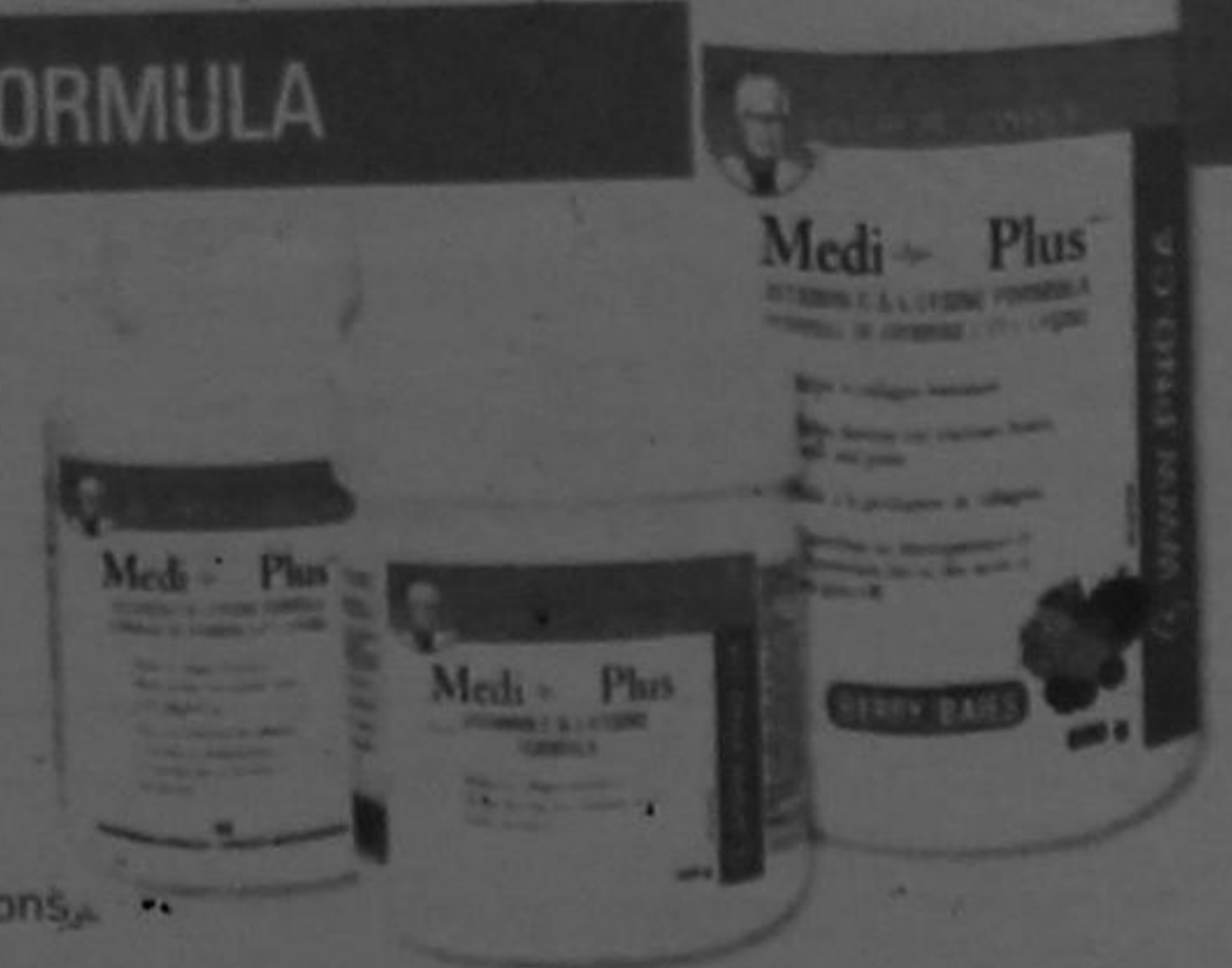
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