

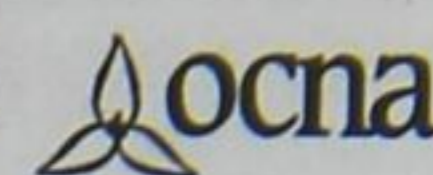
**WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE THIS MONTH**

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There has been some debate over an official designation for Whitchurch - Stouffville... Well, so much for my idea!



**Letters**

**The pitfalls of a knee jerk reaction**

To the Editor:

Knee jerks were the sounds of Stouffville council when Mark Carroll proposed what Phil Bannon called a snake pit. Most people respond with a knee jerk reaction when in close proximity to or at the sight of spiders, snakes, bats and most things creepy crawlly. This I think is quite normal unless you're 8 years old.

I'll never forget my knee jerk reaction when my son came home with fur on his lips from the caterpillar he just ate. He is older now and would only react with passive curiosity watching "Fear Factor". I digress. A mature, thoughtful response to Mr. Carroll's proposal would have been a more knowledgeable reflection on the benefits of these creepy

crawly things. I freak out when the first bat swings by during the summer mosquito hunting season. Then reason sets in and the thought of how infection by a mosquito with the west Nile virus could be minimized.

Now I live with nature a little more since I built my first

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**Opinion**

**Habitat No Cause For Hissy Fit**

Who would be a politician in a world where every utterance is subject to intense scrutiny and instigating innovative ideas is fraught with fears about potential risks to life and limb, however remote?

When former Ward 2 councillor Mark Carroll attended a recent council meeting to present a proposal for a natural wildlife habitat in Ballantrae, his idea really put the snake among the pigeons. Included among the inhabitants of his proposed sanctuary were butterflies, birds and, yes, snakes.

Mr. Carroll was not talking rattlesnakes or pythons, however, but the common garter snake, which is native to the area and harmless to humans. In fact its most dangerous attribute is its ability to provoke nightmares among people who are understandably phobic about these slithering reptiles.

Some councillors expressed concerns about the habitat's proximity to a new subdivision and Ballantrae Public School, but we're with reader Bob Lewis, who points out that the idea dovetails nicely with the town's endangered motto, Country Close to the City. In our view, a wildlife habitat containing garter snakes is a lot less threatening to long term health and safety than a Main Street choked with exhaust fumes from idling vehicles.

Without a viable bypass which is not part of a residential area, this problem is becoming untenable, as those living on streets such as Millard and Rupert can attest. And as our community grows to become increasingly suburban, and trees and topsoil are removed en masse to make way for vast tracts of pavement and pipes, we need, more than ever, to preserve and celebrate what's left of our natural heritage.

While we're on the subject of beautiful rural areas in our community, kudos to Ward 2 Councillor Phil Bannon for re-instigating the winter carnival at Musselman's Lake on Valentine's Day. Have a Heart, Love the Lake will include skating and games, along with free hot dogs and hot chocolate. All residents of Whitchurch-Stouffville are invited to attend the carnival and celebrate winter in the great outdoors.

Finally, we hope that the five-year expansion plan recently announced by York Region Transit will include service to this community. Although our GO Transit bus service has been upgraded in the last couple of years, local transit is urgently needed to give residents an alternative to using their cars, which in turn will limit damage to the local environment.

**Sounding Off**

**What did you do for fun when it was too cold to go outside?**



**FIONA ADSHEAD**

I did a lot of reading and cooking the more time consuming recipes I had wanted to make. The cold weather gives you the excuse to relax and not worry about chores.



**KELLEN GRAY**

I went to the Stouffville Library to do research on history topics. I also stayed inside when it was so cold and just hung out.



**LORETTA DURFEY**

I played lots of board games and darts including the latest version of the Seen It? game. I also ran away to Miami Beach, West Palm Beach and Los Angeles.



**STEPHANIE SHERIDAN**

I worked as much as I possibly could to save money for school (college). I also hung out with my friends at their houses.



**TIM NEUMAN**

I took the spare time to work inside on my computer designing skateboard symbols and hung out at home with my family.