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Aurora's Community Newspaper



Week of March 20, 2012



Piper Mick Ledbitter of Aurora's White Heather Pipes and Drums took a moment from his music making on Saturday evening to hoist a pint at the Royal Canadian Legion. The White Heather Pipes and Drums had a busy day on March 17 as the week-long lead up to St. Patrick's Day across service clubs, restaurants, and bars came to a celebratory finale. Please see page 3.

Auroran photo by Diane Buchanan

Auroran photo by Diane Buchanan

"That has nothing to do with me because I was not part of the board, but I am experienced," he said of his selection. "I have done well. I got the position, I think, not because of what I said, but because of what I did. I did it in the past

The latter committee, which looks at the expulsions of young people "that have crossed the line" is of particular interest to him as it seeks to provide alternative education placement for stu-

Please see page 7



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COMING EVENTS

ON NOW

FEBRUARY - MARCH 31

The Aurora Cultural Centre presents Story Quilts featuring the work of Aurora quilter Angela Krotowski, 22 Church Street; wheelchair accessible at north entrance. For info please call 905-713-1818, or info@auroraculturalcentre.ca.

FEBRUARY 9 - MAY 5

The Aurora Cultural Centre presents Under Sacred Skies; panoramic oil paintings by Michael Fromowitz in the Great Hall Gallery. Continues through until May 5; Gallery Hours Tuesday - Saturday, 1 - 4 p.m. and during special events; free admission, 22 Church Street; wheelchair accessible at north entrance. For info please call 905-713-1818, or info@auroraculturalcentre.ca.

TUESDAY, MARCH 20

Bonsai Hill hosts another evening of poetry and performance tonight at 7 p.m. This evening's show features musicians Aaron Morris of The Manatee Band, the band Me & The Infinite Lovely, Mark Manner, Justin Tamane, and Ryan Webb. Poets on hand will be Deborah Campo, Luleta Brown, Stephanie Davidson, Sterling Dillinger, Billy Ferguson, Susana Lucia, Linda Squires, Dierdre Tomlinson and Malcolm Watts. There will be an open mic for guest poets. The last half hour of the open mic may contain graphic language. Bonsai Hill is located at 15263 Yonge Street, Unit 2.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 21

The Aurora Cultural Centre, 22 Church Street, presents local historian Jacqueline Stuart with the illustrated heritage lecture "The Worst Place Inside the Corporation, and Other Stories of the Railway Station Neighborhood." 7 p.m. start. Admission by donation gratefully received; complimentary light refreshments provided. Wheelchair accessible at north entrance. For info, please call 905-713-1818, or visit www.auroraculturalcentre.ca.

Community Living Newmarket/Aurora District will be presenting its 2012 Community Service Award to Peter Miller, owner/operator, of McDonald's Restaurants of P. G. Miller Enterprises Limited at the Association's 10th Annual Tribute Dinner. The Dinner will be held on Wednesday, March 21, 2012, at 6 p.m., The Manor, Carrying Place Golf & Country Club, Kettleby. Cost: \$125 per person. Reserved table of eight: \$1,000. Proceeds in support of Community Living Newmarket/Aurora District. For tickets call: 905-898-3000 ext. 253 or visit www.clnad.com.

Eating Disorders of York Region (EDOYR) presents tonight a Guidance and Assistance for Family and Friends of Those Striving to Overcome an Eating Disorder workshop with Stephanie Griver, BSW, MSW. The workshop will be held at EDOYR's new headquarters at 15213 Yonge Street (Suite 15) from 7 - 8.30 p.m. Support for family and friends is vital in the recovery of a loved one. A family member or a friend needs to be a strong, safe and consistent source of support and needs to take care of themselves in order to do so. It is good to know that you are not alone when you experience stress, frustration or anger: an eating disorder affects the whole family. To register please call Eating Disorders of York Region at 905-886-6632.

FRIDAY, MARCH 23

The Aurora Cultural Centre presents Soyeon Lee (www.soyeonlee.com), part of the Great Artist Piano Series. Winner of the prestigious Naumburg International Piano Competition, Ms. Lee will present "An Invitation to the Dance"

program to includes works by Bartok, Schumann, Liszt and Albeniz. Individual tickets \$30 adult /\$25 seniors and students, plus HST. Doors open at 7 p.m.; concert at 8 p.m. General Admission seating. Tickets are available over the phone with a credit card, or in person at the Centre, 22 Church Street; fully accessible at the north glass doors. For info: www.auroraculturalcentre.ca or call 905-713-1818.

SATURDAY, MARCH 24

The Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust will be holding its Annual General Meeting this morning at 10 a.m. at the Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum, 14732 Woodbine Ave, Vondorf. Please RSVP to landtrust@bellnet.ca or call 905-833-3171 ext 30 if you plan on attending. Keynote speaker will be David Tomlinson, renowned naturalist and landscape architect discussing "Birds on the Moraine."

SUNDAY, MARCH 25

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum will host a pancake brunch today from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Celebrate the end of winter at this delicious event hosted by the Founding Friends of the Museum. Enjoy a pancake and ham brunch topped off with locally-produced maple syrup. Also join us for a fun and enthusiastic reading of Eric Carle's children's book Pancakes, Pancakes! by local story-teller Susan Murray. Interactive readings at 10.45 a.m. & 1.30 p.m. Drop in readings between noon & 1 p.m. Cost: \$6 for adults, \$3 for children under 12.

MONDAY, MARCH 26

The Aurora Community Arboretum is having its annual "Meet and Greet" meeting at Aurora Town Hall beginning at 7.30 p.m. Everyone is invited to attend and hear what progress has been made in the Arboretum and what the plans are for 2012. A brief Annual General Meeting forms part of the evening.

TUESDAY, MARCH 27

The Aurora Public Library presents MEDIEVAL STAINED GLASS from 7 - 8 p.m. In the Middle Ages, stained glass windows decorated churches and cathedrals. The light streams through in different colours for a beautiful glow. In this exciting workshop, we will replicate stained glass by using tissue paper to create our own Medieval windows. Ages 7+. Registration is \$7.50. For more information contact Polly Ross, Children Services Librarian at 905-727-9494 x 280 or by emailing pross@library.on.ca.

MARCH 29 - APRIL 1

Every three minutes another Canadian is faced with fighting cancer. Throughout April, volunteers in Aurora and across Ontario will be working together to raise funds for the Canadian Cancer Society during Daffodil Month. Join the fight against cancer March 29 until April 1. Buy daffodils for \$7 a bunch or two bunches for \$12 at Metro, Real Canadian Superstore, Sobeys, LCBO, and No Frills and unite behind those living with cancer. Daffodil pins are also available for a donation throughout the month. Money raised during Daffodil Month helps the Society do everything it can to prevent cancer, fund research to outsmart cancer and empower, inform and support people living with cancer right here in Aurora. Visit fightback.ca or call 905-830-0447 ext. 3833 for more information about Daffodil Month, daffodil sales locations, where to get your daffodil pin or to volunteer.

SATURDAY, MARCH 31

The Aurora Cultural Centre, 22 Church Street, presents a special "Earth Hour schoolHOUSE Concert" featuring the voice and guitar of Glenn Marais. A seasoned performer and Juno nominee, don't miss this magical evening, with an entirely acoustic portion of the show in observance of Earth Hour. Bring the family! Tickets: \$15; available in advance at the Centre, over the phone with a credit card, or at the door. Fully accessible building; wheelchair accessible at north entrance. For info please call 905-713-1818, or visit www.auroraculturalcentre.ca.

SUNDAY, APRIL 1

An Order of Canada 2011 recipient, Mary Lou Fallis holds a unique position in the music scene as "Canada's foremost musical comedienne". Visual and Performing Arts Newmarket (VPAN) is honoured to present her to our enthusiastic Newmarket audience as the final offering in the 2011/2012 concert series which will take place on April Fool's Day afternoon! The concert will take place today at the Newmarket Theatre. Order your tickets from the theatre's 24-

hour box office at 905-953-5122 or visit www.newmarkettheatre.ca.

APRIL 1 - APRIL 30

Artists from L'Arche Daybreak will mount their exhibit With Our Own Hands at the Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts this month. The exhibit will be open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and one hour prior to all ticketed performances. The exhibit will be closed to the public on Sundays unless a performance is taking place. "Those with intellectual disabilities have been called 'artisans of the heart' by Jean Vanier," said Richmond Hill artist and L'Arche supporter Jacquie Boughner in a statement. "In this exhibition, the Daybreak artists create works full of joy, life, and peace - a perspective of the heart with which to view and engage the world and society in which we live." For more information, contact L'Arche Daybreak at 905-884-3454.

MONDAY, APRIL 2

Spring classes start today at the Aurora Cultural Centre. A variety of children's art classes starting at age four up through teens, to adult classes in painting, photography, guitar, creative writing and more. Advance registration required. 22 Church Street; wheelchair accessible at north entrance. For info please call 905-713-1818; class descriptions available at www.auroraculturalcentre.ca.

TUESDAY, APRIL 3

Your hospice needs you! Training commences today for volunteers for both Hospice King-Aurora and the Doane House Hospice. Whether you live in Aurora, King Township, Newmarket, Bradford, or East Gwillimbury, we have a volunteer position that will suit you. For more information, please contact Heidi Bonner at 905-967-0259 or 905-773-0155.

APRIL 11 - MAY 15

A Bereavement Support Group for adults experiencing the death of a loved one is again being offered at the Aurora United Church for an eight week session, from 7 to 9 p.m. beginning Wednesday, April 11 and ending May 30. There is no fee for this program. It is non-denominational and is open to all in the community. For info call Paula at 905-727-2584 or email bereavement@live.ca.

APRIL 13-28

Theatre Aurora presents "Harvey", Mary Chase's 1944 Pulitzer Prize winning play. The story is about a man whose best friend is Harvey-a six-foot, three-and-one-half-inch tall invisible rabbit. This is the final show of the 2011-12 season. Directed by Reg O'Brien and produced by Anne Currie-O'Brien, the show runs April 13, 14, 19, 20, 21, 22 (matinee), 25, 26, 27 28. Curtain times are 8.00 p.m. with the matinee at 2.00 p.m. Visit the Theatre Aurora web-site www.theatreaurora.com for further information. Tickets are available on-line through the website, by phone at 905-727-3669, by email at taboxoffice@bellnet.ca or in person at the Theatre. Theatre Aurora is located at 150 Henderson Drive, Aurora.

SATURDAY, APRIL 14

The schoolHOUSE Season Finale Concert at the Aurora Cultural Centre, 22 Church Street is tonight, bringing together favourite musicians from the past season, including Evolution, Judy Marshak and Postcard Comets, as well as newcomers Coca Saviour and Memories Unplugged. Great local talent in a coffeehouse setting - imagine listening to great music in your living room and you'll see what we mean! Tickets: \$15. Doors open at 7.00 p.m.; concert at 7.30 p.m. Tickets available in advance over the phone, or in person at the Centre, 22 Church Street, Aurora; wheelchair accessible at north entrance. For info: www.auroraculturalcentre.ca.

Two yoga classes, suit all levels, 1.00 - 3.30 p.m., Trinity Anglican Church, 79 Victoria Street, Aurora. \$10 donation to Amnesty International. All welcome. For more information, call 905-476-6535 or email mbf@lindavarnam.com.

The York Symphony Orchestra welcomes Brazilian conductor Rafael Luz to the podium for its next series of concerts celebrating "Northern Images". The guest soloist for the enormously popular romantic masterpiece, Edward Grieg's Piano Concerto in A minor is York Region's own Maggie Ho. Their program will include two other orchestral crowd pleasers from the romantic period as well as Dvorak's Sixth Symphony, in D

Major. The Performance will be held tonight at 8 p.m. at Trinity Anglican Church. Tickets may be purchased by calling 416-410-0860 or at the door the night of the performance.

SUNDAY, APRIL 15

Xi Gamma Mu, a chapter of Beta Sigma Phi sorority will be holding a social tea at St Andrew's Valley Golf Club on St John's Sideroad East, Aurora, today from 2 to 4 p.m. All proceeds will be given to Belinda's Place. "Help Build the Hope...Belinda's Place will offer hope to women without a home and will provide life-changing services that promote stability, dignity and self-reliance." Ticket price is: \$35. Ticket includes tea, coffee, sweets & savory treats, and afternoon entertainment. Tickets can be purchased from: Pamper Me Please in Aurora (905-726-3605) Neighbourhood Network at 14996 Yonge Street, Aurora, and Roadhouse & Rose Funeral Home, 157 Main Street South, Newmarket.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 18

Bob McRoberts will lead a heritage discussion entitled "Postcards of Old Aurora: The McRoberts Collection" at the Aurora Cultural Centre at 7 p.m. A digital unveiling of his vast and unique collection of local postcards, alongside current photos. Admission by donation is gratefully received. Light refreshments are provided.

FRIDAY, APRIL 20

The Aurora United Church will hold its Spring Rummage sale today from 1- 8 p.m. with today being the individual sale. Items include clothing, linen, books, toys, and garage sale items. All proceeds fund local charities and some charities received leftover clothes filling their wish lists for their clients free of charge.

SATURDAY, APRIL 21

The Aurora United Church continues its Spring Rummage sale - this time its bag sale - today from 9 a.m. to 12 noon. Items include clothing, linen, books, toys, and garage sale items. All proceeds fund local charities and some charities received leftover clothes filling their wish lists for their clients free of charge.

The York Region Food Network will host the York Region Seedy Saturday Garden Show at the Aurora Cultural Centre (22 Church Street) from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The event will include a seed exchange, guest speakers, food demonstrations, door prizes, and much more! Come on out! Admission by donation. For more information, contact info@healthyfestivals.org or go to www.healthyfestivals.org/events/seedy.aspx.

SUNDAY, APRIL 22


The fourth Annual Runway to Spring 2012 Fashion Event in Support of the Easter Seals Kids takes place today at the Country Day School Performing Arts Centre from 1 p.m. - 5 p.m. hosted by Michele Denniston of Century 21 Heritage Group of Richmond Hill. The event features many local restaurant, caterers and food specialists, and will bring together some of this year's trendiest fashion retailers from the surrounding community. There will be food samples and a wine tasting followed by a fashion show as well as a silent auction, raffle prizes, and a live band throughout the afternoon. Tickets are \$40 in advance and \$45 at the door. For more information contact event coordinator Michele McDonald at 647-454-6025 or flumpydog@gmail.com.

SATURDAY, APRIL 28

2nd annual "I Love Rock 'n' Roll" dinner dance will be held at the Mansion (formerly Dinardo's) tonight. A website www.iloverockandroll.ca is also up and running for further information. Tickets are available now by calling 905-727-8600 and expected to sell out fast so if you are planning to attend and don't want to be disappointed, get your tickets soon.

The Aurora Seniors' Centre will hold its annual spring sale, including a white elephant sale, a book area, and amazing home baking. Members of the ASA's sewing, wood shop and knitting groups will also have their treasures for sale, along with members of the Aurora Farmers' Market. There is something special for everyone.

Continued on 22



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CUSTOM CAR EVENT



Dancers from the York Region Irish Dance Studios were another group of entertainers making the rounds to clubs and eateries around Town on Saturday to mark St. Patrick's Day. The dancers, pictured above, stopped for a moment on their frenzied day to have their photo taken at The Legion. Back row left to right Erin Tackaberry, Taylor Anderson, Amanda MacDonald. Front row Kiera Kenny and Aiden Kenny.

Auroran photo by Diane Buchanan

Citizens made Andrew's dream come true

By Brock Weir

The over 400 people who gathered in Machell Park last spring in an attempt to set the record for the world's largest human smiley face may not have succeeded in their objective, but their efforts served as a "very deep reminder" to one resident of the human bond residents have.

For Frank, who attended Wishmania in June, a fundraiser to send his son Andrew, who lives with Duchenne muscular dystrophy, on his dream trip to Italy through the Children's Wish Foundation, the event was a "very humbling experience."

"It was humbling because I saw so many people gathering together for my son and it really struck a chord with me being a very pro-community person," Frank told The Auroran. "I think it is just a great feeling to know people care."

Andrew, he said, was very excited to be near the action and was thrilled that people across Aurora and other towns came out to the rainy day of activities to help him fulfil his wish.

In all, 411 people sporting yellow and black rain ponchos stood in a circle at Machell Park to try and break the record. The event included activities ranging from mini-putt to pony rides, hot air balloon rides to live performances from Delayne Drive, words from MPP Frank Klees, Mayor Geoffrey Dawe, and Councillor Michael Thompson, as well as pipers, and a few "hollers" from Town Crier John Webster.

"I think Wish-Mania was a great success," said Wish-Mania organizer Shay Pileggi, herself a resident of Aurora. "I was just so thrilled that the community made this happen for him. Without the support of everyone in the community it wouldn't have happened that way. I was just very, very proud of everyone in the community for helping."

While a few of the dignitaries were disappointed the rain kept some people from partaking in the fun, a great

time was had by all and, most importantly, Andrew was Italy-bound the following month.

In the lead up to Wishmania, Andrew, through the Children's Wish Foundation, told The Auroran that his dream was to go on an eating tour of Italy and the Mediterranean Region, and that is exactly what he got.

"It was a fantastic thing to go on this trip," said Frank. "We had never been on a cruise liner before so it was a great time to bond. At that time I lost my job, so I was stressed out, but I basically found a job a few days before we left and this gave me and my family a sense of security, so we truly enjoyed it rather than being stressed about future opportunities."

But the trip across the Atlantic was nearly over before it started as the family missed the first cruise, their flight from Toronto to the United States having been diverted due to storms. While the delay didn't deter them proceeding with the rest of the

trip, it did mean they weren't able to make their scheduled stop in France before heading further down the Mediterranean coast line.

"Children's Wish did their utmost and put us on the second cruise and this worked out," said Frank. "We flew directly to Barcelona and that is where we embarked directly on the ship. It was an adventure."

"First of all we went to Florence and saw the beauty of the city. We saw the Michelangelo statues. While it was pretty hot, we had a pizza, cappuccinos, and Andrew was smiling and very happy. The second day we went to Rome, and to the Vatican. That was the highlight of our trip because we saw the Sistine Chapel and it was like a magical kind of place."

"Our last stop in Italy was Milan, and we went along the Amalfi coast, which is one of the most beautiful coasts in the world. Of course, in each stop we had a lot of ice cream. Italian ice cream is fantastic

and Andrew really enjoyed the food."

Another highlight for the family was a stop in Spain's Palma de Majorca, where they had the chance to go up the mountains and visit a village where Chopin used to go and compose his pieces. Making special reference again to the food, Frank said it was the place they loved most of all for its peaceful and serene atmosphere with minimal tourists.

As a parent, Frank said he

Please see page 18

Briefly

TRAFFIC CALMING SURVEY

Do you want Aurora's northeast quadrant open for through traffic? Are you a resident of the neighbourhood who wants to keep the streets quiet? You can now have your say at the Town level. The Town of Aurora has recently launched their online survey seeking opinions from all residents on the future of the street closures, speed bumps, chicanes, speed cushions, diverters, one-way sections, time-of-day turning restrictions, and curb extensions in the area. The survey seeks to know how you believe the traffic calming measures have affected traffic speeds and volumes, crashes (actual or near misses), travel time, distance and convenience, and the number of trips through the quadrant, as well as impact on the danger to pedestrians, cyclists, and difficulty of residents leaving their driveways and streets. For more information on the traffic calming measures or to fill out the survey itself, visit www.aurora.ca/aurora/northeastquadrant.

EASTER EGG HUNT TICKETS ON SALE

Tickets are now on sale for the Town of Aurora's 11th Annual Easter Egg Hunt. The popular annual event will be held on Saturday, April 7 from 9.30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Aurora Seniors' Centre. 1,500 spots are available for \$5 each, and children 12 and under are welcome to participate. Tickets can be purchased at the Aurora Family Leisure Complex and the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex. Enjoy a visit with the Easter bunny while doing a scavenger hunt, playing bunny bowling, and having your face painted. If you find an egg, redeem it for an "Easter goodie bag!" The Aurora Optimists and Seniors' Association will also offer a pancake breakfast onsite for a nominal fee.



411 residents donned yellow and black rain ponchos last spring in an attempt to set a world record and raise funds for Andrew's trip to Italy.

Auroran photo by Rob Schuetze

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Brock's Banter

By BROCK WEIR

Word from One of the Whopping

When I sat down at my desk on Wednesday morning to write the latest edition of Brock's Banter, I planned on telling a story about a particularly memorable experience in a March Break of yore that was dripping with drama and intrigue, but that will now have to wait until next year.

Logging on to check my email before hammering away at the story, a particular subject line in my inbox caught my eye: "one of the 'whopping 17.'" After considering the email for a few seconds wondering whether it was legit or spam of the ruder variety, I thought, what the hell, and opened it up.

Lo and behold, it was actually from one of the other "whopping 17" people who applied for Aurora-King's trustee position on the York Region District School Board.

Evidently last week's column wondering why so many people applied to be appointed to the board rather than standing for election struck a chord with him. In his email, trustee hopeful Salvatore Amenta sought to "demystify" that very question.

Naturally, I took him up on his offer.

Speaking to the Stouffville resident, the retired teacher with over 35 years of experience said he always wanted to be a trustee but never had the opportunity because he was "too damn busy doing other things". These ranged from heading up a classroom himself to negotiating with trustees when he was a union president for Toronto's Catholic teachers. When he saw a notice seeking to fill Gord Kerr's vacancy, it was something he couldn't pass up.

"I thought, 'Hey, I don't want to engage in a campaign, I'm too old for it...'" he said. "I'm not enamoured with politics in Canada because I see at every level it is degenerating to the level where I don't want to participate in that kind of mud-slinging."

The political arena is not something that interested him, he said, but he said he would serve as trustee for two years, give it his best, "and if I really liked what I was doing, and doing a great job, I might then run."

"I just wanted to do some good work," he said.

While making his pitch to the sitting trustees, Mr. Amenta was vocal in his support for the arts program at Thornhill's Baythorn Public School, which had been on the chopping block.

He told me he believed the "real crime" in the whole Baythorn situation would be if the arts program was eliminated "simply in order to provide equity in the sense that the board defines it in its policy to be consistent throughout the system, and make sure that all the schools are the same is not doing a service to students."

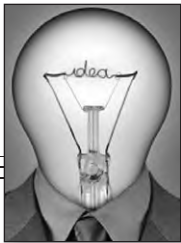
He wondered though whether his boldness had put off some trustees. Indeed, the reaction of trustees seemed to be a sticking point with him, believing that they were simply looking for someone with trustee experience.

"The only ones that seemed to be nominated were those with a connection to the board, the inside track," he said. "It seemed clear to me that all the people that applied didn't have an equal chance at this."

"I thought before I died it would be a good idea to try it and see if I could make a contribution and if I could do it maybe I would run and maybe I wouldn't," he added.

There you have it - the thoughts of one of the "whopping 17" and why they took a stab at the trustee position this time around.

So about that March Break story - I don't want to leave anybody hanging, but I'll just say it involves a sudden deluge of snow, a wig, a clown painting, a straight razor, and a bus-load of female basketball fans from Ohio bubbling over with March Madness. Watch this space in March 2013!



100 Watts

By Christopher Watts

There was no outcry when the Blacksmith's tree was cut down shortly after being designated a "Heritage Tree".

Nor was there any outcry when a majestic tree adjacent to the armory at Town Park that held the Town's only heritage clothesline was recently felled.

But remove a couple trees from a private golf course and there's instant wailing and gnashing of teeth, followed by unnecessary lobbying to reform the Town's tree bylaws.

Canadian literary icon Douglas Coupland sheds light on the ridiculous oversimplification we are witnessing here:

"If you're not a tree hugger, then you're a what, a tree hater?"



*The Red Cross Girls of Aurora
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*Programme by
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*Lulu G. Lepper
Sec. of Committee
Eva Lemon
President*

Kindly reply

Soldiers returning from the front from the First World War were formally welcomed back to Aurora in the April following the November 11, 1918 Armistice, as the invitation to the left attests. This invitation is part of the Aurora Historical Society's collection and illustrates how soldiers, their families, and members of the community were invited to a supper at Aurora's Mechanics Hall. The evening's program included the comedy stylings of Julius Brazil and W.J. White, and was organized by Lulu G. Lepper and Eva Lemon.

For a more recent development on the future of the Aurora Collection, please see Page 16.

To submit a letter to the editor please send your email to letters@auroran.com – deadline for submissions is Saturday at 1 p.m.

Letter to the Editor

Environmentalists seek bird watch volunteers

To the editor:

The Aurora Environmental Advisory Committee Naturalization and Wildlife Group has constructed over 300 bird nest boxes from donated material, with the help of volunteers. These have been placed in the Town's parks and open spaces.

During the nesting season, volunteers monitor these boxes throughout egg laying, hatching and the fledgling period. They record the results, including the number of unhatched eggs and nestling deaths, on an easy-to-use standardized form.

All this information is sent on-line to Bird Studies Canada and to the Royal Ontario Museum's Nest Record Scheme where this database is used for conservation and research purposes. Recently, Aurora was the third largest donor in Ontario with over 400 nest records.

This has been and continues to be one of our most important conservation activities in the Town. Bruce Buchan of Aurora's CleanRiver Recycling Solutions recently donated 20 new plastic nest box kits

which are currently being assembled by a local youth group. We will need to recruit new volunteers to monitor these and some of our more established nest box routes where monitors are unable to continue to participate.

This commitment is not strenuous and consists of visiting a cluster of 10 to 20 boxes every 2-3 weeks between early May and mid-August to record nesting activities. This normally takes between one to two hours each visit.

Skilled birders will have no difficulty in identifying birds or nest contents, but we would also like to recruit volunteers who have no bird identification skills who would like to learn how to develop or improve them by teaming up with one of our more experienced nest monitors. Then you can consider yourself able to visit boxes and record the contents on your own.

Our boxes are located in the northwestern portion of the Town around Cliff Trail to Tree Grove Circle, along the Willow Farm Trail to Orchard Heights; in the centre of Town in Sheppard's Bush, in the Arboretum, Mackenzie Marsh, and the Wildlife Park; and in the north east portion

of Town in the area of State Farm Way and around storm water ponds off St. John's Sideroad East.

If you have time, and would like to learn more or

help with monitoring our nest boxes, please call: 905-727-8979.

David Tomlinson
Aurora

—THE AURORAN—

“Aurora's Community Newspaper”

The Auroran Newspaper Company Ltd.
15213 Yonge Street, Suite 8
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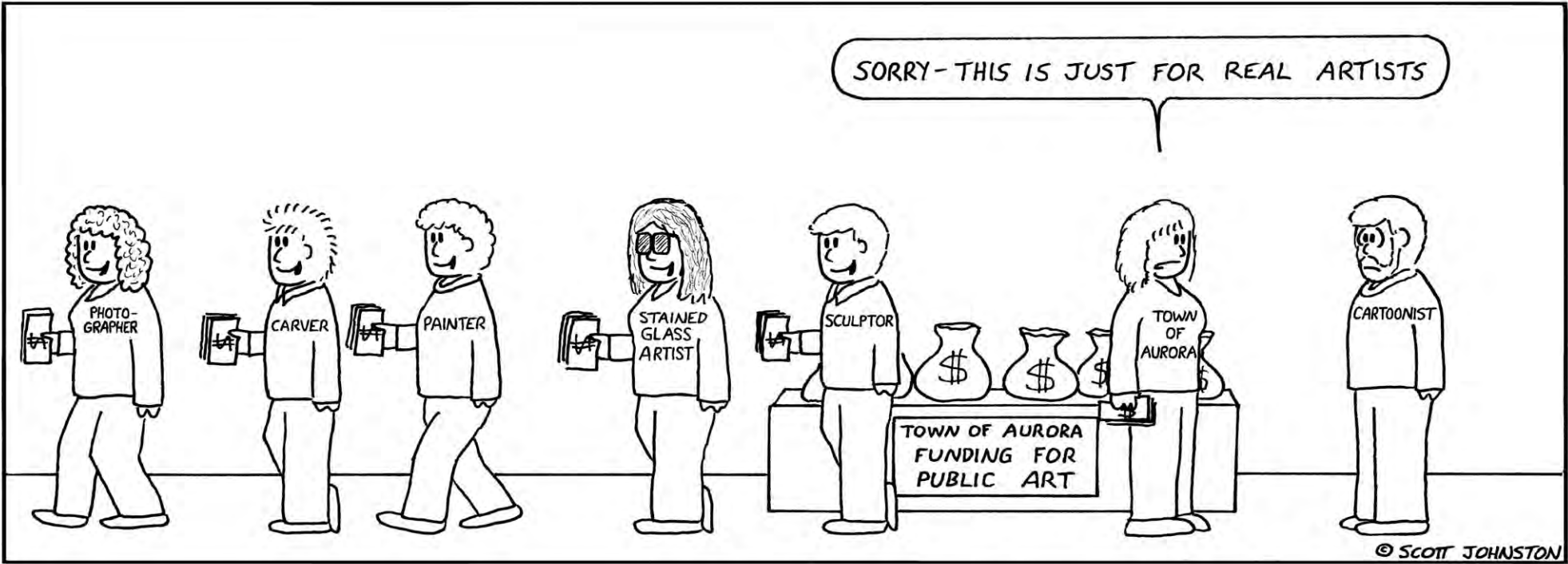
Subscriptions available within Canada and U.S.
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Lois Brown

By LOIS BROWN
MP Newmarket-Aurora

Ottawa Report

Safe Streets and Communities Act

The Safe Streets and Communities Act (Bill C-10) has finally passed through the House of Commons, fulfilling the government's June 2011 Speech from the Throne commitment to "move quickly to re-introduce comprehensive law-and-order legislation to combat crime and terrorism."

Our Government is committed to ensuring criminals are held fully accountable for their actions and that the safety and security of law-abiding Canadians and victims comes first in Canada's justice system. Bill C-10 will extend greater protection to the most vulnerable members of society as well as victims of terrorism, further enhance the ability of our justice system to hold offenders accountable for their actions and help improve the safety and security of all Canadians.

Federal Transfers to Ontario

Ontario will receive the highest level of support in the history of transfer payments. The 2012-13 federal transfers will total \$19.2 billion, which is actually an increase of almost \$8.4 billion since the Conservative Government was first elected in 2006. Here is the breakdown:

Over \$3.2 billion through equalization; Almost \$11.4 billion through the Canada Health Transfer for an increase of over \$3.6 billion or 48% since 2006. \$4.6 billion through the Canada Social Transfer for an increase of over \$1.4 billion or 45% since 2006.

I share this information as it is important to ensure our province has the resources necessary to provide essential public services including health care, post-secondary education and other social services.

Protecting Seniors

The Government of Canada recently tabled legislation to

help ensure that sentencing for crimes against elderly Canadians reflects the significant impact that crime has on their lives.

Elder abuse is any action, often committed by someone in a relationship of trust that results in harm or distress to an older person. Commonly recognized types of elder abuse include physical, psychological and financial abuse. It is estimated that by 2036 there will be more than 10 million Canadians aged 65 or over, representing almost 25 percent of the country's population. Therefore, it is important that laws are in place to protect elderly people from abuse and other forms of crime.

Under a proposed amendment to the Criminal Code, evidence that an offence had a significant impact on the victims due to their age - and other personal circumstances such as health or financial situation - would be considered an aggravating factor for sentencing purposes. This legislation will help ensure tough sentences for those who take advantage of vulnerable members of our society and further supports our Government's common front to combat elder abuse in all forms.

Wireless changes to add service, lower costs

In 2008, we took a significant action to promote competition in the wireless sector. Our decisions have helped to reduce mobile wireless prices for Canadian families by 10%. Most recently, our government announced new action to provide Canadian families with even more choices at low prices for wireless services.

These actions will; amend the Telecommunications Act to lift foreign investment restrictions for telecom companies that hold less than a 10 per cent share of the total Canadian telecommunications market; apply caps in the upcoming spec-

trum auctions to enable both new wireless competitors and incumbent carriers to have access to the spectrum up for auction; and improve and extend the government's policy on roaming and tower sharing to slow the proliferation of new cell phone towers. A portion of spectrum will be reserved for public safety users such as police and firefighters across Canada. These measures will insure the timely availability of world-class wireless services at low prices for Canadians.

Vimy Foundation Pin Campaign

Prime Minister Stephen Harper has launched the Vimy Foundation Pin Campaign which seeks to raise awareness of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, one of Canada's most important military victories.

It was 95 years ago on Easter Monday, April 9, 1917, that the four divisions of the Canadian Corps, fighting side by side for the first time, captured Vimy Ridge.

The operation was an impressive victory, both as a military success and in enhancing Canada's role among the Allied Powers in the First World War. The victory at Vimy was not without a price and Canada suffered many casualties. With the passing of the last Canadian First World War Veteran two years ago, we will continue to ensure that we honour and preserve our veterans' sacrifices. It is the Foundation's goal that Canadians wear the Vimy pin, known as "April's poppy" every Vimy Ridge Day in remembrance of that outstanding victory on April 9, 1917, and in recognition of that battle's contribution to the Canadian identity. To purchase a Vimy pin, please visit the website at: <http://www.vimyfoundation.ca/vimy-pin>.

For more information on these or other issues please contact my office at 905-953-7515 or through my website at www.loisbrown.ca.



Senior Scape

By BRIAN WARBURTON

Spring has arrived once more and the outdoors beckon with many possibilities to consume energy on which to devote energy and attention.

Spring is the most fascinating season, possessing the power to banish winter and turn our frozen world to green and growing, creating conditions that evolve and perpetuate life, with an endless vitality.

Children are often engaged in the sports of youth, but the child lives on to some degree in all of us. We participate wherever our bodies allow, and compete with fervour on occasion. Life's charms lie with the changing seasons...and yet nothing changes, rather it repeats as part of the whole, and we experience seasons and weather, and the close ties of families as our ancestors did as far back as one can imagine.

Everything continues to evolve and repeat and 1,000 years hence, the birds will still sing, the grass will still grow and life will continue.

Novel activities among seniors are always in vogue, always an attraction and soon coming along with the good weather, will be strolls in the park.

Tossing horseshoes will appear once more, and picnics will offer quiet pleasures for seniors who appreciate the quiet and peace of this good weather pastime.

Among the manageable issues that arise with a popular Seniors' Centre and sharing a parking lot with the Aurora Town Hall is the issue of parking spaces.

Parking exists to the north of the Town Hall but on occasion, particularly when business at the Town Hall attracts

many interested parties, and the seniors have a full house also, parking is for the early birds.

A natural antidote is, of course, carpooling, which works like a charm when utilised astutely. To address this issue, a carpooling information session is scheduled in the Centre from 12.45 until 1.15 p.m. on Wednesday, March 21. Carpooling is cost effective and benefits everybody by maximizing the use of the parking spaces required.

Jeffrey Harti, Manager of Environmental Initiatives for the Town of Aurora, will make the presentation and answer questions. Good questions elicit good answers, so write your question down, ensuring it is short, accurate and to the point.

Not everybody can carpool but to do so will immensely help a difficult situation! Those who carpool effectively will alleviate a situation, which requires the dynamics of smart seniors sharing car and parking lot resources; a consideration for savings on wear and gasoline for one or more vehicles encourages cooperation.

In this instance, carpoolers rate as members of merit, desirable and, more often, indispensable.

The call for nominations echoes loud and clear for three directors to fill vacancies caused by expiring terms on the Board of Directors (BoD). The process of nomination will take place between the dates of March 19th and April 13th.

With nominations completed, voting for nominees will take place Friday, May 7, through Friday, May 18, before the Annual General Meeting (AGM) in June, when new directors - or directors returning for a further term - appear before the

members for the first time.

The AGM should attract a capacity participating audience to the West McKenzie Hall, which demonstrates interest for the importance of the event. The voting process provides a smooth transition of power, from one group to another year by year, accepted as normal by all.

We tend to forget troubles that arise in organizations where voting tends to get skewed in some way, and to this day, commercial companies occasionally experience problems electing directors.

Following this nomination and election year, two terms of three years will be the maximum service allowed directors on the BoD. This regulation should assist in promoting new blood to the BoD, and introduce new and exciting ideas.

For directors concluding their term or terms of office, everyday life presents a different face and sometimes leaving office becomes traumatic.

We must have directors; we must have a proven manner in which an organisation such as the ASA will operate effectively and, by and large, the ASA has proven capable of administering its responsibilities.

Minutes of BoD meetings however, while conforming close to legal minimums, provide minimal information concerning the proceedings of the BoD. Why should this be the norm for ASA board meetings? The membership should have the trust of the directors who they elected, and knowledge of business conducted would illuminate the proceedings immensely.

Spring has sprung

New trustee aims for school visits this week

From page 1
alternative education placement for students in these types of situations.
As for his priorities as the new trustee, however, Mr. Adams-Luchowski still said it is too early to pin down a game plan.
"I really haven't been to a meeting other than the one where they swore me in, so I

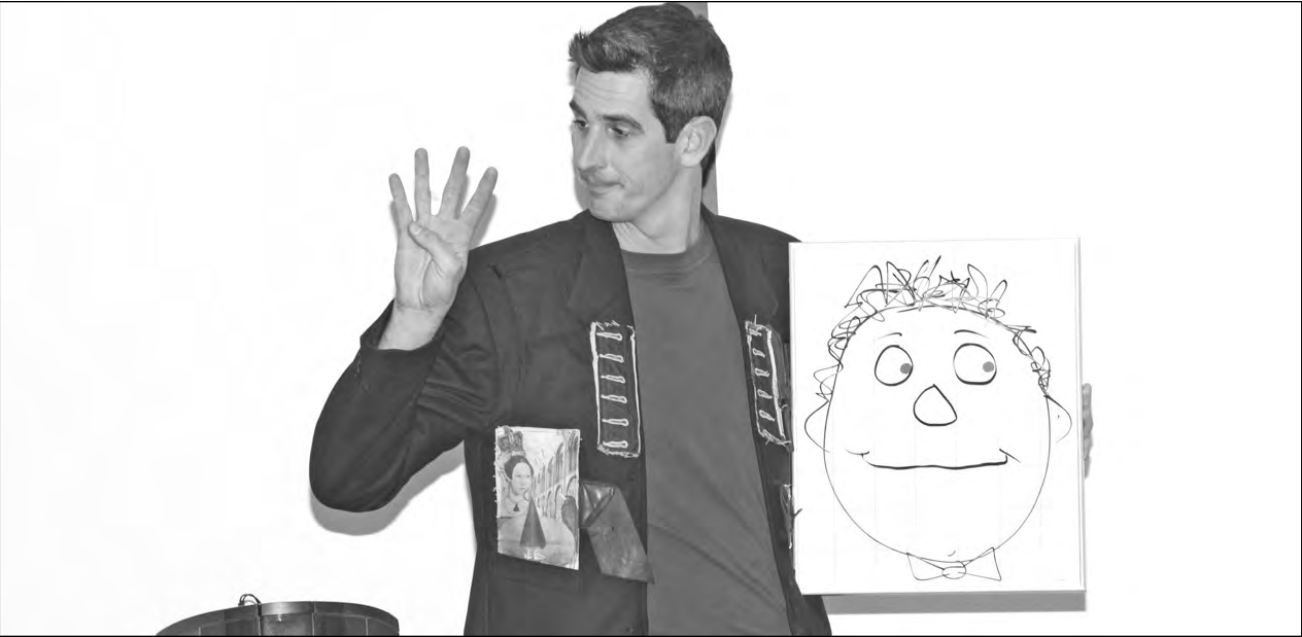
have to go for at least a month or so and see where we are in the multi-year plan and then I will have a better idea on what is already happening and what is on in the near future. Then we can look at other things that might be important. I'm a conservative, so my priorities stay the same: student achievement, efficiency, and getting the most out of our students with the

money we have, and try to stretch it for as long as we can."
As a member of the Board, he said he is one person of 12 and in that kind of environment there is no room for a "personal agenda." It is a team thing, he said, and unless a trustee has the support of the majority, the priorities go nowhere except possibly out to the newspapers.
"Broadening the scope of

[what was included in the multi-year plan going back to 2010] is something I would be more interested in than trying to introduce something that wasn't already included," he said.
In the meantime, this week and next, Mr. Adams-Luchowski said he plans on visiting all of the schools in Aurora and King, introducing himself to faculty and students, and familiarizing

himself on the particular concerns of each of the communities.
He said he also plans on volunteering his time as a football coach at Dr. G.W. Williams Secondary School or at King City Secondary School ("Whichever one needs me").
Football coaching is what led Mr. Adams-Luchowski to become involved in the school board, and then to his first stint as trustee for Richmond Hill in 2007. After seeking re-election in 2010, he lost to Carol Chan. Elaborating on which parts of his campaign platform failed to strike a chord with his local voters the last time around, he said one of his biggest "slams" was that he was not a politician.
"Richmond Hill basically

came down to demographics," he said. "The community in the south end where the wards were organized decided they wanted representation from a Chinese person. She did a really good job of reaching out and I wasn't able to do that. Councillors went the same way."
"That is just an observation and by no means is it a criticism."
Although this is his second crack at a trustee position, it is "definitely" Peter Adams-Luchowski's last, as he and his wife plan to retire in 2015.
"If I do want to stay in public office, I may seek something up [near our residence in Blue Mountain], but I think I'll have had enough and will need a break by then."



Lofty the Magician and his drawn sidekick keep watchful eyes on their audience at a March Break activity at the Aurora Public Library last week. Lofty, otherwise known as Michael Presswood, who was also joined by his rabbit Harvey, was one of several magic acts that entertained over 40 youngsters during their time off from the schoolroom grind.
Auroran photo by David Falconer

Town plans to increase public awareness of disabilities

By Brock Weir

National Access Awareness week will be marked in Aurora this spring with a series of events designed for both celebration and perspective.
The week will be commemorated from June 3 to June 9, and Aurora's Accessibility Advisory Committee is looking at ways to increase civic engagement on issues faced by persons with disabilities or limited access, as well as marking the achievements of people throughout the community.
"I think access is everybody's issue," Councillor Wendy Gaertner, who serves on the Committee, told The Auroran. "At the end of the day there is a possibility that all of us could be in a position where we need accessible buildings ourselves. We may not be thinking about that now, but at some point the population is going to age."
"There is going to be a whole basket of people who need accessible facilities and I can't imagine being a person who wouldn't be able to access everything that I would need to run my daily life somewhat smoothly. I think we need to be a community with foresight, with a heart, with empathy, and do what is right for everybody."
The committee, she said, is going to try and come up with ways to engage the community, particularly citizens who could have an interest in accessibility but may have never had an opportunity to make their voices heard. But with this, she said is the greater question of just how to reach the audience and get people to come out.
"I'm only one part of this group, so it will be up to the group; the committee gets it, but it is an uphill battle to try and

make everybody get it," she said. "You can tell your kids a million things but until you get in a situation they don't really get it. I don't know how we make the community really get it so everyone is truly equal."
Tyler Barker, an Aurora youth who has been a prominent advocate for accessibility issues well before his appointment to the Committee in 2010, said he would ideally like the whole community to come together and be aware of the challenges people with disabilities face in the wider community.
One way this can be achieved, he said, is to have a guest speaker with a disability come to do a talk in Town, as well as holding a wheelchair basketball game or sledge hockey game between Aurora and Newmarket municipal staff members to make them better understand the challenges. A Town Hall meeting specifically tailored for accessibility issues would also better educate lawmakers and citizens alike on some of the ongoing issues faced by the community. This would, he said, be reminiscent of meetings held a few years ago.
"A lot of organizations came out as citizens to suggest what could be done," said Mr. Barker. "It could be as simple as an automatic door in one of the Town's facilities, or even having the Chamber of Commerce get involved and have a series on how businesses can me more accessible and increase productivity and profits, because if businesses are accessible, people with disabilities can come in and use the facility."
"A Town Hall meeting might not only include Aurora but the Region too and make them professionally aware that these are challenges that people with dis-

abilities face not only in Aurora but in York Region as a whole."
In advance of the week, Mr. Barker has outlined a number of key issues that he personally will be focusing on. The first issue, he said, is having increased transportation with people with disabilities. If people can use conventional transit, he said, they can get out and enjoy the community more, attend public events, and be more active overall.
For those who might not be able to get out in the winter, he suggests a buddy system so people can come out and chat with persons who may have difficulty getting out in the snow and slush.
"The most important thing to realise is people with any disability...we have a lot to give, we are intelligent and smart, but we do things in a little different ways," he said. "We are definitely very educated but we just need extra assistance and help."
A Town Hall meeting and various sports games do appear to be on the agenda for Access Awareness week, according to Chris Catania, Aurora's Accessibility Advisor. Plans also include further engagements with local schools - perhaps even roping high school staff members to compete against each other in the wheelchair or sledge games, and provide a public "buy in" in terms of accessibility with the potential Town Hall Meeting. Overall, however, Mr. Catania is keen to emphasize Access Awareness Week as a week of celebration.
In this regard, the Town is looking to book Jeffrey Preston, a man who travelled from London, ON to Ottawa in his motorized wheelchair to raise awareness of mobility issues and to advocate for the break-

down of those particular barriers.
"I would like for him to come by the Town of Aurora and be able to speak on that and speak of the barriers he has had to overcome as well to raise that type of awareness and share a very good story of his trials and tribulations in that regard," said Mr. Catania.

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Advertorial

Fibromyalgia: New Approach Delivers Remarkable Results

Fibromyalgia is reaching alarming levels and ineffective treatment is common. If you suffer from fibromyalgia you need to be aware of exciting new discoveries that can prevent years of pain and suffering.
You have probably told your doctor you have constant, unrelenting joint pain... tender, achy spots all over your body, neck and upper back soreness... pain between your shoulder blades... chronic fatigue... and maybe constant or intermittent headaches. You can't sleep at night and are exhausted all day.
You can't even enjoy the simple things in life anymore, such as playing with your children. Getting out of bed everyday is an unbelievable challenge.
Life has become unbearable.
Your doctor does an exam –negative. He takes some X-rays –negative. Does a few blood tests –negative. Maybe even an MRI

–negative.
Then they may tell you that you have Fibromyalgia (or may have Fibromyalgia) and may give you anti-inflammatory drugs or other medications.
You may find what approaches are offered do not help greatly.
So you go back, again and again, and your doctor gives you different drugs to try to make you feel better.
The doctor eventually may say, "I've done all I can do, you just need to learn to live with it."
After exhausting the list of medications you may also be told it's "all in your head" and they may even send you to a psychiatrist for anti-depressant drugs.
You may have gone through months, if not years, of grueling tests and drugs that may have horrible side effects.
It is clear that any Fibromyalgia sufferer needs to learn the facts revealing how their body became damaged and find out ways to help themselves heal.

Sufferers should be aware that there are many natural ways of helping themselves feel better by strengthening their immune and repair systems.
The medical system has essentially three major choices: drugs, physiotherapy or surgery.
There are additional choices available including new approaches that are sensible, natural, non-invasive and safe. These approaches have helped many fibromyalgia sufferers change their life forever.
To help sufferers function better, an upcoming workshop is scheuled to reveal effective ways to feel better, sleep better, improve energy and restore quality of life.
As a community service, this workshop is free.
The workshop will be held on Wed. Mar. 28, 7:30 pm. – 9 pm. at the King West Wellness Centre 141 King Rd Unit 10 Richmond Hill.
Seating is limited. To make reservations call 877-334-2785.

Are the dog days over? Future of dog park in question

By Brock Weir

Aurora's leash free dog park has "fallen through the cracks", according to Councillor Wendy Gaertner. A picture on the future of Aurora's only leash free dog park off of Industrial Parkway North just south of St. John's Sideroad is expected to become clearer this May when a report is presented to the Town's

Parks and Recreation Committee to address some of the uncertainty. According to Councillor Gaertner, there is no current policy in place when it comes to the dog park. "The Town of Aurora never said they would take responsibility for the dog park and there is no citizens' committee doing that," Councillor Gaertner told The Auroran. "I think what

we have to [ask] is do we want a dog park? Are we serving the residents of Aurora, or are we serving a lot of residents from outside Aurora? "Whose responsibility will it be? If the Town decides it does want to take responsibility for it, what is it going to look like? What is the policy? What are the parameters? It is nowhere at the moment. It is just a

park that has fallen through the cracks with nobody taking responsibility for it. Because the residents were at one point complaining about the dog waste that was being left around, the Town got involved just for health and safety reasons, not because it was under our umbrella, but more as good Samaritans." Councillor Gaertner, who sits on the Parks and Rec

Committee, said she could not speak on its behalf as the report is still outstanding but she said one of her primary concerns was figuring out some way to survey the users of the park. If the majority of the people are indeed from Aurora and not from further afield, the Town is going to have to figure out having to put it under its umbrella, as well as decide how it will be funded, she

said. "I think it would be nice to see a dog park, but the dog park that exists there is wet because it is in a low-lying area," she added. "It's wet and muddy and it is not terrific. If I had a dog, I would love to be able to allow the dog to be able to run off leash [in the park] but there's a lot more that goes into it than putting some fill on the ground and letting dogs run around."

Environmental advocate Gordon Barnes said he is aware Parks and Recreation Director Al Downey has, from the beginning tried to get an organization structure in place to take charge of the dog park. Finding volunteers for it was "elusive", he said. The long-time volunteer at the Aurora Community Arboretum added the dog park, which sits on land allocated to the arboretum, has not been an issue from their perspective in some time.

"We haven't caused a problem to each other, that I know of, since they got organized with the green pins for picked up dog poop," he said. "In the early days there was a great deal of dog poop in bags that got chucked over the fence on one side or the other, but that has been cleared up for at least a year or two."



Aurorans came out in droves over the last few days to enjoy the unseasonably warm weather. While others jogged, walked, biked, and walked their dogs along the McKenzie Marsh boardwalk on the Nokiidaa Trail, others took their furry friends (inset) to the nearby leash free dog park. Reports are expected to come back this spring on the future management of the popular park.

Auroran photo by David Falconer

Arboretum plans a walk to remember

By Brock Weir

Trees have been planted in memory of loved ones in the Aurora Arboretum almost since its inception - but if one new idea comes to pass, the place could soon host a celebration of life. Councillor Sandra Humfries has had preliminary discussions with the Aurora Arboretum board to make the idea reality. If it comes to fruition, the autumn event would encompass not just a memorial walk through the arboretum, but also a festive event including local entertainment, singing, and possibly a recitation of names of those already memorialized prior to trekking through the green space. "It's just an idea to honour some of the people we never want to forget," said Councillor Humfries. "The reason I started thinking about this is I went to a butterfly release after my mother passed away. We all got together, there was music, and we just got to share and talk about the people that have gone. It was a nice early morning thing and it just made me feel good. We have a beautiful arboretum here, so why not do something here." The continued growth of

Flora Aurora, a collection of flowering plants which promises to make for a dazzling array of colour over the next few years, is another aspect Councillor Humfries said finds "exciting." That area to the north of the arboretum could act as a focal point to the entertainment before the walk, and bring awareness to the beauty of the project. "It will be a beautiful hour or hour-and-a-half type event where people could come and have a memory, an ode to an individual who may have passed away. The details on how the can participate and what they can do will all be finalized." The idea has also captured the attention of the Arboretum's Gordon Barnes. He said a good example of what the Councillor has in mind is activities often held at the arboretum in Guelph. The city's Memorial Forest is populated by trees planted in memory of loved ones through a deal with a local funeral home. "Every year in early September they have a Sunday afternoon service in the Memorial Forest," said Mr. Barnes. "I went there a couple of years ago and it is a fantastic event. They had well over 1,000 people that came out for the afternoon

and the Salvation Army Band was there. Representatives from all the religious groups in Town came and it was a big deal. "We're looking at something of that nature and the


obvious location for it will be in flora Aurora near the ball diamonds in front of the Leisure Complex. If we aim that to be in the late spring or early summer then all of that stuff will be in bloom."

Arboretum charts future next week

By Brock Weir

Volunteers, supporters, and all interested parties in the Aurora Community Arboretum are invited to Town Hall next Monday, March 26, to hear plans for the Arboretum's future. The meeting gets underway at 7.30 p.m. in the Council Chamber and will provide the group an opportunity to look back on their successes over the past year and look forward to the projects yet to come. According to the Arboretum's Gordon Barnes, one of the biggest successes in 2011 was the completion of Phase two of Flora Aurora. The next phase will begin this spring with some ground turning at the south end of the conservation area. "We have been planting now since 1996 and more and more people are discovering where the Arboretum

is," said Mr. Barnes. "A lot of people who have been using the area are now discovering that walking up the valleys is, in fact, walking up the Arboretum. The public is getting more and more interested and it is getting more and more use as indicated by the trails. "The recreation planners did their research and discovered that many people were interested in walking on trails and all that sort of thing and we continue to open up more grass trails that get out to where we're putting the trees in. We will be working diligently this next year to get more information on the trees and identify what's what." The Aurora Community Arboretum will hold its annual Community Planting Day on Saturday, May 5. 850 small trees and shrubs will be available for planting from 10 a.m.



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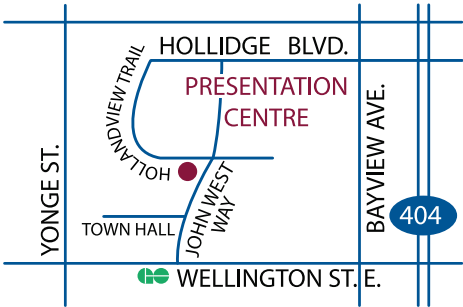
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REAL ESTATE MARKET...



Bringing Design to Life

By JANICE CLEMENTS

Preparing for the spring...market

I don't want to jinx it so I'll cross my fingers when I say it feels like spring has sprung!

For some homeowners the warmer weather stirs up the desire to rake the front lawn of winter grime, clean out the linen closet and open the windows to let fresh air flow. For others, longer days and sunshine means working double time to begin the process of getting their home prepped for sale.

Looking to list? Maximize your property's potential value by creating an environment in your home that any buyer can envision themselves living. Sound easy? Well, it can be easier said than done if you look around at the personal clutter and collection that has made its way into your life over the years.

It's that very clutter that can be distracting for potential buyers, so priority must be given to removing things that represent the property as *your home*. Often the thought of stripping away our most personal treasures and homogenizing our home into being merely a house, can be difficult.

You can make the process easier by breaking the mental and physical work down into three stages: 1) De-clutter, 2) Repair, and 3) Set the Stage.

For our purposes, we will discuss what for many can be the most daunting part of the process: Stage 1 - De-cluttering. If the thought of a thorough clean out makes your head spin, start with a priority list and these helpful tips:

1. **Give yourself PLENTY of time.** Don't leave the clutter clearing until the last minute. If you start now, there's still time to prepare your home for the spring market.
2. **Divide your home into sections** and attack one at a time. There's nothing more daunting than being faced with an entire house that needs help. Divide the work up one room at a time to help make the task more manageable. When you start clearing out a room, don't stop until it's done. **DO NOT** under any circumstances move items from one room to another. You're just delaying the inevitable.
3. **Be merciless.** We ALL get caught up in the "It-meant-a-lot-to-me-15-years-ago" line of thinking. If it's something you haven't seen or used in a year (or dare I say, since you moved into your home) get rid of it.
4. **Give things a new home.** You'd be surprised at the items people will pay good money for. If your cupboard and bookcases are jammed with things your kids no longer want, it's great fodder for sale! Better yet, consider donating some of the larger items to organizations that will put them to good use, like your local Habitat for Humanity ReStore.
5. **Enlist help.** Recruit your kids and you'll find that weeding through the clutter can also be a great way to stroll down memory lane. You'll be able to reminisce about life in your home as you sort through items that

bring back wonderful memories.

6. **Follow the ABCs (Always Be Clearing).** Establish a new rule of not leaving things around and vow at least for the time being, to not toss things into the spare room, spare closet or spare drawer.

7. **Pitch it now or later?** Not sure if you should hold onto a larger item until you get into your new space? Think about the properties of the item: is it multi-functional? Could it be used differently and effectively in your new home? If so, it might be something worth storing until you get into your new space and can see it in a new light.

8. **No more!** Commit to not purchasing anything new (especially larger items) until after you've sold your home. The less you have to store, the better.

9. **Keep only what's necessary.** Remember that space sells, stuff doesn't. It might be uncomfortable to think about, but when buyers are looking through your home, they will likely open cabinet doors and kitchen drawers. Filling these places with "hide-it" stuff will take away from how spacious your home is.

10. **It'll all be worth it!** Remember the more you do now to prepare your home for sale, the better position you'll be in when it comes time to move. You'll be moving less stuff, will pay for less storage, and can move into your new space with only the items you really cherish.

Watch for my next column on tackling the repairs often needed around the house to ensure potential buyers see your property as a true gem!.



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Are you a family looking to buy a new home?
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If so, you are facing one of the most common dilemmas of Canadian home buyers today.

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To apply to be on the show please email: casting@forcefour.com



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ARE YOU URBAN OR SUBURBAN?

HGTV Canada's Urban Suburban calls for Participants for Upcoming Episodes to Air This Fall.

The hit HGTV Canada series Urban Suburban is back for a second season to help prospective home buyers from Victoria to Halifax faced with a tough decision: should they make their home in the heart of the city, or will a suburban lifestyle suit them best?

Currently filming in locations from coast to coast, this popular series is seeking dynamic Canadian families and couples interested in tackling their real-life real estate dilemmas on camera for the series set to air on HGTV Canada this fall.

Produced by Force Four Entertainment, Inc, Urban Suburban is hosted by real estate agents and siblings Sarah Daniels and Philip DuMoulin. In each half-hour episode, a family or couple that can't agree between a home in the city or one in the suburbs turn to

Sarah and Philip who go head-to-head to find the properties that they think their clients will love. Sarah takes on the suburbs, while Philip champions the city, and after touring homes the buyers pick their urban or suburban favourites by factoring in price, space, convenience and lifestyle.

Eventually, they decide on the perfect home and neighbourhood for their needs - and either Sarah or Philip will come out a winner.

Are you trying to convince your partner that city living is the way to go, or a quiet suburban life will give you more bang for your buck? Enthusiastic Canadian families and couples that are looking for a new home, but are torn between urban and suburban are invited to apply to appear in upcoming episodes.

Applicants should send an email to casting@forcefour.com with the following:

- The reasons why they are moving
- The areas they are considering and why

- Approximate budget
 - A photo of the family
 - Contact information
- Vancouver-based Force Four Entertainment Inc. began operations in 1983, and has now grown into one of Canada's most successful and respected television production companies.
- Force Four has produced more than 300 hours of primetime broadcasting programming, earning accolades on the national and international stage.
- The company's highly successful television programs include lifestyle, documentary, and scripted programming that is sold and aired around the world. Force Four has been awarded the prestigious Peabody Award, 10 Gemini Awards, and over 25 Gemini nominations and is owned by President Rob Bromley, Executive Producer John Ritchie, and director of Business Affairs Gillian Lowry. For more information, visit www.forcefour.com.



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still setting records



The Aurora Chamber of Commerce Home Show Committee, above, is getting ready to “Get ‘er Done.”

The Aurora Chamber of Commerce Home Show Committee getting ready to "Get 'er Done"

The recent sunny weather has many of us thinking about the renovations and other decor updates we'd like to do around the house this spring and summer. The Aurora Home Show is a great way to spot the new trends, get some expert guidance and purchase a few new things to get started on your plans.

The Aurora Chamber of Commerce has been running the Home Show for over 25 years.

"It's a great way for the residents of Aurora to learn more about the amazing businesses and contractors we have here in Town and the surrounding region," says Bob Ince, President of the Chamber Board of Directors. "This year's theme? Get 'er done!"

"Our current Home Show Committee has been together for several years," says Robin Taylor-Smith, Committee Chair. "That has allowed us to listen to the community and make improvements each year. For example, making it affordable as a family event is important, so we've kept the admission at a toonie

again this year.

"There's always a lot to see and do at the Aurora Home Show. The show booths offer you some great ideas to make improvements around your home and garden. You might even find a great promotion to save money. There will be face painting for the kids, a few informal concerts by folk singer John Lemme, and an amazing feature garden. And again this year, the Optimists will be running the Chamber Pub & Grill - we hear that the bacon-on-a bun is Chamber President Bob Ince's favourite."

Each year the Home Show is held at the Aurora Community Centre, 1 Community Centre Lane, just off Aurora Heights drive. This year's show runs Friday, April 13, 2.00 - 9.00 p.m., Saturday, April 14, 9.00 a.m. - 6.00 p.m., and Sunday, April 15, 10.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.

Paint? Check. Brushes? Check. Paint rollers? Check. Okay, now you're ready to Get 'er Done!



Real Estate Insights

By STEFANI P. KONIDIS

Aurora is a strong seller's market

The current real estate market is setting records!

For the first time in history, the average sale price for the Toronto Real Estate Board surpassed \$500,000.

In Aurora, the average sale price for February 2012 was \$590,019 which is up from \$550,137 in February of last year. The statistics show a strong seller's market and, with spring in our midst, it will be interesting to watch just how heated this market will get.

Spring, historically, has always been the longest and often the most productive selling season for buyers and sellers in residential real estate. Some people believe the spring market starts when green grass and flowers start showing up, but, the fact is, the sooner into the New Year a property gets listed, the better as there are always buyers looking for good properties.

This philosophy has indeed made the spring selling season even longer with listings coming up as early as the second week of January.

There is nothing like a deep freeze and piles of snow to affect the motivation of buyers, right? Seriously, wouldn't buyers rather be at home curled up with a book or out skiing while the temperatures plummet, not driving in icy and snowy conditions to get to an open house?

Most people would agree, however, that serious buyers, who need to make a change, or have been targeting a specific neighbourhood, will buy whenever an appropriate or desirable property becomes available. Climate won't affect their purchase, and if the property is priced well, it could make for a fast sale.

The mild climate this winter could be a factor in the real estate market breaking records. More importantly, the strength of the real estate market over the past few years is attributed to the historically low borrowing rates across Canada. Affordability is still very much the driving force in our Canadian real estate economy and will, no doubt, keep things steady in our market moving forward. If - and when - the rates rise, the market will enter a more balanced state.

It is notably this time of year that buyers start to wander off their treadmills and back out into the streets to start combing new neighbourhoods for their dream home. As the days get longer, our properties are seen in a new light and so the spring cleaning begins. As a seller, now is the chance to maximize the ROI due to the demand for well maintained, upgraded and turn-key homes that are coveted by buyers looking to move before or during the summer months.

In as much as the seller may control what product comes to market and in what condition, buyers tend to demand closing dates that coincide with school closings and summer vacations. This is, in essence, a major influence in why the spring market is busy and why now is the time to be getting your property ready for market.

- Here is a must-do list for getting your home ready for the spring market:
1. Purge and organize - Try, as much as possible to make your house look like 'Martha' lives here. Never under estimate the power of suggestion. (I.E.: if you lived here, your house could look like this too!)
 2. Paint - This is the most effective and inexpensive way to give any room in your house a lift. Pick from a neutral palette and get advice from a pro. Find a good paint store representative that knows colour!
 3. Clean and clean some more - Seems like an obvious tip but cleaning can, in fact, be overlooked. This task may be worth bringing in a professional to do, as they will reach places in your house you may even forget about. Window washing is a must in spring, as a clean window will let in more natural light.
 4. Handy-man Special - Take an inventory of the long to-do list for your property and get things done that any ordinary buyer will possibly touch or see while viewing your home. Bring in a trusted friend to do a walk-through or ask your sales representative for guidance.
 5. Curb Appeal - You only get one chance to make a good first impression! As soon as your property goes on the market, potential buyers will be driving by for a first glance of what could be their new home. Make it count! Clear the front walk and gardens as much as possible, take down Christmas lights, add a container with seasonal greens or colour and make sure you change your light bulbs so your house number can be seen at dusk!

Happy house selling!

Stefani Konidis is a sales representative with Chestnut Park Real Estate Limited, Brokerage, Exclusive Affiliate of Christie's International Real Estate. She has been trading in real estate for 12 years and works with partner, Kim Nichols, sales representative and they both live and work in King and Aurora. She can be reached online at localagents.blogspot.com.

Market Data for all home types for February 2012 (Collected from Toronto Real Estate Board)

	Aurora	York Region	Toronto Real Estate Board
Average Sale Price	\$590,019	\$584,973	\$502,508 *
Median Sale Price	\$543,000	\$530,000	\$416,150
New Listings	128	2283	12,684
# of Transactions	74	1346	7032
Ratio for Sale/List price	98%	99%	99%
Average Days on Market	22	22	24
Months of Inventory	1.9	1.9	2.2

* February 2011 average sale price for Toronto Real Estate Board was \$453,329



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Week of March 20, 2012

Local speed skater slides into championship spot

**By George Simpson
Special to The Auroran**

Ask most Canadian kids which Olympic winter sport has been the most successful for Canadian athletes, and they will likely tell you that the answer is hockey.

Aurora resident Austin Hendy will tell you that it is actually speed skating.

Austin is a seventh grade student at Light of Christ Elementary School in Aurora who has been playing hockey for over seven years. However, about six years ago, Austin took up short track speed skating along with his brother Dakota after hearing about the sport from one of his friends. "It sounded like it would be a pretty neat sport to try," said Austin, after watching the Canadian speed skaters like Charles Hamelin and Clara Hughes win multiple medals during the

Winter Olympic Games in Torino.

Austin skates with the Newmarket Jets, a growing club that has a great record for producing top talent. "Some of our alumni have gone on to be among the top long track prospects on the Canadian tour," said club president Bill Allen. "Austin is currently ranked third among all midget class skaters in Ontario. In fact, we have a total of four Jets ranked in the top three provincially in their respective divisions. That is quite an achievement for a small club."

While he still enjoys playing hockey, Austin has focused his training on skating with the long blades.

"I really love the speed in short track" says Austin. "The high speed along with the race strategy makes it fun."

Unlike long track speed skating where the competitors race

against each other on a large oval for the best time, short track involves groups of four to six skaters racing around an oval in an indoor ice rink.

"Anything can happen in short track," said Austin. "You have to make quick decisions during a race to make a pass when you can and watch out for the other guys. Sometimes there are big crashes, but that is all part of the sport."

Like his fellow skaters, Austin enjoys the thrill of the race and strives to not only win his races, but improve his time each time he goes out.

Austin's success and the success of his fellow Jets is due largely to the club's development program under the guidance of head coach Paula McConvey. A former figure skater and a track coach, Coach Paula has been with the Jets for 8 years.

"Austin is a motivated athlete

who trains hard and has been skating consistently well this season," she said.

In past seasons, Austin was known for his speed in the shorter races, capitalizing on his explosive starts. Continued training both on and off the ice has increased his endurance and has improved his time in the longer distances.

"To prepare for this season, I did lots of running and dry land training in the summer to improve my conditioning," Austin said.

It has certainly paid off this year.

Skating on the elite Ontario Cup circuit, Austin has consistently placed at the top of his age class at the four Ontario Cup meets this year. With one first, two thirds and one fourth place finish, it is his best season yet.

"Winning the gold medal at the first Cup meet hosted in Newmarket was really special for me," added a beaming Austin.

The season finished up with

the Provincial Championships in Kingston at the end of February. While not a stranger to the championships, Austin was excited to be entering the final race sitting in third place overall. Fellow Jets and friends hoped Austin has success on the track and continues his winning ways - and he did!

When all was said and done, Austin placed third overall in the Midget Division for all skaters in Ontario and fellow Auroran Taylor Simpson finished eighth in the Juvenile division.



Aurora speed skater Austin Hendy recently skated into a championship position in Kingston.

Aurora Novice AE Scores

March 13

Aurora VS Bradford 10-1

83 Lucas DePalma 3G, 77 David Iacovetta 2G, 87 George Rappos Jr 2G, 1A, 40 Riley Pearl 2G, 2 Matteo Rossi 1G, 3A, 42 Ayden Whilby 2A, 81 Noah Ruscica 2A, 3 Andrew Flores 2A.

March 16

Bradford VS Aurora 1-12

3 Andrew Flores 1G, 77 David Iacovetta 3G, 1A, 87 George Rappos Jr 1G, 2 Matteo Rossi 3G,

1A, 5 Ryan Weeks 1G, 3A, 83 Lucas DePalma 2G, 4A, 42 Ayden Whilby 1G, 4A, 4 Ryan Dunbar 1A, 81 Noah Ruscica 1A, 10 Nicholas Petinarelis 2A.

March 17

Aurora VS Bradford 7-1

87 George Rappos Jr 3G, 77 David Iacovetta 2G, 42 Ayden Whilby 1G, 83 Lucas DePalma 1G, 1A, 40 Riley Pearl 3A, 5 Matteo Rossi 1A, 33 Chris Childerhose 1A.

Aurora Minor Hockey Association

**Results, up to
March 18, 2012**



HOUSE LEAGUE

603 Optimist Club of Aurora 5 - Jayson Perkins 2G 1A, Michael Vivian 1G, Austin Hendy 1G 1A, Brock Stewart 1G, Lennon Dranfield 1A, Jason Cox 1A, Jacob Turriff 1A. **602 Aurora Home Hardware Bldg Ctr 3** - Tristan Hicks 2G, Andrew Hammond 1G, Brendan Ross 1A, Matthew Parkin 1A, Liam DeSouza 1A, Adam Wochenmarkt 1A.

REP LEAGUE

Tyke - Select B - Newmarket 3.
Aurora 0.

Tyke - Select B - Newmarket 2.
Aurora 1.

Novice AE - Aurora 10.
Bradford 1.

Minor Atom A - Nobleking 4.

Aurora 1.

Atom AA - Aurora 4.
Whitby 1.

Atom AA - Aurora 2.
Whitby 2.

Atom AA - Whitby 5.
Aurora 2.

Atom A - Nobleking 5.
Aurora 3 -

Sam Ashton 1G, Blair Crabbe 1G, Dylan Prescott 1G, Craig Therkildsen 1A, Matthew McConnell 1A, Andrew Park 1A, Anthony Iacovetta 1A.

Minor Pee wee AA - Aurora 3 -

Jaedon Jackson 1G, Ben Fleischaker 1G, Matthew Hollett 1G, Brandon Vaughan 1A, Nicholas Rountes 1A, Anthony

Magnante 1A. **York Toros 2.**

Minor Pee wee AA - Aurora 3 - Ty Boisseau 2G, Jaedon Jackson 1G, Nicholas Keller 2A, Anthony Capraro 1A.

Toronto Royals 2.

Minor Pee wee A - Newmarket 2.

Aurora 2.

Minor Pee wee A - Newmarket 3.

Aurora 2.

Minor Pee wee A - Newmarket 5.

Aurora 2.

Minor Pee wee A - Newmarket 4.

Aurora 1.

Pee wee A - Innisfil 6.

Aurora 4.

Pee wee A - Innisfil 3.

Aurora 1.

Pee wee AE - Barrie 5.

Aurora 1.

Pee wee AE - Aurora 2.

Stouffville

1.

Pee wee AE - Aurora 6.

Barrie 3.

Minor Bantam AE - Aurora 6 -

Lucas Ruscica 1G 1A, Christian Pearce 2G, Nicolas Pearce 2G, Spencer White 1G 1A

Nicholas Sansalone 1A, Michael Jollimore 1A, Adam Wilson 1A.

Georgina 2.

Bantam AA - TNT 3.

Aurora 1 -

Adam Newell 1G, Lucas James 1A.

Minor Midget AE - Richmond Hill 4.

Aurora 1 - Alexander Harrison 1A,

Nathan Nealon 1G.

Minor Midget AE - Richmond Hill 4.

Aurora 2 - Nathan Nealon 1G, Ryan

McGulrick 1A, Graham Robinson 1G,

Jonah Blaser 1A.

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Hockey is changing, and you're the problem

Young referees are being targeted by verbal and physical attacks and it's leaving hockey with few referees every year - an OPINION by Auroran sports reporter KEVIN MICHIE:

Hockey is a wonderful sport. The passion that's demonstrated by the players and fans represents the game in a way no other sport can. It is an overwhelmingly emotional game that it is, almost unanimously, the favourite sport of this entire country.

With that in mind, I am worried about the sanctity that hockey holds in Canadian culture. I fear it risks losing its place as Canada's national pastime.

And no, I'm not talking about the rise in diagnosed concussions. That's a discussion for another time.

I'm also not referring to the fact that there are no Ontario born hockey players playing for the sport's wealthiest and most talked about team, the Toronto Maple Leafs. Sorry Don, maybe later.

I could list a couple more areas of the game that are giving hockey fans some anxiety, but none of them measure up to what I think may be slowly chiseling away at the fabric of the game.

Hockey as we know it will change in a noticeable and dramatic way if there are no referees, and that is the direction that I think the sport is heading.

The abuse that minor hockey

referees take on any given night, in any arena across Canada, is escalating to the point where the kids are no longer interested in the extra skating time that comes with the perk of being a referee.

At this point, my index finger is up and ready to pin some blame, and you can probably guess whom I'm referring to.

Mr. Hockey Dad and Mrs. Hockey Mom...you are the problem.

My judgment stems from experience as a former minor hockey player, a current minor hockey referee in my seventh year, and also as an impartial media member.

A recent study by the Clinical Journal of Sports Medicine concluded that referees are fighting a losing battle when it comes to control of a game, and the respect, or lack thereof, supposed to be received.

"Referees suggest that they are both physically and verbally abused," the study said. "This potential lack of respect and hostility for referees from coaches, parents and fans creates an environment that may put all on-ice participants at higher risk for injury."

Almost half of the officials surveyed, which was in the hundreds, said they have been the victim of physical violence themselves, ranging from cross-checks to the head to a fan's sucker-punch on a referee.

Is there any wonder why approximately one-third of on-

ice officials quit after their first year?

Starting in September, I began coverage of the Aurora Tigers of the Ontario Junior A Hockey League, the Alliston Hornets, Schomberg Cougars and Caledon Golden Hawks of the Georgian Bay Mid-Ontario Junior C Hockey League, the Lefroy Wave of the Greater Metro Hockey League and several other minor hockey tournaments across York and Simcoe Region.

The hockey has been great and the players and front office staff have been a treat to work with.

However, I have found myself increasingly isolated in the stands. Parents and fans alike just don't seem to see the game the way I see it. And I don't mean in terms of how a team's performance or what on-ice systems are effective.

It sounds as though every single call, or non-call, that an on-ice official makes, or doesn't make, comes with incredible scrutiny attached to it. It seems there never is a good call made.

Now, I understand that fans will blurt the occasional, "Oh, come on ref!" I am guilty of that as well. It's just a reactionary phrase to express a little frustration.

However, when a fan comes down to the edge of the referee locker room to let the referee know that he should, "quit the game while you're ahead because you're so terrible," I get frustrated.

This past year during a minor hockey game in Aurora, a fan had to be excused from the arena after throwing a garbage bin on the ice because he was upset at a referee who penalized his son's rep team. What teenager, in their right mind, would want to continue officiating while having waste thrown at them?

I watched as a middle-aged man berated an official, using more than a few four-letter words, with a 5-year-old girl sitting in front of him. This led the young girl to call the referee a, "stinky pants." The comedic insult may just be the beginning, however. Monkey-hear, monkey-do.

Many fans and parents will counter that these young men and women need to have thicker skin when it comes to refereeing hockey. If a teacher cannot control two-dozen or so 10 year olds students, then why are they a teacher? If a doctor is queasy at the sight of blood, why is he or she a doctor?

Here are the differences between those employment positions.

Minor hockey referees get paid, on average, about \$25 a game. Doctors may make an annual salary of \$75,000. I'm just ball-parking. Teachers go through years of extensive and elaborate training to start a career, not just a hobby. Hockey officials go to a recertification course once every year, and pay around \$150 to do so.

The same skill sets that are

required to pursue a career, are not the same skill sets used when learning the ropes as a hockey referee. Teachers and doctors are weeded out of a large talent pool to find the exceptional candidates in which to take an employment position.

Senior hockey officials can't be so picky. If Hockey Canada weeded out every referee who felt irked by a comment from a coach or fan, there would be no organized hockey in this country.

Young hockey referees should be treated as a precious resource. However, we are currently exhausting that precious resource faster than it can be reproduced.

If hockey referees continue

to feel verbal and physical attacks from players, coaches and, especially, fans then the slippery slope argument leads me to believe that hockey in Canada will, ever so slowly, begin to dissipate. It will most likely never reach a rapture type status, but the face of hockey may change in a very dramatic and significant way, unknown to us right now.

The next time you disagree with call by a referee, you can moan and grunt and maybe toss a quiet slur in the middle, but don't attack an official. It slows down the progress of the sport and it will never improve you or your child's hockey experience.



AN INFUSION OF SUPPORT FOR BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS OF YORK
Mike and Joe Rizzi (left and centre) of J & S Services presented a cheque for \$500 last week to Grant Peckford, Executive Director of BBBSY. The money will go towards their annual Volunteer Appreciation Picnic on June 23.

Auroran photo by David Falconer

Salvation Army aims to provide for body and soul

By Wendy Soloduik

What do you think of when you hear "Salvation Army"?

Like many, I'm sure you think of the Christmas Kettle Drive, or Thrift Stores, or helping the less fortunate. Maybe you think of the largest, non-government independent social services provider in the world.

Although it is all that, the Salvation Army of Central York Region (SACYR), which serves the communities of Aurora, Newmarket and East Gwillimbury, is working to become known for more. By expanding their umbrella of community and social services, the SACYR aims to "expand the definition of 'necessities of life'" and provide for Central York residents - body, and soul.

In a declining economy, fraught with changes to the family dynamic, volunteers with the SACYR noticed a tremendous need for outreach services, to aid families from the inside out.

Community and Family Service outreach coordinator, Raymond Varkki, told The Auroran of the SACYR's faith based community and social services (with all programs open to residents of all religious denominations).

"When you look around the area we live, you see an affluent community," said Varkki. "You never know what is happening in someone's home. We don't know our neighbours they way we used to, and so many people are suffering in silence. We want people in Central York to know we are here, and that we provide a non-judgmental place for them to come and develop the life skills they need to get through a difficult time, or simply, to meet other people in a similar situation."

Programs offered by the

SACYR include:

- The Mercy Street Monday Drop In and Friday Night Programs provide teens with fun, welcoming, safe places to play sports, connect and socialize with caring adult supervision and mentoring.
- The Conversation Café welcomes new Canadians to a comfortable, informal environment to practice and improve their English. 40% of York Region residents say English is not their first language.
- Day and Special Interest Camps makes a summer camping experience possible and affordable for youth aged 7 to 12 years, providing a rare opportunity to commune with nature and have respite from the urban challenges they face each day.
- The Northridge Co-ed Scout Group models character development, good citizenship and leadership training in an environment of fun and learning for boys and girls aged 7 to 17 years. The program provides an exciting, enriching adventure through Scouting.
- Overcoming Anger: An 8-week program to assist adults to cope with anger in a more positive and effective manner. A new component-The Red Cap Program-was specifically developed to address bullying issues in schools.
- Mood Disorders: A peer support group that shares knowledge, resources and information in a supportive, confidential environment to help alleviate and overcome the symptoms of your mood disorder.
- Divorce Care: A support group led by people who understand the stress and difficulties associated with divorce. Gain information and resources to help deal with the past pain and

begin rebuilding your future.

- Grief Share: A seminar support group for people grieving the loss of someone close. Be part of a group of people who understand and offer comfort and encouragement during this difficult time.
- Eating Right: An 8-week program based on holistic nutrition teaching you how to improve your life naturally through healthier eating and cooking by meal planning, preparation and economic shopping.
- Get Fit: A weekly fitness program focused on walking and stretching. This fun, social group can help you ease into an exercise regimen to help you in weight loss, maintenance, health and wellness.
- Budgeting by the Book:

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"The Salvation Army in Central York Region delivers benefits far beyond the basic human needs of food and shelter," the SACYR said in a statement. "By focusing on skills and capabilities, programs like Grief Share and Financial Wellness offer healing and restoration, empower individuals to make good choices and enable them to realize their hopes and dreams."

"By the year 2026, youth and seniors will comprise 41% of York Region's population - a total of 525,000 individuals. The risk of isolation and falling below

the poverty line grows incrementally after the age of 64.

"Any one of these situations can impact our ability to live a healthy and fulfilling life. All of

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THE AURORAN Arts & Culture

Artists welcome new public art policy

By Brock Weir

Aurora artists are welcoming the news that one per cent of Aurora's future capital budgets could be devoted to public art in new municipal buildings.

As The Auroran reported last week, the Region of York made the request in a series of modifications to the Town's Official Plan, of which the Region is the final approval authority. With the planned addition of four new municipal buildings in the next few years -

including a youth centre and a new library building - this could result in a \$350,000 pot dedicated to public art.

According to Marco Ramunno, Aurora's Director of Planning, public art funding was always to be included in the official plan, but the recommendations put forward by the Region are more specific and uniform with municipalities across the Region.

The raised a fair number of questions at Council when it was presented earlier this

month, including arguments from Councillor Evelyn Buck who said while she supported public art, she did not agree with it being included in an official plan. The drive for public art, she said, should come from the public itself and be dictated by a committee to establish just what constitutes public art and where it should be placed.

"We have nothing to offer guidance," said Councillor Buck at the time, noting that a public art committee was discussed in the previous term of Council

when they approved the installation of the Peace Flame Tree sculpture outside Town Hall's main entrance.

"I think that is where this movement should come from, from the bottom up. When people in this community start to think that's what we should do, yes, let's have a public policy."

The artist behind the Peace Flame Tree, however, was very encouraged by the recommendations from the Region.

"The decision was at the time when they accepted the Peace Flame tree to be placed permanently in Aurora was they were going to create an exterior arts policy," said Aurora artist Deborah Campo. "Now I assume they're getting to the point of creating one, which is fantastic because that will benefit future artists. It is just tremendously great."

"Aurora is moving ahead in that area where it was a little bit behind, simply because Toronto had an exterior arts policy like Uxbridge and Orangeville."

Public art has been a passion for Ms. Campo ever since plans were first devised for the new Aurora Public Library at Yonge and Church when she and several other artists advocated for a sculpture garden to be included within the library complex. Having something more specific and firm would be a "tremendous" boost not only to local artists themselves, but also to the Town as a whole, she argued.

That being said, she added she was looking forward to seeing the finer details come into place such as how this money would be divided up, whether there would be honorariums for artists, and whether there would be any public-private partnerships on art pieces, including corporate sponsorships similar to the structure of Orangeville's sculpture walk.

"[This would] encourage further cultural tourism to come to Aurora once there is exterior art pieces on display," she said. "It lends a beautification. It's just a great move forward for the Town of Aurora. I'm looking forward to the development of the exterior arts policy."



Aurora artist Deborah Campo, pictured above perusing silent auction items at the recent Girls Night Out fundraiser, has welcomed the Region's recommendation for more money for art in public spaces as a boost not only to artists but to the local economy.

Auroran photo by David Falconer

Next steps for Town, Cultural Centre to be released this week

By Brock Weir

Information on the next phase of the negotiations between the Town and the Aurora Cultural Centre to draft a new contract is slated to be released Friday after two further meetings this week.

At press time, representatives from the Town - Mayor Geoffrey Dawe, CAO Neil Garbe, and Parks and Recreation Director Al Downey - as well as the Cultural Centre Board - Susan Shaw, Craig Mather, and Frank Pulumbarit - had met three times over the past two weeks to discuss terms. Two more meetings are scheduled for later this week before the draft terms of reference are released in advance of next Tuesday's Council meeting.

The two parties were tasked late last month to work together to come up with the terms of reference for a committee of Council, Board Members, and perhaps other interested parties, that would address many of the concerns both sides had with their current agreement.

At a marathon Council meeting on February 28, the Aurora Cultural Centre was faced with a motion from Councillors John Abel and Paul Pirri calling for the termination of the current agreement with 12 months notice to begin negotiations for a new one. The "termination" word was removed from

the motion and ultimately deferred until March 27.

Speaking to The Auroran on Friday, Mayor Geoffrey Dawe said the discussions thus far had been "very productive." Both sides, he added, were committed to delivering a report back to Council on the date set.

"I think we will be able to present a pretty complete package [on Tuesday]," said Mayor Dawe, adding that the one month delay has managed to "bring down the tone" in the debate on the future of the Cultural Centre agreement, as well as foster "a little more objectivity in the process."

Rob Layton, president of the Aurora Cultural Centre Board said too that the feedback he had received from the three board members at the negotiation table had been positive. While he said they know there will be some sticking points, they are "being careful and diligent."

"We know from the public statements of the Council people involved generally what they're looking for and we think there is a path forward on all of those," said Mr. Layton, noting that this time has also given the Centre more clear vision of the future.

"You could tell by how we prepared for the previous Council meeting that we were worried," he said. "I think now we're back on track, we see the work that needs to be done in

front of us. It was somewhat unknown previously what we were going to have to do and where we were going to be placed. Now we see the work in front of us. The board members are a hard working bunch of volunteers and they are all committed to keeping the Centre going, so the quick answer is we have a determined and positive outlook on getting this done."

In the meantime since "termination" was removed from the motion on the table last month, bookings are going ahead "full steam" at the centre and fundraising events are continuing, said Mr. Layton. What they're not moving ahead with at the moment is their business development fundraising in looking for sponsorship and corporate underwriting.

"We want to have a very clear story," said Mr. Layton.

As for any talk of a communications issue between the Cultural Centre, its supporters, as well as the Town and its Council, that escalated the situation or even created misinformation on the future of the Centre, Mr. Layton dismisses the notion.

"Our message was clear," he said. "There was a resolution tabled to terminate our contract so we were addressing that. Our purpose for bringing that forward, and not diminishing what the effect of that would be, was a clear message."

Understanding reached on aquisition of Aurora Collections

By Brock Weir

Aurora's historic collections could be acquired by the Town in just over a year, if plans slated to be outlined this week are followed through.

A memorandum of understanding between the Town of Aurora and the Aurora Historical Society is expected to be presented at this Tuesday's General Committee meeting.

The memo details the communications thus far between the two parties on the transfer of the Aurora Collection to the Town. Such an agreement, if put into action, would include permanent exhibition space for the heritage collections, accord-

ing to the memo.

"As a result of ongoing communications between the Aurora Historical Society (AHS) board and the Town of Aurora regarding the future management and ownership of the existing artefacts and archives, both parties have a commitment to the important role the Aurora Collection plays in the preservation and education of Aurora's heritage."

Several additional items are outlined as part of this understanding, including reiterating the \$50,000 the Town of Aurora has contributed towards the project, the continued access to the archive facility (which is now at the Aurora Cultural Centre),

and that "a year round public exhibition has existed in the past and is desired in the future."

The next step will be the development of an exhibition and management agreement for the Aurora Collection.

Next month and through May, the Town and the AHS will take on a third party to appraise and do an inventory of the collection. This will be followed by several months of research on how other municipalities handle similar arrangements, and a presentation to the public of the results by the end of March 2013.

"Staff have been in discussions with the AHS for a few

months regarding the future management and ownership of the existing artefacts and archives," said Al Downey, Aurora's Director of Parks and Recreation, in a report which will be before Councillors on Tuesday night. "Both parties have a commitment to the important role the Aurora Collection plays in the preservation and education of Aurora's heritage."

"Staff for both parties have met on a regular basis and have detailed each project separately being the transfer agreement and the exhibition and management agreement. The process for both will take approximately one year to complete."



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Wednesday March 21, 2012 | 7pm

"The Worst Place Inside the Corporation, and Other Stories of the Railway Station Neighbourhood"
By Jacqueline Stuart
Admission by donation; light refreshments

Great Artist Piano Series presents

Soyeon Lee

Friday March 23, 2012 | 8pm

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SM4RT Living Family Challenge starts April 1

By Wendy Soloduik

The York Region SM4RT Living Family Challenge is now underway. The creative component of the SM4RT Living cam-

paign (an umbrella concept designed to shape the next 25 years of Waste Management in York Region), the Challenge is one of six ways the Regional Municipality of York is get-

ting residents involved with the future of waste management. Applications for the Challenge, which encourages residents to reduce the amount of waste created by

their household by maximizing waste diversion, were accepted from mid-February until March 11. The Region received 25 applications for three positions. The names of the participating families will be released at the end of the month.

Part of the York Region Integrated Waste Management Master Plan, the SM4RT Living Family Challenge runs for a three month period (April 1 - Jun 30, 2012). Achievements from the Challenge will help to guide waste in the Region over the next two and a half decades.

"SM4RT Living will establish a strategic direction for waste management within York Region for the next 25 years," confirms York Region chairman and CEO Bill Fisch. "The waste management plan will help our residents become more aware of the amount of waste generated and how to manage their waste materials."

"This plan will focus on shifting minds, beliefs and values to drive waste pre-

vention and reuse, while maximizing recycling, composting, and energy recovery. It will ultimately highlight the need for lifestyle changes and for more informed decisions around the way we buy materials and generate waste. This is a critical component of the goal to create a more sustainable community," said the Challenge in a statement.

Participating families will learn to: de-clutter their home by holding a yard sale, redesigning living space and repurposing their "stuff". They will also learn to "unwrap their shopping" by utilizing farmers' markets, buying local food and tapping into local artisans and shops. Participants can also expect to "unlock their potential" through gardening, creating and mentoring; untangle time by enjoying a family trip; and "unbuckle themselves" by exploring York Region by foot or by bicycle, while discovering local forests, parks and trails.

Families will be guided

through select tasks (completed at their own expense during the Challenge duration), with tips and resources provided by the Region, for points and prizes.

Families not selected to participate in the Challenge can still take part by:

1. Visiting the Challenge's Facebook page at www.facebook.com/sm4rtliving
 2. Contributing ideas, suggestions and cheering on families with your comments.
 3. Visiting the Challenge website at www.sm4rtliving.ca and following participating families.
- For information on York Region's waste management programs visit www.york.ca/waste
- Check out the SM4RT Living Family Challenge Facebook page at www.facebook.com/sm4rtliving site (at press time, the site had received 59 'Likes') and look to The Auroran as more information on the participants, their projects and their accomplishments, becomes available.



SENIORS GOT A HEAD START FOR ST. PATRICK'S DAY
Joan Stevenson (left) and Joan Levert (right) get ready to serve up some Irish stew last Wednesday as part of the St. Patrick's Day celebrations at the Aurora Seniors' Centre.
Auroran photo by David Falconer

Saluting the best of Aurora's heritage developments

By Brock Weir

Aurora's best examples of heritage preservation and restoration had their moment in the spotlight last month as property owners and developers were honoured by the Town in the Heritage Awards of Excellence. The awards were handed out in a ceremony at Town Hall which paid tribute to individuals for restoration and infill properties. The first honouree was Dino Dias, for his work restoring 100 Old Yonge Street, otherwise known as the "Alloa Lea House," which was heralded by heritage planner Mai Al Nabhan as "a good example of a colonial revival style building of the 1930s."

"Due to land severance, the house had to be relocated closer to Old Yonge Street," said Ms. Al Nabhan in her citation. "Mr. Dias' hard work and great attention to detail is clearly shown in the completely restored interior and exterior of the house."

Named in the same category was Farsheed Ameryoun, who was also singled out as a recipient of a 2011 Ontario Heritage Trust Community Recognition award for his work on Aurora's built heritage with the Hartman's Corners school house, now located on Wellington Street at Berczy, as one example of his work.

Paying tribute to his "special appreciation for

heritage structure", Ms. Al Nabhan said he is able to see buildings beyond their "rundown conditions."

"He believes in preserving heritage through proper restoration to give heritage structures a second chance to shine," she said. "The Napier House is a modest structure on the east side of Yonge Street, one of three similar houses built between 1907 and 1912 and is designated as part of the North East Old Aurora Heritage Conservation District."

"When Mr. Ameryoun and his team started working on the house, they understood the challenges but did not expect the project to take a year to be completed. The house was completely redone from fixing structural issues to replacing plumbing, windows and doors, and the entire exterior was replaced with premium quality wood siding and the porch was reopened to its original design and restored. The end result is a great demonstration of how heritage structures can be revived and given new life."

Awarded in the "infill" category was Rocco Picheca of the eponymous salon at 15387 Yonge Street. The building on the site replaced an earlier structure in 2009 that was deemed to have structural problems.

"They approached the Town with a request to replace the building and Council approved it condi-

tional on a building complete with a compatible architectural style of the designated neighbourhood that adds character to Yonge Street," said Ms. Al Nabhan. The family and their architect worked hard and did not save on details or materials to design and build a new structure that kept with the heritage look and spirit."

The award ceremony took a moment to remember a long-time local heritage activist, awarding the late Andries "Andy" Godschalk with the Outstanding Achievement Award. Accepted by his wife Cindy, the award paid tribute to Mr. Godschalk as a "guardian of local history" whose "passion and devotion will always be missed."

An ardent member of the Heritage Advisory Committee between 2006 and 2010, a year prior to his death, the Committee singled him out for his dedication, professionalism, and skills that were particularly valuable to the committee when looking at the restoration or relocation of a heritage building, including his work during the campaign to save Wells Street Public School.

"A friendly and outgoing individual who loved to engage with the committee and impart his passion for heritage preservation to friends and colleagues, he volunteered for most Doors Open events so he could reach out to the public and

advocate for the importance of historic features and properties," said Ms. Al Nabhan.

Before the conclusion of the ceremony, plaques were officially handed out to buildings newly designated as heritage properties within Aurora. 45 properties had been designated under the heritage act, as well as one neighbourhood, and 19 joined them at the ceremony, including the John W. Knowles House at 68 Wellington Street and Bond's Grocery Store at 15231 Yonge Street.

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Why Practice Qigong?
Dr. Oz the popular TV doctor says it all - "If you want to

be healthy and live to 100, do QIQONG." Radiant health, inner peace and a positive outlook in life are natural by-products of a daily practice of qigong. Qigong helps induce a relaxation response that can positively impact your body's natural healing ability and increase your sense of balance in a seemingly stressful world. Amongst its many benefits, Qigong is scientifically proven to reduce hypertension, high blood pressure and to boost overall immunity and help with restless sleep.

Andrea Roth is sharing a number of forms of qigong in Aurora On, including: Radiant Lotus Women's Qigong (RLWQ), Detox & Strengthening (Zhang Fu Gong) and Sheng Zhen Qigong. Regardless of what

form you choose to practice in your life a healthy, happy body, mind and heart can be the result.

For women who practice the RLWQ form, miraculous responses have been demonstrated in the areas of: uterine cysts, menstrual pains, breast tenderness and menopausal discomfort. This program has also been shown to facilitate the release of toxins while balancing female hormones. Practitioners have reported increased awareness, uplifted mood and a deep joy for life.

Andrea teaches the other forms in her yoga & qigong classes as well as special workshops. For more information regarding classes or workshops, email AndreaRoth-Trimbleqigongyes@gmail.com or visit <http://www.yogaforlife.ca>.

Dream became a reality

From page 3
was "exhilarated and very, very happy" to see Andrew's wish fulfilled thanks to the people of Aurora and Ms. Pileggi. As for Andrew, Frank said his son, who is currently in Grade Nine at Dr. G.W. Williams Secondary School, is "a bright guy, very nice, very sociable, and very much like by his peers." He is "okay as he can be" and still receives daily treatment to help with his condition, but remains in good spirits.

Looking back over his experience last spring, Frank said there are no words to thank the people who came out and participated to help make Andrew's dream come true. "What you give is what you take," he said. "We all give and take and that is how this world works and should be working. Looking around us, there are many, many children, with a lot of strange diseases and there is no cure. I think we have to

recognize that this is probably the most important task or project of our society to be able to cure our children. "I'm afraid our focus is on some other aspects nowadays like military and wars. Our focus should be on children in our society here. I would be encouraged if I could have the same feeling from other people because it is our sons and daughters. This is the future generation for Canada. I think this is the most important."



It's the agony of anticipation for young Nicholas Szuros, as he braces to have a cup of water poured over his head by Rob Blanke, Super Science Entertainer. Nicholas was one of nearly 50 Aurora youth who kicked back for March Break at the Aurora Public Library.

Auroran photo by David Falconer

Big month for Rangers

From page 1
ing the attendance of Rangers who had served overseas in Croatia, Bosnia, and Afghanistan," he said. "This year's emphasis is on all of the Rangers, whether or not they had served overseas, but thanking them for their dedication and their service. I think that is proper and just. Of course, we will be welcoming and celebrating the new commanding officer, Lt. Col. Philip Halton. This will be his first major public event in Aurora. "We start off the week before with a lecture by [LCol. Diane Kruger] the Queen's York Rangers' historical curator on the War of 1812 and the role of York County volunteers in the War of 1812. That group later merged with the Queen's Rangers to become the Queen's York Rangers." LCol. Kruger's lecture will be held at the Cultural Centre on May 2 at 7 p.m. A week later is the big day. Having cleared the \$16,000 for the fund last year, organizers are now targeting a \$25,000 goal with tickets on sale for \$250 apiece. "What we have done is take the majority of the funds

from last year's event, along with funds that were raised by the Queen's York Rangers Association to start a Regimental Assistance Plan," said Councillor Ballard. "The plan has launched and is being used and we need to ensure that we have funding in place to ensure the continued success of the Plan. "Our citizen soldiers, once they return to their part time role in the reserves, no longer qualify for support, the counselling support, for example, that regular force soldiers have access to when they have returned from overseas in places of conflict. The Regimental Association and the Regimental Council, obviously with the Queen's York Rangers, decided that we need to fill that gap to make sure the citizen soldiers of the Queen's York Rangers have all the support they need when they return from rather traumatic postings overseas. "That's, frankly, the main reason many of us are involved to make sure the Regimental Assistance Plan or program is well funded in the coming years." Between the Levee on May

9, and the opening of the Armoury on May 27, the program will have an artistic component to it as well with the creation of new art pieces for auction, pieces that will incorporate 10 original First World War Helmets decorated by local artists as a base. Although the finishing touches are being made to this program, including the final roster of artists that will be able to take part in this initiative, one has gone to an artist who paints hockey masks for NHL players through to an internationally acclaimed fabric artist. The completed works will hit the auction block just before the Levee and bids will close at the Armoury opening. "We're hoping, along with everything else we're doing, to generate some interest in the art collecting people of York Region and the GTA," said Mr. Ballard. "They can get a very unusual piece of artwork with linkages to the Queen's York Rangers." More information on the Levee and surrounding events - including ticket purchasing information - can be found at www.simcoeslevee.ca.

CROSSWORD

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CLUES ACROSS

1. Duck cartoon character

6. Town in Guinea

11. Upright posture

12. Rest on your knees

13. Move upward

15. Disposed to take risks

18. Makes a sweater

19. Grooved surface of a tire

20. Identical in kind

21. Radiotelegraphic signal

24. "Picnic" author William

25. Bashkir Republic capital

26. Male highlanders

30. Doing several things at once

32. Title of respect

33. Old world, new
35. "Sophie's Choice" actress

43. Encloses completely

44. Decaliter

45. Makes angry

48. Commercial free network

49. Latvian capital

50. Tycho __, Danish astronomer

52. Leave slowly and hesitantly

53. Harm to property

55. Dining, pool and coffee

56. Remove all traces of

58. Yemen capital

59. Passover feast and ceremony

60. Trenches

CLUES DOWN

1. Proper fractions

2. Ridgeline

3. Marshland area of E. England

4. Flood Control District

5. Canadian province (abbr.)

6. Project Runway designer judge's initials

7. Along with

8. Orderly and clean

9. A short-barreled pocket pistol

10. Extraterrestrial being

13. Ancient capital of Ethiopia

14. Goof

16. Annoy constantly

17. Haitian monetary unit (abbr.)

21. Arrived extinct

22. Belonging to a thing

23. Tounge click

26. Fireman's signal

27. Connecticut

28. 3rd tone of the scale

29. Language spoken in Russia

31. Split occupancy
34. Diacritics for s's

36. Mobile camper

37. Affirmative (slang)

38. Bachelor of Laws

39. __ Angeles

40. State police

41. U.S. gold coin worth 10 dollars

42. Bets on

45. Million barrels per day (abbr.)

46. Macaws

47. Julie Andrews and Judi Dench

49. Capital of Morocco

51. Oh, God!

52. __ Carvey, comedian

54. Point midway between E and SE

55. Principle of Chinese philosophy

57. Trauma center

58. Atomic #62

Last Week's Puzzle Solution

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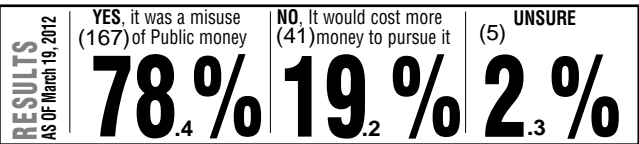
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Simcoe-York Group of Newspapers is currently hiring for the position of Editor at one of our local newspapers.

The editor will be expected to:

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- Generate story ideas and follow up on news tips
- Coordinate and edit content and columns submitted for publication
- Take photographs
- Show proficiency at using social media, Mac computers, and QuarkXPress, InDesign, Photoshop and other programs necessary for the publication of a weekly newspaper
- Work some evenings and weekends, as required

Qualifications:

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- Candidates should have experience working on the editorial side of the newspaper industry
- Excellent writing, editing and photography skills
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The ideal candidate will have a distinct willingness to cover both community events, local politics, and be able to work in a team-oriented yet self-motivated environment.

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| | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alexander Ovechkin(WAS) | <input type="checkbox"/> Patrik Elias (NJD) | <input type="checkbox"/> Scott Hartnell (PHI) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ilya Kovalchuk (NJD) | <input type="checkbox"/> Tyler Seguin (BOS) | <input type="checkbox"/> Ray Whitney (PHX) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jarome Iginla (CGY) | <input type="checkbox"/> Ryan Kesler (VAN) | <input type="checkbox"/> Milan Lucic (BOS) |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Martin Erat (NSH) | <input type="checkbox"/> Loui Erikson (DAL) | <input type="checkbox"/> Ryan Oriely (COL) |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Zdene Chara (BOS) | <input type="checkbox"/> Michael Del Zotto (NYR) | <input type="checkbox"/> Erik Karlsson (OTT) |
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COMING EVENTS

From page 2

The Aurora Cultural Centre proudly presents the 4-member a capella group Soul Influence with "A Musical African Journey". A Pan-African celebration of gospel sounds to mark their new CD "GIGO". An amazing collection of four voices - a perfect family night! Check them out at www.soulinfluence.org. Tickets: \$20. Doors open at 7.30 p.m.; concert at 8 p.m. Tickets available in advance over the phone, or in person at the Centre, 22 Church Street, Aurora; wheelchair accessible at north entrance. For info, visit www.auroraculturalcentre.ca.

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum presents History Hands On (H2O) in Spring today from 12 noon to 4 p.m. H2O in Spring is a chance to really experience life as it was more than 100 years ago! Visit the Log Cabin and try your hand at some Pioneer chores. Help prepare treats in the Farmhouse kitchen and recite your lessons to the Schoolmaster in the 19th century classroom. Admission is free, donations gratefully accepted. The museum is located at 14732 Woodbine Ave in Gormley. Call 905-727-8954.

SATURDAY, MAY 5

Aurora's St.Andrew's Presbyterian Church hosts its Spring Indoor Vendor Market today from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Local vendors and artisans are all under one roof with unique one-of-a-kind products and services. Jewellery, home ware, foods, clothing, etc are just a few of the items available. Some local familiar names are Twistt, Nady Dog Biscuits, Pampered Chef, Creative Bears, R&J Concepts, Simply Sweets by Patti and many more. Looking for that special Mother's Day gift? This is the perfect place. Proceeds from the event go to local charities. Vendors/Artisans.... book your spot now. 905-841-2864.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 16

Ron Wallace will lead a heritage discussion entitled "How the Word Got Around: A Historical Look at Local Newspapers" at the Aurora Cultural Centre at 7 p.m. A glimpse into past days of news media in Aurora - from an expert in the field. Admission by donation is gratefully received. Light refreshments are provided.

SUNDAY, MAY 27

The 2012 Upper Canada Mall Easter Seals 10k Run and 5k Run & Walk will take place today in a new location - the Newmarket Riverwalk Commons in Downtown Newmarket and is expected to draw nearly 1,000 participants. The new venue located on Doug Duncan Drive offers a beautiful, flat and scenic run course through Fairy Lake Park and the Tom Taylor Trail System. For more information visit www.eastersealsrun.com.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 18

The Doane House Hospice will hold its third annual Unique Craft and Gift Show today from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Newmarket Community Centre (200 Doug Duncan Drive, Newmarket). For more information, call 905-967-0259.

CONTINUING

The Aurora Probus Club meets every second Wednesday of the month (except July and August) at the

Aurora Legion. Memberships consist of retired and semi-retired PROfessional and BUSiness people, hence the name Probus. It is a fun fellowship with well-chosen speakers. New memberships are welcome. For more information call Marilyn Munslow at 905-727-9344 or Bob Saunders at 905-841-3558.

The Aurora Garden and Horticultural Society is always looking for new members of all ages. Monthly meetings with guest speakers are held on the fourth Wednesday of every month at 8 p.m. (youth meet at 6 p.m.) at the Royal Canadian legion in Aurora. For more Information call Cindy at 905-713-6660.

York Regional Police Venturers have openings for boys and girls aged 14 to 17. Police Venturers meet every Wednesday night from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. at 240 Prospect Street, 1 District police station community room. This is a joint program between York Regional Police and Scouts Canada. There is a Scouts Canada membership fee. Service uniforms are provided. High school students can earn community service hours through the program. If interested visit a meeting. For further information visit York Regional Police volunteer website or contact volunteers@yrp.ca.

Trinity Anglican Church "Clothes Closet", located at 44 Metcalfe Street, Aurora, is the local source for gently used women's, children's and men's clothing. All monies raised are used to support the needy of Aurora, since it goes directly to the "Welcoming Arms" Ministry. Open weekday mornings, 9.30 a.m., to 11.30 a.m. and Wednesday evenings 6.30 to 7.30 p.m. The Bag Sale happens the last Monday of each month.

At the request of its director, Richard Heinzele, the Evergreen Choir's time of practice will be increased to 90 minutes. Registration is now available at the front desk of the Aurora Seniors' Centre for the season until June 2012. The fee for the coming sessions remains the same: \$50 per member. New members are always welcome. It is not necessary to be able to read music, nor will you be asked to audition, to enjoy being part of this experience. For more information call the seniors' desk at 905-726-4767.

GRANAurora, the local Grandmothers To Grandmothers group, meets monthly to raise awareness, generate funds and lobby on behalf of the grandmother care-givers in AIDS-ravaged Africa. For more information call Kay at 905-841-9318 or Joan at 905-727-5586.

Alateen meets every Sunday at 8 p.m. at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, corner of Victoria and Mosley Streets. Al-Anon meets every Tuesday at 8 p.m. at the Aurora United Church on Yonge Street. For more information go to al-anon.alateen.on.ca.

The Aurora Garden & Horticultural Society meets on the

fourth Wednesday of every month at 8 p.m. at the Royal Canadian Legion, 105 Industrial Parkway North. Visitors are welcome for only \$2. For more information call Ray at 905-727-6168.

York Highlands Chorus is an award-winning a capella Sweet Adelines chorus, a group of women who gather Tuesday evenings at the Old Fire Hall, Newmarket, to sing, share in the harmony of friendship and learn the barbershop art form. York Highlands is always looking for new women who share the love of a capella music. Call Karen at 905-726-2113 or e-mail Vikki at information@yorkhighlands.com.

The Upper Canada Chordsmen, Aurora-Newmarket's award winning chorus, is looking for male singers. The group meets every Wednesday from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. at the Old Fire Hall, 140 Main Street South, in Newmarket.

The Optimist Club of Aurora meets the first Wednesday of each month at the Aurora Legion. New members are welcome. Call 905-727-5012 for more information.

The Aurora Lions, have moved to their new meeting place at the Aurora Legion in the Coulson Hall where they have three meetings per month. The second Monday of the month is the dinner meeting at 7 p.m., the third Tuesday is the business meeting at 7.30 p.m. and the fourth Monday is a dinner meeting at 7 p.m. The club is welcoming people to come out to the meetings to see what the Aurora Lions are all about and consider joining the Lions and reach out to the community in many events. For further details go to their website at www.auroralionscanada.com.

The Aurora Rotary Club meets every Monday night at Gabriel's Restaurant on Yonge Street. New members are welcome. For further information, go to their website at www.rotaryaurora.com

Meet for lunch and a sense of community at Martha's Table, based in St. Andrew's Hall at Aurora's Presbyterian Church. The thriving, volunteer-run program reopens September 1. Lunch, featuring soup, sandwiches, and dessert, is offered between 11.30 a.m. and 1.30 p.m. Net receipts go to local charities. The hall is on the corner of Mosley and Victoria Streets.

The York Regional Police Male Chorus is looking for new members. You do not have to be a police officer nor are you required to read music to volunteer. The group rehearses Monday evenings between 7.30 and 9.30 p.m. For further information, contact the chorus supervisor at 905-727-9676 or the co-ordinator of volunteer services for YRP at 905-830-0303, extension 6717.

Aurora's Air Cadets meet every Tuesday night at Cardinal Carter School from 6.30 p.m. to 9.30 p.m., and offer a program for 12 years and older boys and girls.

Queen's York Rangers Army cadet corps has openings for boys and girls aged 12 to 18. The group parades every Friday night between 7 and 9 p.m. There is no membership fee and those in high school can earn community service hours through the program. For further information, call 905-726-8600.

Aurora Opera Children's Chorus welcomes treble voices. It is a choir dedicated to nurturing and providing opportunities for children to express their musical abilities. The chorus is open to boys and girls ages 5-17. Contact the general director at keepsinging@rogers.com.

Community Home Assistance to Seniors (CHATS) is looking for volunteers to assist with the activities in its Adult Day Program. The positions call for a commitment of a few hours a week at its Aurora location. Various times are available. Call Christine at 905-713-3494.

Every Wednesday from 6.30 to 8 p.m. the Pioneer Club for boys and girls, age three to Grade 4 and the Junior High Club for boys and girls, Grades 5 to 8, will be held at the Aurora Cornerstone Church, 390 Industrial Parkway South. For more information call 905-841-8884.

A drop-in centre will operate every Wednesday at the Community Bible Church on Bathurst Street just south of Henderson from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. For more information e-mail Judy Hoffmann at jhoffmann@sympatico.

Scottish Country Dancing on Friday mornings at St. Andrews' Presbyterian Church beginning at 10.30 a.m. No partners are needed and beginners are welcome. For more information, call Agnes at 905-841-2747.

Independent Order of Odd Fellows Lodge 148 meets the first and third Tuesday of each month at 8 p.m. at 15216 Yonge Street, south of Wellington. For more information call 905-830-9205.

Masonic Rising Sun Lodge meets the first Thursday of each month at the Rising Sun Temple, 57 Mosley Street, Aurora at 7.30 p.m.

Robertson Masonic Lodge meets the third Saturday each month at 57 Mosley Street at 10.30 a.m. Coffee Club at 9 a.m. and lunch at noon. Call 905-727-3032 or 905-727-1080 for more information.

Gamblers Anonymous meets every Tuesday night at Trinity Anglican Church, Victoria Street, at 7.30 p.m.

Progressive Euchre every Thursday night at the Aurora Legion at 7.30 p.m. Call 905-727-9932.

Canadian Federation of University Women holds monthly meetings at the Aurora Legion with a variety of speakers. Contact Beverley Varcoe at 905-953-9709.

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Sophie of King Township (left) is a regular visitor to Perfectly Stable with her mother, who often spend days enjoying the atmosphere, mucking out stalls, and, of course, going for a ride. (Centre) Hierarch, who came to the farm as a rescue, waits patiently to be saddled up and taken out for a trot. (Right) Margaret on Willow, Nicole on Teddy Bear, and Jamie on Chelsea go out for a ride.

Auroran photos by David Falconer

Local horse farm promises to level playing field for all kids

By Brock Weir

Julie Parsons, owner of Perfectly Stable, a horse farm for kids in Snowball just outside of Aurora, makes no bones about her rather rustic operation.

"We're not one of the pretty barns," she cautioned before The Auroran visited them last week, but what has developed on the site that is little more than an old cattle barn set amidst the rolling hills of the King Township countryside is a unique little haven for kids of all backgrounds and life experiences.

Perfectly Stable and its group of "Barn Ratz", their own term for its members between the ages of eight and 16 is Ms. Parsons' brain-child.

With a background in public health, and after working with the Provincial government writing programs for aboriginal children, single parents, mothers on welfare, and infant development, personal circumstances dictated she re-evaluate her chosen career path.

"I sat down and wrote a program for children with emotional trauma due to life circumstances they find themselves in using horses," said Ms. Parsons on what has developed into her equine therapy program now housed in the cattle barn.

Keenly aware of the competition from what might be considered state-of-the-art and even glamorous horse barns in the surrounding area, what sets Perfectly Stable apart from the others, she said, is that it levels the playing field for all of its clientele.

"[Other barns] are already making an income - and probably quite a good income - off of the fact they are teaching lessons and people are paying \$600 a month to keep their horses there," she said. "There are all kinds of wonderful little affluent children who are participating in their riding

lessons which are expensive. What I have set mine up for is children with no money.

"Kids with no money dream of horses too. Sometimes a kid is coming out of a situation or a life situation where there is no money or there might be really unfortunate circumstances going on in the home of the child. CAS might be involved, but CAS can't do enough for these kids."

At Perfectly Stable, members pay \$75 a month in fees (although the price is expected to rise by \$25 in the near future) and that gives them access to the farm every afternoon after school, weekends from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., school P.A. days from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., and last week, of course, where kids enjoyed the extended March Break hours.

While the group focuses on kids from eight to 16, they look predominantly at 10 to 14 year-olds that might not want to go to day care, or their families might be unable to hire or provide afterschool care.

"That is a problem, and that is what creates these issues for those kids coming out of single parent families," said Ms. Parsons.

"Not all my kids are financially compromised. I have had a few children who actually came from very affluent families, but one little girl was overweight. She was being teased for being overweight, was picked on, and was spit on in the hallways and she had to leave two different public schools.

"By the time she came to us, she was so beaten up and broken emotionally, but now she is one of the most popular girls at school. Nothing has changed, she has not lost the weight, but it is about building the confidence level, about giving this kid some place where she knows she belongs and she is an equal. Because all these kids have challenges

that are holding them back in life, they all accept one another and are all kind."

Additional challenges faced by some of the "Barn Ratz" include autism and Down syndrome. The opportunities for these groups of kids, particularly those with autism, serves to fill a gap, according to Ms. Parsons for when they are finished high school at the age of 21. Their membership fee entitles them to come and enjoy the horses, as well as the rabbits and other animals in the community.

Indeed, the farm has a very unique atmosphere. In addition to the ragtag collection of horses they have, which mostly come to the farm as rescues after their own harrowing experiences on the brink of meeting unsavoury ends (one stallion, for instance, which Ms. Parsons claims is descended from Highclere, a horse once owned by the Queen, came to the farm after being rescued from a corral of stolen animals). There are also at least two dogs on site to keep the larger animals in line, and a large flock of geese to keep the dogs on their paws.

But whatever your means, which ever horse you get to saddle up, as a Barn Rat, you're on a perfectly level playing field, said Ms. Parsons.

"Nobody is allowed to come with riding equipment - we have that," she said. "We have helmets, we have rubber boots, and it doesn't matter how much money you have. If you have all that fancy stuff, beautiful britches, beautiful riding boots and britches, leave them at home because you can't wear them here.

"If all of the kids don't have them, then none of the kids are going to have them. That level playing field means a lot of the kids don't have them."

What Perfectly Stable doesn't have, on the other hand, is a steady source of funding. In business for three

years now, Ms. Parsons will soon be focusing for the next few months seeking assistance in writing a grant request to the Ontario Trillium Foundation to keep it going for another few years and hopefully move to premises a little less dilapidated.

While doing this, she will continue to provide the program to kids of all levels of ability and means. She maintains that sending children to \$400/week riding camps is counterproductive and merely serves to show less affluent kids "what they can't have."

"For the \$400 you're spending on one kid, you could give them a four month membership where they can come to a sustainable program, have sustainable friendships, and form a sustainable attachment to an animal. Five days doesn't help a child heal. Five days just shows them what they can't be and what they can't have, and what all these other children with affluent families can and do have.

"What's the point in giving a kid a dream for five days and taking it away from them? That is not a dream, that is a torture. I have got kids in my program that you go in and meet their parents and go into their rooms, and there is no wall for the pictures they have cut out of newspapers and magazines and little plastic horses that they bought from the dollar store on every ledge.

"These kids have never touched a horse. King Township is horse country yet we have made it so unattainable for a whole group of children and they are the kids who need a dream, that dream coming true for them means that they can have hope and faith, and maybe something else good can happen to them in life."

Perfectly Stable and its "Barn Ratz" can be found at 14550 Dufferin Street in Snowball. For more information, visit www.perfectlystablefarms.ca.



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