

New in Homes & Condos

SECTION H
SATURDAY
AUGUST 1, 2009
thestar.com

Pg. 1 of 2

TRADITIONS IN MILTON



JIM ROSS FOR THE TORONTO STAR
Kristopher Projkovski enjoys making candy with developer Hugh Heron, one of the many programs offered at Heathwood Traditions in Milton.

Knitting a community together

Summer camp, movie nights, knitting classes and candy making are some events offered at site

RYAN STARR
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

On a recent Sunday afternoon, a crowd of kids gathered for a workshop with Milton Youth Theatre Productions. The class wasn't held on a stage, mind you, nor at a local playhouse. It took place at the sales centre for Traditions, Heathwood Homes' new master-planned community on the edge of the Niagara Escarpment in Milton.

The developer paid for the two-hour session, an action-packed crash course in drama basics. The

young people didn't actually end up doing any acting, but they loved every minute of it. Best of all, these new kids on the block got to meet and make friends with neighbours.

Heathwood Homes was so thrilled with the workshop, they asked Milton Youth Theatre director Kim Jesch-Belvedere to put on a two-week summer camp this August, exclusively for the Traditions community and paid for by the builder.

"I think it's going to be of huge interest," says Jesch-Belvedere, noting there'll be theatre activities

mixed in with other camp staples such as arts and crafts, scavenger hunts, music and plenty of sports. Camp Heathwood is one of a host of programs Heathwood Homes is offering Traditions homeowners.

The developer has turned its on-site sales centre into "Residents Corner," a place for family movie nights, yoga classes, an adult book club and kids craft days. There have been cooking classes and a knitting workshop, a tweens' babysitting course run by the local Red Cross, and a gardening seminar with HGTV personality Charlie Dobbin. Free dog grooming and karate clas-

TRADITIONS continued on H14

Fostering community connections

TRADITIONS from HI

ses are also in the works. Heathwood Homes wants to foster a sense of community at Traditions, a vast new subdivision that will ultimately include 550 homes, priced from \$304,900 to \$715,900.

It's not just the residents who benefit here.

Local business owners and organizations are invited to run the seminars and classes at the Traditions sales centre, giving homeowners a taste of what's on offer in downtown Milton.

For added incentive, homeowners receive a Traditions Residents Club card that gets them discounts at Milton-area shops and on local services, many of the same ones featured at the sampler sessions. The goal of the programming is to help Traditions avoid turning into just another bedroom community with no connection to the world beyond its fences.

"We try and put our best foot forward right at the very beginning," says Heathwood Homes president Hugh Heron. "With these programs, we wanted to promote the process of getting people together and talking about the community."

"We wanted to assist them in getting there earlier than they normally would."

THE STRATEGY APPEARS to be working. Traditions is in the first stage of a three-phase development. But already residents there say they're feeling right at home, thanks in part to these community programs.

Fran Leith, whose family moved to Traditions in November, has joined the adult book club and attended cooking classes with her five-year-old daughter. Monthly movie night is a family favourite. And her daughter is a regular at craft days.

When the family moved last year, Leith says she had concerns about her daughter having to leave behind friends she'd known her whole young life.

"So I wanted to try and make the transition a little bit easier for her by moving here and helping her develop new friendships within the neighbourhood," Leith says.

"I think these programs are a great way to do it, because they're offering a variety of different experiences for the kids so they can meet someone with the same interests."

Traci Erkkila is also a fan. Her family moved to Traditions last October, the second time they've bought a home in a new development.

The kids quickly took a shine to craft days: they made dad a painted T-shirt for Father's Day; on Mother's Day, Erkkila got a framed photo of her children, decorated with markers and "tons of sparkles."

TRADITIONS

Location: Main St., west of Bronte St., in Milton

Number of homes: 550

Types: Single-family, semi-detached and townhomes

Size range: 1,241 to 3,900 square feet

Price range: \$304,900 to \$715,900

Sales office: 3136 Main St. W., Milton

Hours: Monday to Thursday, 1 p.m. to 8 p.m., Saturday, Sunday and holidays, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Friday by appointment.

Contact: 905-876-3140 or heathwoodtraditions.com

ESTABLISHING A STRONG connection to nearby Main St. is a key part of Heathwood Homes' anti-bedroom-community strategy.

Earlier this year, instructors from Milton's Inner Sanctum Yoga Studio were invited to run twice-monthly sessions at the sales centre. "It gave us a chance to meet and greet new members of the community," says Inner Sanctum owner-operator Wendy Sammut. Through the Traditions Residents Club program, homeowners can also get one free class at the Inner Sanctum studio.

"It brings those people into downtown Milton," Sammut says.

Carolyn Anstey, owner of Main St. Yarns, recently ran a beginners' how-to knitting class at the Traditions sales centre.

It proved to be popular, and additional sessions are planned for the summer and fall. Meantime, folks who've caught the knitting fever and want to pursue their new-found passion receive a 10 per cent discount.

With Camp Heathwood this summer and a VIP program discount on all theatre classes during the year, Jesch-Belvedere hopes her new neighbours will develop a connection to Main St., Milton. Heathwood Homes is onto something with this initiative, she thinks. "They're not just selling people a house, they're helping them fit into the community."

It begs the question, though: Why would Heathwood Homes put in all this effort and foot the bill for these programs, when they say their competitors aren't doing the same?

"Let me tell you something," says Heron. "This all started 72 years ago in the slums of Glasgow. When I grew up we had absolutely nothing, so community was awfully important."

"We've made a total commitment to create a difference between our company and our competition," Heron says.

"We give something back."