

By **EAMONN MAHER**  
Staff Writer

When a job opportunity brought Ron Birrell and his young family from Regina, Sask. to this area nearly 25 years ago in search of a new home, a real estate agent advised the elevator company executive that Acton wasn't the most pleasant place in which to live.

Birrell was told that the town had a reputation that wasn't welcoming to outsiders and that many local youths spent their idle time getting into trouble on the streets.

A native of Vancouver, who turns 64 next week, Birrell didn't see it that way.

Along with wife Irene, daughter Shannon and sons Jamie and Jeff, Birrell became involved with Scouts, Guides and the Calvinist Kinettes, as well as coaching high school basketball and charity work with the Trinity United and Acton Baptist churches.

Monday he was named the Rotary Club of Acton's Citizen of the Year for 2013 for his contri-

butions to the town.

"The community has been so supportive of my family and I really believe Acton has grown up and matured in a positive way as it's grown into a vibrant community since the tannery shut down," Birrell said.

"We were just looking for ways that we could contribute to our community in any way, shape or form and that's been my sort of approach to giving back."

Currently president of the Mississauga-based Mainline Elevator, which employs approximately 50 people, Birrell started up a food bank drive through the Scouts that remains in operation today.

During the mid-1990s, Birrell rounded up some local tradesmen and local businesses to replace the basketball court at Acton High School, then stepped in to coach the Bearcats' senior boys' hoops teams during a la-



**RON BIRRELL**

bour dispute between the provincial government and teachers.

"We had three children in public (elementary) school when we moved to town and it was apparent that there was a need for folks to volunteer and coach, whether it was Scouts, Guides or sports," he add-

ed.

"When your kids are going through the system, you'll have a better understanding of what they're going through by virtue of experiencing it with them, whether that's puppeteering with my daughter or playing basketball with my son and his friends."

One of his favourite projects was to start up a night school course in Acton with his son Jamie on how to build cedar-strip canoes.

Most recently, Birrell was chair of Heritage Acton and helped oversee a crew of volun-

teers who helped refurbish the Acton Town Hall, re-open the theatre and complete the addition to the building.

When Trinity United Church was being rebuilt, he found an out-of-use elevator and installed it to help cut down on the cost of the project.

With his children grown up and moved away, Birrell has no plans to leave Acton anytime soon.

"For the first 20 years, you're still considered a newbie, and after that, people realize you're not going away, so you're part of the establishment," said Birrell, who returned from a three-week trip to western Canada on Monday to discover he'd been chosen Acton's Citizen of the Year.

"With respect to being acknowledged with this award, this honour is over the top and definitely not expected, when you look down the list of the others who've received it."

Birrell will be honoured for his efforts at the annual Citizen of the Year dinner, whose date and location has yet to be determined.

## Shop entered

Halton Regional Police investigated a break and enter that took place at La Grigio Café on Guelph St. sometime early Friday (Sept. 6).

A delivery person discovered the front entrance to the restaurant damaged and entry was gained through a broken window. A small quantity of cash was taken from the register.

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Staff members at the LCBO outlet on Guelph St. in Georgetown alerted the Halton Police Thursday (Sept. 5) afternoon about a man in the store who had been barred from the premises by a court order.

Frank Fox, 48, of Georgetown was charged with breach of probation and breach of undertaking.

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A Georgetown man was charged with being in breach of a court-imposed curfew after being pulled over in a traffic stop at approximately 12:30 a.m. Monday at Duncan Dr. and Sinclair Ave.

Charged with failing to comply with undertaking is Shawn Jackman, 18.

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**Q:** My spouse is often upset, is it my role to make them feel better?

**A:** Some schools of thought would say that you cannot do anything and that as an adult, it is your spouse's responsibility to soothe themselves. Stan Tatkin, author of "Wired for Love" disagrees. As spouses, it is in his opinion our role to help our partner settle when they are upset. Unconsciously, many spouses try to achieve why we so often try to problem solve and offer advice when our partner is upset. The challenge with advice giving is that it does not get to the heart of the issue. The upset spouse feels unheard and the advice giver is left feeling ineffective and powerless to change the situation. There are more effective strategies to assist your partner to get regulated emotionally. Here are a few:

1. When re-entering a common space, such as one spouse coming home from work, make sure you greet each other with a loving embrace, notice I am not saying a hug or a curt "hey". The loving embrace resets the safe emotional space for both spouses.
  2. Take the time to verbally acknowledge each other as well "it's nice to have you home" or "it feels good to come back to you".
  3. Greet each other before the kids and the dogs, or before jumping into the evening's activities. This reinforces the message that you are each other's priority.
  4. Work as a team. Talk about how you will divide the night's chores to conquer them. It is late, you are both tired and neither of you should abandon your teammate to do it all. If you do, they will resent you. Resentment leads to dis-regulation and disconnection.
  5. Take time to listen and express empathy. No need to fix anything. A simple "I am sorry you are struggling with this issue" and some words of encouragement can go a long way.
- Remember we pair up in life to "feel safe and supported". These behaviors will help you build a sense of synchrony between the two of you. These simple strategies can go a long way to help each other settle with many of the life challenges that are encountered in a day. By creating comfort for each other, a lot of emotional tension can be released.

Manon Dulude Ph.D. offers coaching and counselling services. She can be reached at 905 873-9393

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**Q:** I am thinking of moving into a retirement residence. With so many things to consider, how do I make the right choice?

**A:** This might seem like a daunting task but one that can be made easier when you, along with your family, give yourselves the time to plan ahead.

A good place to start is with a retirement residence that comes highly recommended by family or friends. They probably have experienced first-hand the level of care that you can expect if you make the move there.

Location is another key element. Most retirees have made the decision to move closer to family members. This is most convenient, especially when important decisions need to be made concerning your personal health care.

Next, do a realistic assessment of your needs. For example, if you currently live in your own home, ask yourself these important questions: are you able to keep up with all the physical maintenance required inside and out? Are you preparing and eating three nutritious meals every day? Are you taking your medication as prescribed? Are you lonely and getting daily social interaction? Also, if you were to fall or need immediate assistance, is help close by?

When researching different residences with supportive living, make note of what services are included in the monthly fee and that pertain to health care, meals, room maintenance, fitness and social activity. These are the elements that help to "enrich" your life and keep you healthy and independent.

Lastly it's important to pick a place that makes you feel comfortable and at home. Is it a bright, clean and welcoming? Are the staff warm and friendly?

Your evaluation of homes can be based on all the things that are important to you and meet your needs, but most of all will bring you peace of mind.