

COMMENT

The way we were



A room in the Glen

Built in 1848 by William Alexander, the Glen Hotel provided rooms and meals for salesmen, farmers and merchants. The last hotelier to operate it was Thomas J. Hill, the father of the first mayor of Halton Hills. Closed in 1919 when prohibition was imposed, it is now a private residence and a listed heritage property.

Text courtesy of Heritage Halton Hills

Photo courtesy of Esqueusing Historical Society

From our readers



IT'S NOT AFRICA

Zach McLean took this photo of the sunset just outside of the Gellert Community Centre on 8th Line late September. Have a photo you want to share? Email — with details — to cgamble@theifp.ca.

A side of Georgetown most of us never see

It's my first lesson about life in Georgetown.

It's only been a few weeks since we moved here, my wife, two teenage girls and a spoiled rotten mini Dachshund named Molly, tucked nicely into a small townhouse just a minute or two from downtown. There have already been pleasant early fall walks to the farmers' market and the Shepherd's Crook pub, both a nice surprise for someone not sure if he'd appreciate the smaller-town life in Georgetown.

I've quickly learned that pretty much anything you need can be found on Guelph St. and I could put on a few pounds if I gave in to temptation and stopped by La Vita Bakery every day. I've also learned there's something in town called a McKab. I saw my first McKab sitting at McDonald's, which seemed appropriate somehow.

And one more thought from the teens in the house; someone needs to open up a Starbucks within easy walking distance of Christ the King High School.

But our first real lesson about Georgetown comes from Don Burt and the friendly volunteers at the Georgetown Bread Basket. Three days a week he sees a different side of life in town. The one a newcomer like me doesn't see— and one that you likely don't see either.

Three times a week, Don opens the doors of the food bank, often with a few people already waiting in line outside. Mothers, seniors, people with drug and alcohol addictions. Some of them working low-paying jobs, or not getting enough hours at work. Some not able to work at all. None of them want to be here. And the rest of us don't want to know about it.

Burt figures that's one of his biggest problems. In a well-off community, rated of one of the best small towns to live in Canada, few people see the need in Georgetown. Even the food bank itself is low-profile, quietly operating out of an industrial strip mall on Sinclair Ave. Like poverty itself in

Georgetown, you have to be looking for it to find it.

"I see it all the time," Burt explains. "That seems to be the first comment from people. 'Really? We have people who are hungry in Georgetown?'"

"I can't explain it."

It's not a whole lot of people. Only six per cent of Halton Hills residents live below what's called the "low-income measure". But Burt and his team of about 70 volunteers keep busy looking after

those six per cent. He knows most of them by name as they stop by once or twice a month. A volunteer walks them up and down the two aisles containing cans of tuna and pasta, tubs of peanut butter and boxes of cereal. For moms and babies, there's formula and jars of baby food.

But right now, while most of are getting ready for Thanksgiving and counting our blessings, there's not enough on the shelves to help those in need.

The food bank gets about 450 to 500 visits a month but "we always need more," explains Burt, a former communications manager who has been

heading up the food bank for more than 10 years. "Right now we are quite short."

Last month, things were so tight, the Bread Basket had to dip into a reserve fund to keep fresh food on the shelves.

So as I settle into life in Georgetown, I realize it's all good, unless you happen to be one of those people in the bottom six per cent. They can easily be forgotten. They are forgotten.

But not by Don Burt and the dozens of volunteers at the Georgetown Bread Basket. And hopefully the rest of us will think about them the next time we do our grocery shopping.

David Churchill is a longtime journalist who writes about family, life in Georgetown and a love of travel.

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