

Books for Babies kit of learning fun

Oakville Public Library, along with its three Halton counterparts, has just launched a program to further the joy of reading and increase parents' awareness of the importance of literacy for young children.

The Books for Babies kit was developed in response to evidence which demonstrates how the intellectual stimulation of children during the early years of childhood influences brain development and sets the foundations for competence and coping skills, language, learning, behaviour and health.

The kit was designed by staff from the four Halton public libraries to encourage positive experiences such as talking with baby, telling stories, singing rhymes, giving a reassuring hug or having fun playing.

All mothers of babies born in Halton will receive the Books for Babies kit, through the Halton Healthy Babies, healthy Children's Post-partum Enhancement Program in which public health nurses visit the mothers of newborns in their homes.

Each kit contains a Calendar and Reading Guide which provides parents with information, activities and suggestions for shared reading activities, a board book, a gift coupon and an evaluation card, all wrapped in a canvas book bag. When they present the gift coupon at their local library, new mothers will receive an audio cassette of nursery rhymes donated by the three speech centres in Halton including the Child Development Centre in Oakville.

Support for the program came from the Healthy Community Funders of Halton, the Halton Healthy Babies, Healthy Children Program and City Parent/Metroland Printing, Publishing and Distributing Ltd.



Photo by Riziero Vertolli

Raising children with healthy minds is the goal of a new project developed by the four Halton public libraries. Books for Babies aims to spread the joy of reading and increase parents' awareness of the importance of literacy for young children. That's Madelaine Perica-5 months, with mom Angela at the launch for Books for Babies at the Oakville Central Library last week.

Contest put students' mapping skills to test Computers used to create maps from raw data

Karen Robbins
SPECIAL TO THE BEAVER

Students from Crescent School in Willowdale have won the first Ontario-wide high school geographical information systems (GIS) contest.

Joyce Savoline, Halton Regional chairman, Nichole Beck, a teacher from Appleby College who initiated the contest, and Colleen Raymond, from Environment Systems Research Institute Canada (ESRI), presented the winners with plaques and canvas briefcases last week at the Halton Regional Administration Building.

GIS is a software program being used in geography classes across Ontario. Beck said it is an advanced computer program that allows users to create maps from data.

The students were given a scenario taken from real data about ambulance services in Oakville and Burlington. The students were to pretend that they worked for the Halton Region and had to find out which areas were under serviced. This was based on call volumes and response times - if a call didn't reach its destination within 7 minutes than that call was under serviced.

From this information, the students had to determine if there were new areas where they should place an ambulance station.

One of the winners, David Luk, 15, said it took them about two weeks to finish the project. "At the beginning it was really tough to get started," he said.

His teacher, John Nicolucci said the students learned a lot from the experience. "It was hard to formulate the problem and figure out how to get started," he said.

"But at the end when we were rushing to get done, new ideas came up. By then it was too late."

Other team members included Jeff Singer, 16, Aaron Glazer, 16 and Templar Trinaistich, 15.

Savoline said the Region started using GIS systems in 1995. She estimated that 150 staff members use it on a daily basis for things like producing high quality maps, analyzing ambulance response times, waste and water infrastructure management, biosolids programs, hydrogeology, planning and demographics and crime analysis.

Colleen Raymond, who is in the education services department at ESRI Canada, presented Crescent School with GIS extension software, which will give them a little more functionality and more capabilities.

Raymond was quite pleased with the contest. "ERSI Canada has been working hard to encourage municipal and corporate participation in education and GIS awareness. This is a prime example of a fabulous opportunity for students to work on a real world project with municipal data that had been actually analyzed and

worked on in Halton Region."

Beck said she plans to run the contest again next year. "We just have to find an interesting project

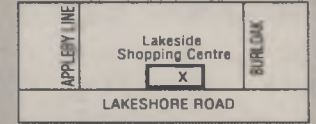
that will work and be interesting - we like the idea of crime analysis but I don't know how appropriate that it. We'll see," she said.

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