

'Net abuse seminar informs parents

BY JAMIE HARRISON
The Georgetown Gemini

Expanding technologies, new medias, and curious minds could prove to be a dangerous, and in some cases, deadly, mix. Precautions should be taken to protect children from inappropriate material, so say members of Halton Regional Police, The Centre for Childhood Sexual Abuse and The Council on Violence.

The goal of the team is to inform parents who might not otherwise know what their children are accessing on the World Wide Web.

"The concerns really are that we believe every person has the right to live in a violence-free society," said Margaret Ligas of the Council on Violence. "We really believe that ending violence is everyone's responsibility."

"Children have far too easy access to violence, racism, child and adult pornography on the 'Net.'"



REPATRIATED: Former Georgetown Raiders captain David 'Duke' Bouskill donned the Raider sweater one last time before his number and jersey were retired at a ceremony Saturday night at Gordon Alcott Arena. Bouskill was joined by Shel Lawr of Georgetown Hockey Heritage and team president Finn Poulstrup. For more on Bouskill's jersey retirement, see Page 14 in *The Gemini Sports*. (Jamie Harrison photo)

Build it and they will shop

When will some stores be built in Georgetown South? That's the question area residents repeatedly ask Ward 4 Councillor Ron Chatten, who several months ago asked the Mayor to meet with officials of Halton Hills Village Homes to discuss delays with their proposed plaza on the corner of Mountainview and Argyll Roads in Georgetown South.

When Chatten asked for an update last week, staff said the property in question had been sold and that they were in the process of getting the details.

Earlier Chatten said a lot of the traffic going back and forth on Mountainview Road could be cut if the plaza was open and suggested that the Town do what Brampton does - insist that facilities like plazas be built when a certain number of houses are built in a large development, not when the subdivision is complete.

The team was formed following the arrest of two Ontario-based individuals who were allegedly found with vast quantities of pornographic material, including child porn downloaded from sites on the Internet.

Paul Bennett of the Centre for Childhood Sexual Abuse said that the goal of the group is not to censor what appears on the World Wide Web, but to deny children access to web pages and chat rooms which may contain material considered inappropriate for youths.

"(The goal is) to educate parents in the community who have a child and a home computer, to make them aware, and to raise their awareness that they have an obligation.

"We are not advocating censorship of the 'Net, nor are we saying the home computers and the Internet are bad things."

Research indicates that, in the last decade, home computer ownership has risen from 18 to 45 per cent.

Staff Sergeant Joe Taylor believes the Internet has proven itself to be a great benefit when used as an educational and communicative tool, adding that even the Halton Regional Police Service has a web page, allowing the public to access the service.

"The unfortunate part is that there are some sites that contain sexually explicit material, and that is growing every day," Taylor said. Taylor added that he has downloaded some sites clearly contravene the Criminal Code of Canada, particularly with respect to child pornography.

"It is estimated that over 37 million people are on the Internet, with over seven million users under the age of 18 in North America, alone.

"Kids are going to be there, but they need to be there safely," Taylor said.

"This is a similar concept to Street-proofing your kids. We're going to try to Web-proof our kids."

In an effort to educate parents, the three groups will be hosting a series of presentations throughout the region, including seminars on the uses and abuses of the Internet at Georgetown District High School on Feb. 25 at 7 pm, and Bishop Reding Secondary School, Feb. 18 at 7 pm.

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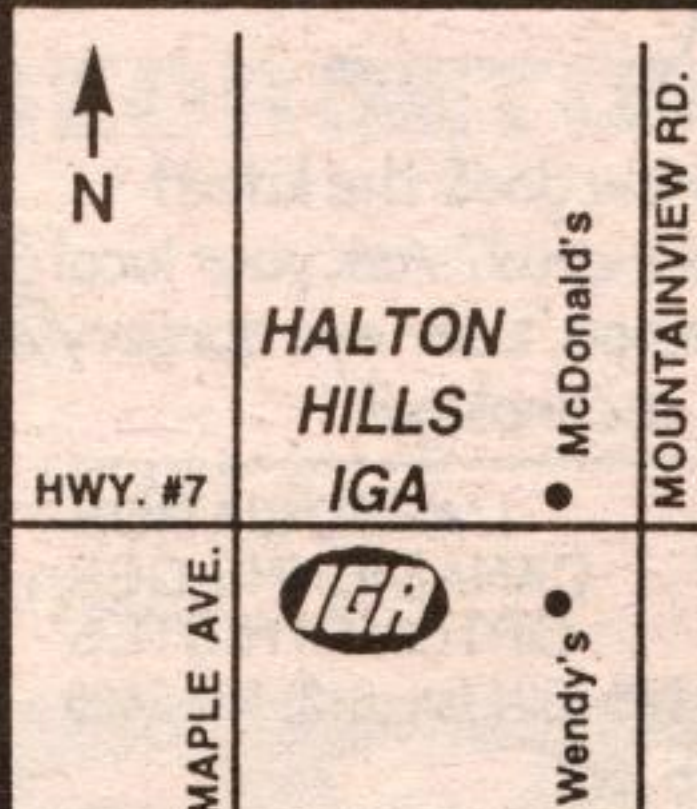
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