

TAG bazaar brings crowd

A large crowd enjoyed the Trinity Activity Group bazaar in the United church Saturday afternoon. Marlene Steckley was bazaar convener, Dorothy Rognvaldson tea convener and Betty Bowman bake sale convener. Kathy McGillivray is president of the group. The vestibule and basement of the church were both packed with shoppers. Christmas decorations, knitting, crafts, baked goods, white elephants, plants and fresh cut flowers were all for sale. There was a special corner where children could pick out gifts at especially reasonable prices.

BIG STUFFED animal delights David Andrews, 2½ years, at the Trinity Activity Group bazaar Saturday in the United church. His grandma bought fit for him.



SATISFIED shopper is Aimee Kamminga, two, at the Trinity Activity Group bazaar Saturday.



SOME OF THE crafts for sale at Trinity Activity Group bazaar included paintings by Jean Johnston, hooking by Mary McKenzie and felt crafts by Gwen Johnson, as well as Christmas stockings and puppets made by other members of the group. Volunteer clerk Karen Steckley shows some of her stock.

Thieves take hub caps

Four 15-inch slotted mag wheel hub caps were reported to Halton Regional Police as stolen last week. The theft is reported to have taken place while the vehicle, owned by an R.R. 1 man, was parked at the high school.

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NAPKIN HOLDER for Christmas is admired by Barbara Edmundson and daughter Joanne, who is six. They were among the many shoppers at the Trinity Activity Group bazaar Saturday.

Distress centre five years old today



THE TELEPHONE ROOM at North Halton Contact Centre is manned by a volunteer. There are about 60 volunteers who have manned the phone continuously since the centre opened five years ago.

It was five years ago today (Wednesday) that North Halton Contact Centre in Georgetown took its first call. Since that time the centre has logged an impressive number of statistics.

The single telephone has been manned continuously, a total of 41,976 hours, a fact which gives the 60 volunteers a source of pride.

Up to the end of 1977, the centre logged 16,027 calls. Indicative of the growing acceptance of the contact centre and the service it offers to distressed callers, or to those phoning merely for information, is the fact 7,403 were calls logged this year to November 6.

"At the rate we've been going," Lou Egerton, chairman of the centre said in an interview Monday, "we won't be far off 9,000 calls for the year."

The centre averages about 700 calls a month now and Egerton recalled that with 105 calls the first month and half in service, "We thought we were doing fantastic... We've come a long way since we opened."

The centre was founded through the efforts of the Georgetown and District Ministerial Association, the Georgetown chapter of the

Red Cross, the YM-YWCA and the regional public health unit. Members of these groups felt a concern for the numbers of lonely, distressed people they came in contact with and decided that an anonymous service was needed.

The growth in the number of calls the contact centre receives reflects the growth of contact centres in general.

In 1973 there were 27 distress lines which were members of the Ontario Association of Telephone Distress Centres. In 1978 there are about 45 centres in Ontario and about 96 across Canada.

About a year after forming, the centre was approached by the provincial government to be an official information centre, a fact which most people in the community don't realize, Egerton said.

About 40 per cent of its calls are from people seeking information. There is a relatively large library of information on subjects ranging from housing, day care, pollution and seniors activities and services to birth control, abortion, safety, single parents associations, and mental health.

The centre's 1977 budget

was \$6,677, of which \$2,500 came from Halton Hills, \$2,000 from the provincial government and the balance from churches, service clubs and private donations.

The centre was originally opened as a suicide prevention and distress line but it has been only since 1977 that separate statistics have been kept on suicide related calls.

In 1977 there were 34 calls but up until the end of October this year there have been 65.

When the centre was founded, it anticipated a lot of calls from lonely and distressed people, Egerton said. "But the biggest surprise was the number of calls." Even so, they expected more calls from young people than they actually get. "They're always saying they want someone to talk to. We're still getting calls but not the number we expected."

One of the biggest frustrations the centre's volunteers get is from people calling with nowhere to spend the night. "We can't tell them to keep walking the streets." "We can put people up on a temporary basis with the Red Cross or the Salvation Army but it is limited to local motels or hotels and if their rooms are booked up, we're out of luck."

Usually such accommodation is for homeless women and children and does not address the problem of men and youths with nowhere to go, he added.

At one time the centre used to have a youth home program for those who for one reason or another had left home, Egerton said. They used to go into private homes but there weren't enough homes available. The youths were then forced to go either to Oakville or a home in Toronto, a situation which often put more stress on them when they preferred to stay in this area.

Egerton noted that if the rate of calls continues, another phone may need to be installed. That would mean having two volunteers, "quite a strain on the phones."

He noted too that the centre would like to have a drop-in centre. It would not necessarily offer counselling but would provide information or even just human contact for lonely people. A drop in centre would attract people who don't feel comfortable on the telephone.

However, confidentiality is

the keyword at the contact centre. The callers are guaranteed confidentiality and so are the volunteers.

In cases where a referral is required, the centre will take the first name and telephone number to forward to an appropriate agency, such as Alcoholics Anonymous, for instance.

One thing that the centre's volunteers are questioning is the need for follow-up calls. There are mixed feelings, Egerton said. "It is better we don't (follow up) in the overall picture, but I wonder."

The centre also has a shut-in service whereby they call once or twice a day to make

sure someone living alone is all right.

Egerton expressed some surprise at how few people knew of the information aspect of the centre's work, where there are over 1,000 headings for information. For the last three summers students have worked compiling and updating the centre's files.

The centre receives calls not only from Georgetown, Acton and Milton but from Mississauga, Brampton, Guelph, Hamilton, Orangeville and Toronto. Egerton believes these long distance calls are from people who can't get through to distress centres in their

Contact Centre's FAMILY

North Halton Contact Centre uses the letters of the word FAMILY to break down the kinds of calls it receives.

In 1977, five percent of the calls were about Financial matters; three per cent for Alcohol and drugs; 14 per cent Miscellaneous; 40 per cent Information; 37 per cent for Lonely and depressed; and three per cent for information about the centre.

Anonymity is guaranteed for both caller and volunteer except in a few special cases.

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