

Schools—a place for parents?



Joan Schipper, one of many parents helping out in local schools, helps M.Z. Bennett students Sherry McFadden, Daryl Hinx and Ashley Fray with their reading.

by Jennifer Rowe

At one time schools were a place for students and teachers. Parents made occasional visits when invited to attend school functions and for the traditional interviews on parents' night. Now more than 2800 parents spend time during school hours in classrooms in Halton county as parent volunteers. The concept, which started in the United States in the '60s, has grown from volunteering to help teachers on school trips to coming in on a regular basis. Volunteers take reading groups, assist in the classroom and help man the office or library. Getting an exact figure on the number of parent volunteers in Halton county is no easy task. In the Halton public school system a regular volunteer is anyone who comes in to assist for a half day or more each

week. Ron Coussons, principal at Pineland school, has done a great deal of research on the topic for the Halton Board of Education in preparation for two reports he prepared, in 1972 and again in 1978. From his findings Coussons estimates regular parent volunteers number about 2,000 to 2,500. Many more parents come in on an irregular basis to assist with certain units or studies of interest to them. Although there hasn't been a recent study by the separate school board, Cliff Byrnes, director of education, estimates there are well over 300 regular parent volunteers in the Halton separate school system. Byrnes said the concept of parent volunteers coming in on a regular basis was started in the late '60s and early '70s in Halton. The use of parent vol-

unteers in schools is endorsed by the Catholic board and has definitely increased the quality of education received by the children, according to Byrnes. "With a turn to a more individualized education, parent volunteers are invaluable in doing work which gives them a feeling of self worth," Cliff Byrnes said. From his dealings with parent volunteers, Byrnes said he has found many parents, especially mothers, come in to help after their last child has started school. "It helps to fill the vacuum when all of a sudden there are no children at home any more and administrative staff more time for individual attention," to local schools they don't provide any cost savings to either boards. "It is not a saving to the board, and there are no fewer teachers because of the program. The resource of having parent volunteers would be impossible to duplicate. If we didn't have them the students would just have to share

more," he said. In some of the area Catholic schools, parents assist not only in the school but from their homes. "We have some parents who phone the school and get the names of students who are absent and make the necessary phone calls. We even get some senior citizens coming in to help out," he said. Although parent volunteers are a great asset

the teachers' and staff's time with the duties parent volunteers take care of," Ron Coussons said. Parent volunteers are now commonplace in schools. As one local principal said, "Some schools have a lot of volunteers while others have very few or none at all. Frankly I don't know how those without volunteers survive."

Fifth place for "Sweet Adelines"

Six Halton Hills women, members of the Mississauga City Sweet Adelines, took part in a regional competition in Syracuse, N.Y. on the weekend.

Edna Turnbull of Georgetown and Angie Ogden and Mary Knowles of Acton, were

well pleased with their fifth spot, since they have a new director and had recently presented a two

night show. The Mississauga City Sweet Adelines has a membership of 140 wo-

men who meet and sing every Tuesday night at the auditorium in Square One.

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Bikes put cops on the trail

The Halton Hills detachment of the regional police force are fighting fire with fire with their addition of a trail bike to the fleet. Inspector Alex McPherson says the trail bike will be used in Acton if a problem with biking occurs. The use of trail bikes in fields and wooded areas have posed a problem for police. In other areas of Halton residents have complained of excessive noise, dangerous driving and tearing up private property.

Halton Hills council in the past.

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However Acton has been fortunate, according to Inspector McPherson with no problems reported. If there is a problem, he said, people should let the police know. Officers who normally drive motorcycles will be using the trail bike to get to the areas they can't reach by car. There have been trail bike problems brought to

Boat people learn...

only been in school two days, are already learning days of the week, names and abstract concepts. "The older ones are finding it more difficult but they are trying very hard", Mrs. Euwen says. "They're very enthusiastic and they don't mind laughing—we have a lot of fun." Assisting with interpreting are Acton resident George Lee, Teresa Wong and Betty Ke of Rockwood's Foodland Store where much of the food supplies for the Le family have been purchased. Other Acton residents have aided with language interpretation and orientation.

Both families are living on Mill Street in apartments found by the sponsor groups. All equipment necessary except a rice cooker for the Le family has been donated or purchased.

Rev. Das Sydney, chairman of the Acton Clergy Group, remarks the sponsors are finding it easier than they thought to help the refugees. "Excitement is overcoming all barriers," he says.

One of the Phung daughters summed up the families' feelings, says Rev. Sydney, by spreading her arms wide to encompass the world and smiling, "beautiful, beautiful."

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