

Group helps parents of hyperactive children

by Helen Murray

"Just knowing it is not your fault is a big burden off your shoulders," says Acton's Joanne Avery, when discussing a newly formed organization for parents of hyperactive children.

Circle H has provided relief for more than one parent when it comes to realizing the many problems, handling them, and coming to grips with one's self.

Basically a Guelph group, organizers are reaching out to parents from all over who are in need of their support. Joanne is a public relations officer, who herself has been through the problems of having her eldest son diagnosed as hyperactive. The group also has members from Oakville, Cambridge, Kitchener and Fergus, as it is the only organization of its kind in the area.

Most people perceive a hyperactive child as being constantly on the go and fidgety. However, Joanne points out, hyperactivity can appear different in each person. They are labelled as behavioral problems, and when older as delinquents. Little brats is a familiar term.

Joanne explains some have a low frustration level, and some appear clumsy with a lack of coordination and a short attention span. Most are unpredictable, and act before they think. This in itself can cause parental nightmares because of the dangers of being hit by a car.

Very often, the hyperactive child has no friends. They cannot interact with other children, or adults, as they get older. Their marks at school are poor, even though most hyperactive children are above average in intelligence. Some 96 per cent, Joanne says, are boys.

Guilt is the most common bond between

parents of these types of children. "You just feel you are beating your head against a brick wall," when dealing with your child, she says. Doctor after doctor is unable to diagnose the problem, and many make the mother or father feel as if it is their fault the child is different. While the symptoms vary, the actual home life is much the same in various families.

Joanne like others, was accused of being over-protective, yet she lived in fear of her son being hit by a car. She could not leave him alone with other children, even his younger brother, in case a fight ensued.

After going to several doctors over six years, Joanne's son was finally diagnosed as being hyperactive. In the few short months since this breakthrough, the eight-year-old has been put on medication, has calmed down and is behaving like any other boy his age. Unfortunately, the reputation he built up before finding the right doctor is still with him.

"He was ostracized by the other children," Joanne recalls. "He would beat them up and they would make fun of him. . . he is just starting to make friends now, but it is slow process with children."

Hyperactivity is a sickness, Joanne states, with no known cause. There is no cure, but there is a control. Some cases can be handled with diet alone, some with drugs. There is no compromising between the two, Joanne says, it is an either/or situation.

What concerns Joanne is that for every child who is detected as being hyperactive there are two that go unnoticed. Some one in five children is hyperactive.

The stress an undiagnosed child can create in

the home is immense, Joanne says. Parents blame each other, or themselves. Marriages have broken up over it, and even the happiest married couples find tension in the home.

The Averys have another problem right now. Their youngest son at two-years-old is showing signs of hyperactivity. However, they do not know if it is because of that, or if it is "learned behavior." He sees his older brother doing it, so he does it. Or he could just be seeking attention because things are chaotic at home.

Joanne admits the chances of the younger one being hyperactive are small. The oldest boy is adopted, and she cannot see an adopted and a natural one both being inflicted with the same sickness.

Acton's Dr. van der Bent is aware of Circle H, according to Joanne and has recommended some parents call her about the group. There is also literature around town at Toddlers to Teens and Willow Lane Health Food Store.

Joanne wants to reach out to the parents who are going through what she did for many years. She wants to ease the guilt burden, and share her experiences and maybe recommend doctors who can help.

The difference in her life is incomparable, she points out. The house is now tranquil (for the most part), whereas before it was not known when her son would lash out at someone. She no longer needs to worry about cars, and bridges and all the other things in life most parents take for granted.

M.Z. Bennett school principal Howard Allan has been very supportive, Joanne says. The child's teacher, Dave Mashintz, fills out a weekly report, describing the boy's behaviour,

his marks, etc. It is through this that Joanne can follow his patterns and make sure if his medication needs adjusting or not. This close contact with the school can show the parents and the doctors where and when the problems started.

One teenage girl, in the Circle H newsletter, pointed out she had no friends, her marks were poor, and she was ready to quit school and get a job. However, after seeing a newspaper article on Circle H and hyperactivity, she looked into it and found she herself was afflicted. She is now on medication, is developing friends, and has set her sights on college. Her life has turned about, thanks to Circle H.

Some of the questions parents or teachers may ask to help determine if a child is hyperactive are:

Does the child work slowly, or in spurts, often not finishing the assigned work?

Is his handwriting illegible and messy?

Does the child get involved in most of the classroom incidents, such as throwing paper wads, fighting?

Do the little noises and movements of others disturb and distract him?

Does he seem to have a poor or fluctuating memory—remembering things one day and not the next, but maybe the day after?

Does he have a loud voice that seems to speak out at inappropriate times?

Is he impulsive in his work, not seeming to think things through or plan ahead in answering, writing or asking?

Most hyperactive children have a low self-esteem, Joanne said. Circle H helps build that esteem in the children, and also the parents.



Parents of hyperactive children are not to be blamed for their child's behavior nor are they alone, says Joanne Avery who is attempting to bring the Guelph based group, Circle H, to the people of Halton Hills. Joanne's life has changed dramatically for the better since discovering the group. Family relationships are improving and her hyperactive son is beginning to feel "normal". The biggest problem was getting his illness diagnosed.

newsmakers

Georgetown/Acton, Wednesday, Nov. 17, 1982



It's a proud moment for Hugh Graham of Limehouse as he is presented with a large trophy signifying he has earned the greatest number of points in Grand Prix events this year to be named Equestrian of the Year. Representatives of

Rothmans who sponsor many horse shows and directors of the Royal Winter Fair were on hand to honor him at a reception, last week at the Royal York Hotel.

Graham — Rider of year

The village of Limehouse is proud of a native son, Hugh Graham 32, is the Rothmans Equestrian of the Year, a title he has earned by winning the most points in six Grand Prix events throughout the year.

With 13 points earned at qualifying shows in Hamilton, Edmonton, Montreal, Quebec City, Cheltenham, and Vancouver, Hugh Graham took first spot, with Torchy Millar, of Kettleby, Ontario, second with 11 points.

Graham earned the coveted award, which brings with it \$5,000 for the owner of the horse, a handsome trophy, containing a magnum of champagne and a cooler for the horse, despite a year filled with serious injuries.

A cracked pelvis and separated back left him on crutches until on the advice of veteran rider Jim Elder he visited an orthopaedic surgeon well-known to professional athletes.

Told to come back in 12 weeks, Graham said he wanted to ride in a Grand Prix event in three weeks. "Then come back in two weeks" said the surgeon; and still in pain he did ride within three weeks.

Graham told this tale at the reception at the Royal York where he was awarded the trophy and the title, Wednesday.

He thanked Rothmans on behalf of all the competitors for their part in developing horses and riders in Canada, and termed the Grand Prix the best in North America.

He said he was deeply sorry he cannot be part of the Canadian Equestrian Team at the Royal Winter Fair since his horse Abraxas is out of action with an injury. Abraxas, on whom he won the Equestrian of the Year title is a big 17 hand chestnut gelding owned by Laura Tobias of Toronto, and is in his first season of open jumper competi-



Hugh Graham looks a bit pensive for a man who has just been chosen Equestrian of the Year. Here he carries the large trophy and bottle of champagne back to his table at a reception in the Royal York.

On his second mount, Athenian Prince, owned by Samson Farms, of Hornby, a well-known local horse farm, Graham took second place in the September Grand Prix in California.

Graham, a member of a large Limehouse family, attended Georgetown high school and became interested in horses at an early age. Before entering the world of hunters he was a champion calf roper, and while still in his teens staged a rodeo, sponsored by Georgetown Lions Club, here in Fairgrounds Park.

Pay restraints affect teachers

The new Provincial edict on public sector raises means that as many as 900 Halton teachers and principals will not get normal step increases.

These are the people making \$35,000 a year or more.

Although the Provincial plan has not been fully understood, Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation local president, Joe Harwood, and Halton Elementary Teachers Association president, Robert Filman, believe this group will get only the basic 5 per cent increase allowed by the Province.

Both men are concerned that this capping at \$35,000 will disrupt the pay grid system which has been established.

Principals and vice-principals all over \$35,000, will have no opportunity to get the increase, which normally goes along with an additional experience.

Halton Board of Education superintendent of instruction, Ray Stoness, estimated that about 500 Halton secondary school teachers (nearly half) already earn about \$35,000. On the current, grid the maximum is \$37,464. There is one step below that but above \$35,000, and another below \$35,000 which would not be eligible for a normal full increment.

These increments (equivalent to merit pay in the private sector) are worth 2 to 3 per cent a year and are given out automatically with each additional year's experience.

Part of land sold for hwy.

A corner of the Speyside School property has been sold to the Ministry of Transportation and Communication for \$375.

Wednesday evening, Halton Board of Education approved the sale of 1,201 square feet of the south-west corner of the land in order that improvements may be made to Highway 25.

Work is expected to commence in the spring of 1983. The ministry has agreed to reconstruct the existing entrances to the school after the work is completed.

Special learning centre is proposed for Halton

Halton Board of Education is considering the establishment of a Centre for Self-Reliant Learning, for next September.

Trustees learned at their meeting last Wednesday that the program would be located at Lord Elgin High School in Burlington and would be conditional on registration.

A minimum of ninety students is necessary, with no more than 200 being accepted. The program would be offered to students across the Halton region, and applicants would be screened by the area superintendents.

The purpose of the program would be to provide a "small quality school so (the board) can meet the needs of special students in the region," according to Dr. R. T. Dixon, superintendent of programs.

In a report to the board, Dixon explained the Centre would be ideal for students who have medical problems or other commitments (such as a job or athletics) which require them to miss a lot of school; students who work at a very rapid pace, either attributable to intelligence or industry; drop-outs who would benefit from an individual program; adult students who need a flexible school time table to accommodate their jobs; students who have a personal situation which prevents them from attending regular school, such as the self supporting individual or single parents; students who learn better with individual attention; and students who have a large-school phobia.

The only added expense administration foresees is the cost of a half-time secretary, which in the first four months of operation would be about \$3,000 and \$7,500 a year after that. Staffing, administration, furniture and other equipment would come from the existing board inventory.

Staff would have to meet certain characteristics, the report said: flexibility with time-table and teaching styles; specialization, plus general academic ability; an interest and ability in guidance and counselling; creativity and commitment to use of community resources; and a high ability to adapt to Ministry guidelines to individual student profiles.

Lord Elgin High School was chosen, Dixon noted, because declining enrolment has made available a separate wing of the school in order to house the Centre. It would however, be self-sufficient from the rest of the school.

Milton trustee Ivan Armstrong suggested restricting the program to a five year period, to be re-evaluated after that date. "I just do not like starting something forever," he commented.

Georgetown trustee Betty Fisher expressed concern over the pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) and whether it would be the same as the other high schools. Ray Stoness, superintendent of instruction said it is hoped the PTR would be 17.4.

Len Crozier, Oakville, wondered if any of the program could be tied in with nearby Sheridan College. He was told the vast majority of the students would not qualify for community college programs.

Bereaved families, dealt with by guest speakers Janet Humphries of Bereaved Families of Ontario and Nancy Brown, executive director of Halton Family Services.

There is no charge to forum participants. Working through grief is the theme to be



Dick Howitt is sworn in

Georgetown lawyer and Esquing resident Dick Howitt was sworn in as a trustee of Halton Board of Education Wednesday evening, less than 48 hours after he was voted into the position.

Howitt, and newly elected Oakville trustee

Pat Hillhouse, were replacing Bill Herd, who was transferred to a new job in the United States in September. Milton Trustee Bill Lawson welcomed Howitt to the board, and noted his experience on municipal council would be beneficial to the board.

Assoc. for bright children being organized in Halton

By MARG LANGTON

Teachers are very effective at identifying gifted children if they are "teacher pleasers", the ones who thrive on an adult's approval. But they don't catch all the gifted children, especially those who bow to peer pressure by giving the occasional wrong answer. This was one observation offered by enrichment consultant George Robb at last week's meeting to organize a Halton chapter of the Association for Bright Children.

Mr. Robb, who works for the Halton Board of Education, called for identification of very bright children to begin at Kindergarten. At present, it takes place in Grade 4 in Halton, he explained, because this is believed to be the earliest age that children have the small motor development needed to fill in the small boxes in a computerized test. The time of identification is likely to be under close scrutiny soon, Mr. Robb hinted.

Funds to provide programs for gifted children are lumped in with special education dollars allotted to school boards, the speaker said, an amount that is generally considered "grossly inadequate."

Looking at the needs of children who are at the extreme upper end of the ability scale, Mr. Robb stressed the necessity for the good teaching of basic skills, keeping in mind that the intellectually gifted can learn the same amount in a shorter time than the non-gifted. "It is indefensible," he charged, "to give them another few sums if they finish early."

Teachers must be alerted to methods for stimulating this minority in their spare time, Mr. Robb explained, listing productive thinking, critical thinking, creativity, logic and problem solving as suitable areas of endeavor. Independent study is crucial for this group, he said.

Mr. Robb also believes it is less important to seek fresh data for the gifted children to assimilate than to have them use what they have already

the "scholar as detective" theory. Mr. Robb sees the multi-disciplinary approach to a theme as the best curriculum approach for the gifted while acknowledging that it is extremely difficult for the classroom teacher to teach across a wide range of ability.

Prejudice against gifted children is fairly common within the teaching profession, Mr. Robb indicated, and is not easy to eradicate. "Special high school enrichment is a very emotional issue. People feel it is not in the long-term best interest of the student."

"My name is Liz Wallace and I'm exceptionally bright," Ms. Wallace, the moving force behind the meeting at Oakville Central Library, wanted to open her remarks to the gathering this way, she said, but fear of the audience reaction prevented her. She compared her feelings to the bright child who is subject to peer accepted by hiding the unusual intelligence.

"It is a myth that these children are always winners," Ms. Wallace declared. "Their problems are different from those of the learning disabled and they are not appreciated by many. The same as the learning disabled, they need to be accepted for what they are."

The Association for Bright Children (ABC) exists to identify and meet the needs of the exceptionally bright child, she said. The group also supports parents and works with educators. It is a myth, Ms. Wallace pointed out, that parents of bright children have an easy time. For one thing, they rarely feel comfortable discussing their special problems with neighbors or friends.

Once formed, the Halton branch of ABC could work to develop appropriate programs in the school system from the nursery level up. Ms. Wallace hopes an approach that could eliminate the current "vast differences" among schools. "Good programs," she maintained, "do not necessarily cost more."



Graham and Irene Farnell hold a painting by Eunice Melton of Graham's grandfather's house in Norval. It was one of the gifts presented to Graham at a large retirement party, marking the end of 40 years with Georgetown and Halton Hills Hydro Commission. He served 20 years on the commission and another 20 as general manager.

Change board bylaws delegations speak later

A revised bylaw into the operation of the Halton Board of Education will see delegations having their time designation changed.

If the bylaw is accepted, anyone having matters before the board would have to wait until the "information" section of the agenda rather than at the beginning of the meeting, as it now stands.

Newly-elected Esquing trustee Dick Howitt voiced concern over delegations wanting to speak to an issue the board may already have dealt with earlier in the evening under the "action" portion of the agenda. Florence Meares, of

the bylaw revision committee, told the trustee it is hoped delegations will speak to the board before it is time for action. Items come to the board as information items before they are termed "action" items.

Rev. Garry Morton, explained that with major issues, people usually come to the board at the information stage anyway. He emphasized, however, that information items one week do not necessarily have to come to the board for action the very next meeting.

Howitt questioned whether the bylaw could state that the

order of delegations be moved if requested. He was told that was possible.

Meares noted the board was not trying to limit delegations by the change. One of the concerns of the committee, including Acton trustee Arlene Bruce, was that sometimes the delegations speak for lengthy periods of time, in spite of a time limit. After the trustees have already met for almost an hour in a committee of the whole meeting, then listen to delegations go on for a couple of hours, by the time they are at the action items "they are so tired they can hardly discuss the matters they are voting on," she noted.

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