

Sexual abuse of children comes out of hiding

By JANE MULLER

Local children may be given a chance to guard themselves against sexual abuse if an educational program geared to preventing such incidents is instigated here.

Thousands of students from Kindergarten level to Grade 8 have already benefited from such a program in Toronto through the school system. The Halton Task Force for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse in co-operation with both public and separate school boards here is looking to include a preventative program in Halton by next fall.

At the first formal meeting since the task force formed more than a year ago, the proven Toronto-based program was outlined by Catherine Stewart. The project director for the Metropolitan Chairman's Special Committee on Child Abuse made the presentation to an audience which included members of Halton Board of Education, Halton Separate School Board, and Halton Children's Aid Society.

The special committee, established two years ago by Metropolitan Chairman Paul

Godfrey considered the problem of child abuse. Sexual abuse became the group's focus, as according to Mrs. Stewart, this is a hidden problem.

In the process of getting sexual abuse into the open, the committee looked into legal aspects like investigation and prosecution and the response to children who complain about such abuse.

"We had to change a lot of beliefs and misunderstandings. A lot of attitudes in the past got in the way of children being helped. Now we're saying we believe the child," the project director said.

When the special committee formed, members were faced with a 168 per cent increase in reported incidents within the Catholic school board and a 229 per cent rise in reports by students within the Metropolitan board. The rash of victims had nowhere to turn for help, however, but according to Mrs. Stewart services are now in place for victims and offenders.

Grappling with the problem and realizing its extent made the need for preventative

steps obvious and part of the special committee's focus.

"We felt it was important to look at it in terms of the effect of the community. The lack of community understanding has kept kids from reporting," explained Mrs. Stewart.

Before the education process begins to involve children, orientation is provided for parents, teachers and other school staff.

"The theme of the program is personal safety. We tell parents we're not doing sex education, it's more broad than that," Mrs. Stewart said.

Part of the parent's introduction to the prevention program is a theatrical presentation used to acquaint children with the subject. Music and humour are combined in a play called "Journey from AMU" (the acronym stands for All Mixed Up).

This revised version of a play used previously "embraces a wider age group" said Mrs. Stewart.

The creator of the music for the play, Mrs. Stewart called the presentation bright,

colourful and entertaining. Written this past summer, it includes some concepts which were missing from the original and puts more emphasis on some which were included.

"We felt we couldn't do something which was age-specific," she said.

Response from students has shown the play does appeal to the wide age range included in elementary schools. This is the result of what Mrs. Stewart called a contemporary approach as opposed to the "Romper Room" style of its predecessor.

"While the play is useful in introducing concepts it is absolutely mandatory to have follow-up," she explained.

Mrs. Stewart stressed practise, encouragement and reinforcement are needed to ensure the aims of the program are met. A special kit for teachers includes puppets for role playing exercises, posters and instructional material.

Her music includes songs called "Touch," "Trust your feelings" and "It's not my fault" which provide further reinforcement of the program's message. Follow-up in the

classroom is covered in four areas. Teaching is dealt with, the idea of children standing up for themselves, people they can go to for help and personal safety are part of the approach produced by the committee.

"It's important for the child to know the teacher is involved," Mrs. Stewart said.

"The message we wanted to make clear is that everyone in this school knows about the problem and can talk to them about the problem."

Halton residents will have a chance to preview the play and learn about the program as well as respond to it. The location for a Milton presentation has not been determined however it will happen here Tues. Nov. 27 at 7.30 p.m. Two have been scheduled in Burlington the following day.

The task force in the meantime will be working toward completing a formal report to both Halton boards of education by January. Before creating that report, four committees will evaluate the play and education kit and organize in-service training for teachers.

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The hog operation of Bob Merry featured feeding half of his pigs outside. He uses metal dividers to separate the animals during feeding.



Five-year-old Peter Merry proudly showed off two baby pigs to the group visiting his father's farm.

Politicians get earful on tour of area farms

by Ted Brown

In an effort to educate politicians on the problems facing farm operations today, the Halton Agricultural Advisory Committee (HAAC) organized a tour of five Halton farms, October 4.

About 35 local politicians, school trustees, planners and municipal staff spent Thursday afternoon listening to farmers voice their concerns.

Then first stop of the bus tour was at the operation of Evelyn and Graham Gilles of Milton. The Gilles operate a beef cow-calf farm, and answered questions on the operation. Because their farm is in close to the proposed Halton landfill and OWMA toxic sites, the Gilles then took the opportunity to voice their opposition to the councillors.

The next stop was the dairy operation run by the father-son partnership of Bill and Paul Laidlaw of RR 2, Norval.

After explaining some of the practices of dairy farming, Paul Laidlaw was questioned about the controversial Croatian Centre up the road, and its affect on their

farm operation. "My neighbors will probably shoot me for saying this," he said, "But I feel it has little or no effect on us. In fact we rent a considerable amount of land from them."

The third stop on the tour was at the beef feedlot of Doris and Donald Lindsay, of RR 1, Georgetown. The unique feature of the Lindsay operation is that the short keep steers are fattened economically on hay and bakery waste which is cookies, cakes etc. that didn't meet quality control standards. Lindsay explained to the group that this method of feeding was about one-third the cost of a conventional corn feeding program.

The group moved on to Pinehaven Farms, the fruit and vegetable farm of James and Peter McCarthy of RR 3 Georgetown. After a brief talk on the business, Peter McCarthy took the group on a tour of his orchards.

While discussing farm and regional problems later, McCarthy expressed a concern over the swallowing up of agricultural farmland in the province. "We've got

to be careful, in our long-range planning, that we preserve this good farmland" he said. "After all, they're not making any more of it." He also expressed concern over the selection of garbage dumps. "I know they have to be," he told the group. "But I hope you people give them a lot of thought."

The final stop was at Merrybrook Farms, the hog operation of Bob Merry of RR 5, Milton. Merry commented first to the group about the subdivision that has sprung up directly south of his pig farm on Numbej Five Sideroad. "That subdivision is not compatible with my operation. Houses and agriculture do not mix, and I was here first," he stated. "And the only reason that that subdivision has come about, is because you people (the councillors) have allowed it."

Merry then outlined the financial aspects facing the farmer of today, and explained his own operation to the group.

The group finished the tour with a pork barbecue at the Merry Farm.



Local beef farmer, Donald Lindsay explained his feeding program consisting of hay and bakery waste. Lindsay is able to produce beef through this program at one-quarter the cost of a corn based ration.



Visitors to the Laidlaw farm were able to view the fine herd of Holstein cattle they have built up over the years.

Patrons lobby for computer technology

If the public has its way, the Acton and Georgetown libraries may soon turn into computer playgrounds from which students and researchers could tap into international data resources.

The need to help local schools keep up with technology and enable students to take advantage of the vast potential offered by today's computer systems emerged as a burning issue among members of the public who attended last Wednesday's meeting of the Halton Hills Public Library Board.

Suggestions from a half dozen people who attended the board's public forum in Georgetown amounted to an organized lobby seeking greater investment in computer and other technologies.

"There is a new elite who have computers at home and they're leaving behind a large segment of the population," Sheridan College administrator and former computer instructor Robert Lovelace advised the board. "There just aren't enough computer programs in the schools and those they do have are very structured. It's very important, therefore, for the library to make some inexpensive computers available."

Commenting that it's "criminal" for such services not to be provided by public libraries, Lovelace said the right computer link-up would enable local students of all ages to apply "university-level research" to their projects by tapping into publicly-accessible computer data bases in Canada and the U.S.

Harrison Public School teacher John Murphy noted that the Hamilton-Wentworth Board of Education sends students to its Region's public libraries, where computer programs complement classroom curriculum.

Lovelace and Bill Appgar of Maple Ave., a sometime computer instructor and a member of the Halton Social Planning Council, told the board that their views are shared by many other local educators, including principals at Acton and Georgetown

schools. Library trustees made no promises, but vowed to keep the demand for computers and other new technologies in mind during future budget considerations.

"If (local library computer programs) don't become a reality in the next few years," Appgar told this newspaper later, "I think the library board is going to be in the embarrassing situation of being one of the few boards around that are not offering these services. There are ways to get the money and there are plenty of people willing to help them set things up. It's a matter of whether they're willing to take that first step."

Appgar said he doesn't believe the cost of launching such programs will be as "overwhelming" as some might think. He expressed hope that other local residents enthused by the idea will contact the trustees about it.

Board chairman Norm Elliott welcomed an offer of help from the Halton-Peel Computer Club, whose vice-president, John Rice, said members will help library staff set up the equipment and programs and put them in touch with various data bases.

All present agreed that they'd be willing to pay any new library fees to use such equipment if the board consider them necessary.

As an extension of new technological programs at the library, Lovelace added that he'd like to see satellite reception equipment at the library capable of bringing in a variety of educational programming. The relatively new field of "teleconferencing" enables viewers around the world to tune in on specially-televised symposiums, he said.

Support for the move was offered by Rod Taylor of Windsor Rd., Ken Hughes of Market St. and Brenda Payton who noted a special need for computer programs geared to the physically handicapped. Although such courses are offered in south Halton, Payton said, the transportation costs are prohibitive for students.

Halton has declared Oct. 20-28 as Week of the Child.

The region's support in backing the week was recommended by the region health and social services committee.

November 5-9 will be Engineering Week in Halton.

Contracts

Tanya E. Cole, a speech therapist, has been awarded a contract to provide speech therapy to eligible home-care patients until March 31, 1985 on a fee-for-service basis.

Karen Laretei, nutritionist, has been awarded a contract to provide nutritional services in the region until March 21, 1985, and a fee-for-service basis.

Honoured

A number of regional employees were honoured by council for their service.

Retiring at the region were Doreen Brownell, printing; Gordon Filman, plant operator; Pearl Mowat, health care aide; and Josephine Mule, housemaid.

Retiring from Halton Regional Police were: Charles Parsons, Constable First Class; Jack Petrarca, Constable First Class; and Alexander Terell, Inspector.

Warning Sign

Council has authorized an agreement with CP Rail for the installation operation, maintenance and repair of a proposed special interconnected warning signal on Guelph Line in Campbellville.

Region briefs

Trees Planted

Halton will pay for trees to be planted along the newly reconstructed portion of Steeles Ave. in Milton.

This and another project in Halton Hills will cost \$26,402.60 to be completed.

Old Coat For New

A provincial coat of arms housed at the Halton Region Museum will soon grace the newly rebuilt courthouse and jail which will be used as Milton's new town hall.

The loan will be long-term, and when erected, will be accompanied by a small plaque noting the coat of arms is on loan from the museum.

Funeral Help

Regional chairman Peter Pomeroy will officially write a letter thanking the Town of Milton for the town's participation in the funeral procession held for Metro Police Constable David Dunmore.

The procession was conducted in an "uninterrupted and dignified manner" by the town, Mr. Pomeroy said.

Maintain children's programs, library trustees told

While the need for Halton Hills' public libraries to offer access to the new technologies was the main topic of conversation at last week's public meeting of the Library Board, it wasn't the only subject broached by concerned patrons.

The continuation of children's programs, the extension of operating hours, provision of an after-hours book return facility and improvements to the Acton library for the physically handicapped were other topics that drew about a dozen people to the meeting at the Georgetown library.

Taking a keen interest in the proceedings

was Councillor Harry Levy, former chairman of the Town's budget committee who called himself "a severe critic of the library."

Expressing his disappointment that more councillors weren't present, Levy commented that the meeting made it "obvious" to him that library requirements have changed substantially in recent years.

The book return box will be installed within months and changes to the two libraries' operating hours are being considered. The Acton library, termed "a hopeless case" for disabled patrons by Kit Woode

of the Physically Handicapped Citizens Association, could also see some changes to help alleviate that problem. Woode also asked the board whether it might expand on its deal with TV Ontario to provide access to all Channel 19 programming through its videotape equipment. The trustees took the suggestion under advisement, chief librarian Betsy Cornwell commenting that the libraries are slowly but surely "backing into the 20th Century" where modern electronic equipment and services are concerned.

Congratulating the board for the libraries'

"very beneficial" children's programs, Rod Taylor of Windsor Rd. said he'd rather have to pay extra library fees than see any programs cancelled for lack of funds.

Year-round children's programs, and especially summer pastime courses and pre-schooler's activities, provide "an excellent introduction to books and other library services", Taylor said.

Of the current debate over how much a library must do to accommodate local schools, Taylor commented on the need for a mutually-beneficial agreement. While teachers bring their students to the library

to work on projects with librarians' help, he said, perhaps the library patrons could make use of school facilities during the summer and off-hours. The schools' computers, if made accessible to library users, could help meet the demand for new technology at the libraries, he said.

To Brenda Payton and Robert Heaton, who asked about operating hours, board chairman Norm Elliott pointed out that current hours "aren't carved in stone", and while any changes will have "a tremendous impact" on library staff, 1985 will likely see some implemented.