

Determined youngster refuses to give in

By LOUI TAYLOR
Herald staff writer
Agnes Kavanagh is a very determined, independent young lady but she has to be because she has cerebral palsy.

Agnes was chosen this year to be Halton's "Tammy", to represent crippled children in Halton at fund-raising events on behalf of the Ontario Society for Crippled Children. She was first notified that she had been chosen when she was invited to attend the Halton Regional Police force's Policemen's Ball in early April.

Region plans meeting to be held in town

The members of Halton region's public works committee will be taking a first-hand look at eight different trouble spots in Halton Hills next week before convening a special meeting at North Halton Golf and Country Club.

The occasion is the annual works department tour, which this year is concentrating on 15 north Halton locations currently being discussed by the committee.

A charter bus will carry committee members and other interested officials from the regional headquarters in Oakville and make its first stop at Site "F", the highly-controversial 246-acre agricultural area in rural Milton where regional council has been attempting to establish a major landfill site.

The committee is actually expected to simply drive past Site "F" so that never members can familiarize themselves with the appearance of the area, which was the subject of a recent, three-month Ontario Municipal Board hearing. A decision is pending.

Stops are planned at four other Milton locations where the committee will examine two bridges and a highway intersection where improvements are needed, along with the newly-expanded Milton Water Pollution Control plant and the works department's north area operations headquarters on Steeles Avenue.

SPECIAL SESSION
The committee's regular bi-weekly meeting, normally held in Oakville, is scheduled to

begin at 1 p.m. at the North Halton Golf and Country Club on Georgetown's Maple Avenue, where members will have lunch while discussing pertinent issues.

Prior to the meeting, the committee will visit six Halton Hills locations.

Members will first view Main Street South in Acton, where the region is contributing \$421,750 toward the cost of installing sanitary sewers and watermains along Main, Mill and Agnes Streets. The project is slated to begin in June and end next November.

The next stop is Acton's Water Pollution Control plant off Churchill Road South, which was expanded last year to handle 1 million gallons of water per day.

In Georgetown, committee members will be shown the town's coin meter station on Todd Road, recently constructed adjacent to the region's water tower to improve the level of water services for some residents. Consumers had previously faced problems because bulk water haulers were drawing supplies from the Maple Avenue filtration plant.

NORVAL WATER
The Norval waterworks system is next on the agenda, providing the committee with an opportunity to see how the hamlet has been serviced from Georgetown's water supply using the 176,000-gallon capacity standpipe to provide balanced

pressure and an emergency supply for fire fighting purposes. The system was placed in service last June at a cost of \$474,200 although watermains were not completed until November.

The committee bus will then stop at Georgetown's Water Pollution Control plant off Mountainview Road South, originally constructed in 1961 and expanded last year to a 3 million gallon per day capacity.

The community's Water Filtration plant on Maple Avenue will also be viewed, showing the committee members how groundwater from four of Georgetown's six municipal wells is processed from consumption. According to 1978 statistics, Georgetown's consumer about 1.9 million gallons of water a day.

Following the committee meeting and luncheon, members will board the bus and head southward again, stopping briefly along Trafalgar Road between Stewartown and Ashgrove, where preliminary work has begun to widen the road.

The region obtained possession of all necessary lands along Trafalgar April 30 and tenders for the work will be called later this month.

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at three days a week for an hour of therapy to increase her mobility. When she started in kindergarten at Holy Cross school she was crawling on her hands and knees to get around.

By the time Agnes was in grade one, she was using a saddle walker, which she sat down in, and pushed with her legs. By grade 3, she used a parallel pusher, and by grade four, she was using a 4-11 walker.

In grade six, Aggie was using crutches for the first time, but it took a lot of work and exercise to get her there. During her hours of therapy, Aggie practises raising her legs from the floor, walking between parallel bars, and riding a bicycle. She also practises getting up and down stairs.

"It's hard work," she said.

Aggie is 12 years old, and has been handicapped since she was born. She was premature and the family doctor and pediatrician originally attributed her handicap to that fact.

When Mr. and Mrs. Kavanagh took Aggie to Sick Children's Hospital, they were told Aggie had cerebral palsy. She was three years old when the diagnosis was finally made.

NEVERTALK
When they said cerebral palsy, it hit us like a ton of bricks," Mrs. Kavanagh said. "They never told me she'd never walk."

Aggie now gets around with the assistance of crutches and looks forward to the day when she will be able to walk alone. But she wasn't always as mobile as she is now.

Aggie goes to Georgetown and District Memorial Hospital in addition to her visits to Georgetown hospital. Aggie makes regular visits every six months to the office of the Ontario Society for Crippled Children in Toronto, where she is examined by a neurologist and an orthopaedic surgeon. They give her and her parents a progress report; the last report said her balance is improving. Aggie said if she hopes to walk without crutches, Aggie must have a good sense of balance.

Aggie said she sets small goals for herself when doing her therapy, but she also has bigger goals to work on. Ask her what those bigger goals are, and she'll answer promptly: "I want to get my hips straight, and lift my legs higher." The accomplishment of both these goals is essential, if Aggie hopes to walk without her crutches.

"They say she'll throw away the crutches, with a lot of support, with a lot of therapy," Mrs. Kavanagh said. How long will it be before Aggie discards those crutches?

"It's not very far away," Aggie answered with confidence. Life isn't often smooth for the handicapped, as Aggie can testify. School has been good for the most part, she said, although there was one teacher who was unsympathetic to her special needs. This was resolved with a little help from her mother, but other situations Aggie can handle herself.

Children her own age frequently call her names. Is it because she's different? "That's what it seems like," Aggie said. As to the way she handles it, "I ignore it and tell them to shut up."

"I'm not sure it's really right, but she has to have some kind of defence," Mrs. Kavanagh said.

Aggie is limited in the activities she can participate in, but she enjoys to the hilt the ones she can do. She is particularly fond of television game shows, and loves playing cards, and going to the store and to the movies.

REALLY GOOD
"They're really good to us at the theatre," Mrs. Kavanagh said. "They let Aggie go to the head of the line so she won't get tired standing in line."

Going to the store, which Aggie said she enjoys very much, can be a problem, Mrs. Kavanagh said. People aren't aware that there's a handicapped person in the store, and they rush about at their normal speed without taking into consideration the fact that Aggie operates at a little slower rate, she said.

People do sometimes stare, and Mrs. Kavanagh said, "I stare right back at them for her."

Going on picnics with the other children at Cedarvale park was at one time out of the question for Aggie, but she is now able to go down to the park. With the hills on Maple Avenue, Aggie couldn't get to the park unless her mother drove her by car.

"The Guides have been very, very good to her," Mrs. Kavanagh said. "It's a pleasure to take her there." Aggie has earned her health, hostess, writer's, baker's and history badges and right now she is working on her speaker's badge.

Aggie has her own responsibilities at home, as do her brother, Jim and sisters, Pam and Cynthia. Aggie has to wash the dishes, "I've got dishpan hands", make her own bed, and keep her room clean.

"The way we've always

laugh, is that if Aggie does something wrong, she's punished for it, just as the rest of the children are," Mrs. Kavanagh said. "At the Society for Crippled Children they said, 'She doesn't want pity, it isn't good for her. Treat her like any other child.' And that's what we try to do."

Aggie isn't always treated like any other child by outsiders, however. Mrs. Kavanagh said when Aggie was four years old, she and her husband tried to get insurance policies for each of their children to provide them with a nest egg. The insurance company refused to insure Aggie, because "they said if there was a car coming at her she wouldn't be able to get out of the way fast enough. It's ridiculous — her life expectancy is the same as ours."

COMPANY REFUSED
Each summer Aggie goes to camp for two weeks. Lakewood Camp is located on the shoreline of Lake Erie, and is sponsored by the Easter Seals campaign. Children at the camp take part in arts and crafts programs, and swimming, and also have "free time to play," Aggie said. The campers also sometimes have campfires.

"Aggie really looks forward to it," Mrs. Kavanagh said. "Our cabin, Cabin 1, is this far from the Lake Erie," Aggie said, holding her hands out about a foot apart.

Mrs. Kavanagh said Aggie's family contributes financially to her stay at the camp, and hopes to be able to increase their contribution next year. The biggest expense for Aggie, aside from medical expenses, has been for shoes, Mrs. Kavanagh said. Aggie is unable to tie her shoes very far off the ground, and as a result, her shoes wear out quickly.

Aggie is driven to school each day by Glen Taxi, and Mrs. Kavanagh expressed her appreciation for their help. She said Aggie and her family also received a great deal of assistance from the Rotary Club and the Red Cross.

"Overall, it's been rough, but it's getting better, and getting easier," Mrs. Kavanagh said.

FEEL BETTER
Aggie said she gets depressed sometimes, but she just practises her exercises then, and she starts to feel better about the distance she's travelled.

She has her ambitions for the future, namely to become a teacher of children in grade



HALTON'S TAMMY

Agnes Kavanagh is a little limited in the activities she can share with her brother, Jim, and her sisters Pam and Cynthia, but the four enjoy playing cards together. Agnes, who is the second from the left, was born with cerebral palsy. She walks with the assistance of crutches, and her goal is to one day walk alone.

(Herald photo)

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