

It's backyard pool time again, and the rec department had some sound advice for owners last week

Taking the plunge this year?

This week, hundreds of Halton Hills families will uncover their pools, readying their backyard retreats to make the hottest of summer days tolerable.

But in the meantime, there's a lot of work to be done and the jobs list seems to go on forever. Gauges and pumps have to be reattached, water has to be tested, weirs attached, etc.

The Halton Hills recreation department conducted a seminar on preparing pools for summer use Thursday at Georgetown District High School.

Guest speaker Doug Paton, a recreation course instructor at Mohawk College in Hamilton, said, "The most important advice I can give to pool owners is, if you're in doubt about the safety of your water, contact the health department for tests."

Halton regional health officials said, "There are too many types of contagious bacteria for our labs to test private pools. You have to give us something to look for to give us any reason to check your pool."

As long as your pool is properly chlorinated, you won't have bacteria problems. Mr. Paton said, "The first



Poolside reports from Norm Ibuki

step to prepare your pool is to take a water sample and have its PH and alkaline levels tested."

From these test results, the pool owner can be advised as to methods of balancing their acidic level. Testing is usually free at any pool supplies store.

There are about 55,000 types of algae. They grow rapidly and may appear on pool walls, on the water surface, or remain suspended. And if care is not taken it will clog your water filter.

Mr. Paton noted that, "The most effective way to prevent algae growth is by ensuring you've got the proper number of skimmers (three for a 20 by 40 foot pool) and a pump that filters your pool's total volume of water at least twice a day."

Don't turn off your water pump at night. Chemical and health problems are more likely to result, off setting any energy savings," he said.

A pH (a measure for acidity) of 7.5 should be maintained at all times. At this level the disinfectant properties of chlorine function safest and best. Levels higher than 7.5 could cause eye soreness. At very high pH levels, skin can become scaly.

Measures below 7.5 cause skin and eye irritation. Though it is at these levels where chlorine works most efficiently, health problems and corrosion may occur.

The remedy for high or low pH is simple. If pH is too high, add either muriatic acid or sodium bisulfate to your water. If pH is too low, add soda ash (sodium carbonate)

(about 10 pounds for a 20 by 40-foot pool.) This will kill algae spores and bacteria. Shocking will also get rid of any excess chlorine, hair oil, perspiration, sun tan lotion, or anything else that may have made its way into your pool.

Mr. Sanderson noted, that, "All pool owners should shock their pools at least once every two weeks with either sodium hypochlorite or calcium hypochloride which is a solid and safest to use."

your pool is both a health and investment protection. Pool contractors report increased sales of up to 50 per cent over last year's sales. Most ironically attribute increased sales to increased interest rates.

Pessimists fear interest rates only get worse, and like victims of last year's "Gold rush", people are panicking.

Mr. Sanderson said, "People are buying more pools because of the increasing expense of maintaining a cottage. Today people would rather vacation in their backyards."

Jack Robertson, salesman for Family Trust Real Estate, said, "Investment into a pool for investment sake is a bad idea."

"A swimming pool depreciates in value quickly. And most owners of above ground pools usually end up having to disassemble their pools when they sell their homes."

Mr. Robertson points out that the value of an inground pool can only add to the value of your home. However there may be a difference of up to 80 per cent of what pool may add to your home's value if sold in the winter."

"If you're going to invest in a pool, make sure it's something you take good care of and are able to enjoy having for many years," said Mr. Robertson.

And with today's average pool costing about \$7,000 - that's good advice.

The good maintenance of



Being ready is best safe-guard against pool injuries

The most effective way to prevent swimming pool accidents around the home is to set conditions for pool use. Karen Goodfellow, water safety chairman for the Georgetown Red Cross, noted that "most drowning fatalities could have been prevented with rescue breathing - knowing what to do in an emergency."

"The procedure (mouth-to-mouth resuscitation) is not the most appealing, but it's the most effective method of rescue breathing. With immediate action, most deaths could have been prevented."

Flutterboards, life jackets, leaf skimmers and a ball attached to a rope should all be by poolside. Any material that is light, portable and floats is a potential life-saving device.

Mrs. Goodfellow also advised: -practicing life-saving methods regularly, making sure everyone knows what to do in an emergency;

-keeping a phone with emergency numbers attached within 50 seconds' reach;

-keeping all pool chemicals and measuring instruments locked up when not in use;

-positioning your float line a foot before the drop off line; -knowing the location of your hydro source;

-keeping a whistle at poolside to signal any emergency; -ensuring any gate or door to your pool is locked whenever your pool is not in use.

Most drowning victims are children. They should always be supervised.

Glen Campbell, Halton Hills' supervisor of aquatics, said, "Most drownings occur in unsupervised areas. I can't really say there's a problem with private pool accidents, because they aren't required to report their accident."

Neither Georgetown hospital nor police in Georgetown have any statistics on pool injuries.

Mr. Campbell noted that, "Other than the odd cut or stubbed toe, there have been no major accidents in a Georgetown public pool."

An employee at Georgetown district hospital said, "We don't get many pool related accidents. A bigger problem is with kids who swim in rivers and step on broken glass."

Mrs. Goodfellow said, "Our family pool is one of the best investments we've ever made. For a super-enjoyable summer, make sure your pool is safe-then you'll really love it."

Extra \$10 a year takes care of liability

By spending about \$10 a year more on your home insurance, you can be covered for pool liabilities which have resulted in recent court settlements of more than \$1 million.

Georgetown lawyer Tom Anderson said, "As long as a swimming pool owner behaves in a common sense manner, he probably won't be liable for pool accidents."

Mr. Anderson noted that more than 10 per cent of all pool accidents are diving-related. Between 1940 and 1973, 38 diving accidents were reported to Toronto

General and Sunnybrook hospitals. Injuries to 25 divers resulted in paraplegia.

To avoid liability for diving accidents, there should be no hidden dangers, the water shouldn't be murky and markings should indicate where it's safe to dive.

"The pool owner, by law, is responsible for the supervision of all young and poor swimmers," said Mr. Anderson.

"Those who teach swimming lessons in their own pool face greater responsibilities and should notify their insurance company, in writing, of their situation."

Vacationing pool owners are not liable for accidents, in their absence as long as they've abided by Halton Hills safety regulations in the construction and enclosure of their pool. (Copies of bylaw 80-51 are available from the Halton Hills building department, phone 877-5151).

If you allow friends to use your pool in your absence, you're still liable for any accident that may happen to them. You may be excluded from liability by a contract, but this is binding only between the pool owner and the individual with whom the contract is made.

Volunteer service chiefs hold meeting Wednesday

The Halton Association for Co-ordinators of Volunteer Services will hold a breakfast meeting at the Burlington Cultural Centre 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. this Wednesday.

The aim of the session is to share information and ideas among co-ordinators of volunteer services on the effective use of youth volunteers in their programs.

inators and volunteers are welcome. Participants will be asked to share their ideas and concerns about youth volunteer involvement.

For more information contact: Marion Esposito, President, (844-0462), or Joyce Fisher, Program Co-ordinator (844-4110).

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Region \$22,000 study will promote daycare

By CHRIS AAGAARD Herald Staff Writer

Halton region's daycare supervisor has predicted that residents will "see a much higher role" for daycare in the region as a result of a \$22,000 study now underway.

"We have a mobile society with a large number of single parents who have no one, absolutely no one to call for child care", Norma Lepa told members of the North Halton Social Planning Council recently.

Because Halton workers tend to travel to the region's southernmost communities, young parents, especially single, working mothers, need a wide range of daycare services in the north or else move to more expensive housing in Oakville or Burlington.

Describing daycare as "an investment in human resources", Mrs. Lepa said that the region and the provincial government will spend about \$80,000 on daycare this year, which breaks down to about one cent per levy dollar charged to residents. While operating daycare centres of its own (one on Maple Avenue north of Mountainview Road in Georgetown as well as two others in Oakville), the region also purchases services from privately-run centres in Milton and Oakville and also enlists private home care from 55 residents throughout the region.

A relatively small number of parents pay full fees while taking advantage of regional daycare services. Most users are single parents, mostly mothers, whose daycare needs are subsidized by the region to varying degrees depending on financial status.

KEEP JOBS
Daycare, Mrs. Lepa pointed out, allows the single parent to remain in the workforce, rather than quit his or her job to go on family benefits to support a child.

Without daycare services, taxpayers may end up forking over \$36 a month in family assistance for the single parent with one child, compared to the \$134 per month if the parent is able to get subsidized daycare.

Historically, Mrs. Lepa explained, a mother might quit her job and collect family benefits to care for her child until the youngster is old enough to work and leave home. However, by that time,

the mother may be between 40 and 55 years of age, unskilled and forced to live on welfare for the rest of her life.

Noting how devastating this can be to a parent's self-esteem, Mrs. Lepa said the long-term, unemployed parent is a "poor model for the child" as well as being very expensive to the provincial taxpayer.

"What we want to do is stop her from coming on the system," she added.

By placing the child in daycare centres or private homes, the parent can then use the time to look for a job, participate in job-retraining programs and, when she has found work, gradually begin to cover some of her child's own daycare costs. While parents pay full fees if they are earning \$20,000 per year, they may only pay a minimum

of \$1.55 per day at \$13,000 per year.

Private home daycare, in which youngsters are cared for in a home environment, may be a little more expensive, but it accommodates parents who have to work at odd hours of the day or during weekends. But it does not provide 24 hour service.

Not all parents receive subsidized daycare for their children because of severe financial trouble. Mrs. Lepa said the region's services also offer daycare for "therapeutic" reasons, removing the child from a hostile environment while parents seek counselling or otherwise overcome a family crisis.

Meanwhile, regional councilors are expected to receive the daycare study later this month.

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