

Extend-A-Family

Parents of handicapped get a break

By CHRIS AAGAARD
Herald Staff Writer
All parents need a break from the kids every once in a while, but for parents of physically and mentally handicapped youngsters, these brief respites are often few and far between.

So Mary Valeriote and Chris Dewdney, both parents of handicapped children, decided to open a chapter of a service they learned about in Burlington recently. It's called Extend-A-Family and as the title suggests, it tries to place disabled children for short periods of time (about a half-day a couple of times a month) with another family.

And, Mrs. Dewdney and Mrs. Valeriote agree, there are benefits enjoyed by the child's parents, the "surrogate" family and the child him or herself.

"Handicapped children tend to be very isolated from the rest of the community," Mrs. Dewdney said. "They often go to different schools in different places than where they live."

By placing them in other people's homes, even for very short periods of time, community awareness of the handicapped and their needs is heightened, Mrs. Valeriote added.

AWARENESS
"That's an important spin-off," she said, "getting handicapped children out into the community and having them accepted."

The idea for an Extend-A-Family chapter in North Halton was seeded after Mrs. Dewdney and Mrs. Valeriote attended a meeting in Burlington of "host" and natural families participating in various Extend-A-Family programs.

Seeded last year, the idea took root in September and there are now two Halton Hills Extend-A-Family host families and another currently being screened.

Host families are volunteers, as are Mrs. Dewdney and Mrs. Valeriote. They often have small children of their own and

host parents and hopefully a "match" is secured. "Any parenting can wear you out once in a while and you need to get out of the house," Mrs. Dewdney said. "With Extend-A-Family, it's nice for my son to have friends and it's nice for his father and I to have someone to call on when we need to."

Of the response to the Extend-A-Family chapter, Mrs. Valeriote noted: "There are people out there who really want to help and very willing to get involved." Some Extend-A-Family chapters have grand-parents as host families, Mrs. Dewdney said.

Meanwhile there are some intrinsic benefits in working as a volunteer on the Extend-A-Family program.

"It's a chance to get out and meet people," Mrs. Dewdney said. "A lot of things simply wouldn't happen without volunteers."

"You have," Mrs. Valeriote added, "the personal satisfaction of knowing you can help."

Although the Extend-A-Family program includes physically handicapped children, for organization purposes it comes under the North Halton Association for the Mentally Retarded (NHAMR) umbrella.

If you wish more information on Extend-A-Family, contact the NHAMR at 877-8867 or 877-2260. The NHAMR office is located at 63 Park Ave. in Georgetown (Silver Creek Towers).

Saving \$3.5 billion

For the first time, Statistics Canada included questions in their 1978-1980 Labour Force Survey 1 on the Volunteer Labour Force. What follows is a short summary of the results of that research.

— This number of hours is equivalent to 218,000 persons working a 40-hour week for a full year.
— The average number of hours worked was 177 hours per person.
— If these volunteers were to be paid at the average industrial wage, they would have represented \$3.5 billion in earnings.
— 64 per cent of these volunteers were female, 46 per cent were male.



Mary Valeriote (left) and Chris Dewdney (left) have formed an Extend-A-Family chapter in North Halton. This unique volunteer service matches "host" parents with the natural parents of the physically- and mentally-handicapped children. Two or three times a month, the host parents take care of the handicapped youngster, allowing the child's natural parents as long as a half day to themselves. Mrs. Dewdney and Mrs. Valeriote are joined by Mrs. Valeriote's daughter, Elinor.

A warm welcome for new neighbors

By CHRIS AAGAARD
Herald Staff Writer
Moving into a new community can be, pardon the expression, a little unsettling.

But two Halton Hills women are helping to take some of the anxiety out of opening a fresh chapter of life in an unfamiliar community.

Acton's Linda Reeve and Georgetown's Joan Gillespie are representatives with HI Neighbor, an all-Canadian service which introduces newcomers to community services and businesses.

With the exception of a stipend they receive from HI Neighbor's head office in Calgary to cover telephone and gas expenses, Mrs. Reeve and Mrs. Gillespie are one of hundreds of volunteers giving freely their time to help others. There are 500 HI Neighbor chapters in Canada.

FRIENDSHIP
Often a move to a new and strange community calls for the kind of friendship and assistance these HI Neighbor reps give.

Both Mrs. Reeve and Mrs. Gillespie were visited when they first arrived in Halton Hills.

"It was a big difference for us to move to

Acton from Mississauga," Mrs. Reeve recalled.



JOAN GILLESPIE

"But we found the people here warm and friendly."

The Gillespies came to Georgetown about ten years ago from Montreal, part of the wave of thousands of Quebecers who moved with their companies when the province's political climate was perceived to grow more hostile to English-speaking residents.

When they are not welcoming new residents, HI Neighbor reps encourage local businesses to participate in their introductory program. Newcomers contacted by the HI Neighbor service receive a folder crammed with useful information, like maps and possibly a business directory.

Shop proprietors featured in the folder offer coupons entitling the bearer to special "welcoming" gifts.

While it's good promotion for the merchants, it also helps new residents get around in the community, familiarizing themselves with stores and services, as well as community's network of streets.

Names of newcomers are sometimes supplied by real estate firms or reach the HI Neighbor reps by "word-of-mouth."

"When we get the name of a new family, we make an appointment for a

visit," Mrs. Reeve explained. "We tell them

where the stores are located, who are the owners, where the schools and churches are, who to call for this and that."

As volunteers, Mr. Reeve and Mrs. Gillespie reap rewards which have nothing to do with making money.

"It's nice to get out and meet new people," Mrs. Reeve said. "I like to talk to them and help them feel settled."

Often the move can be hardest on the homemaker who is left alone during the day to do her own exploring in an unfamiliar environment.

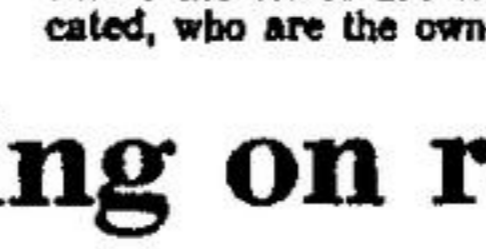
"A lot of women who are part of a transfer

really love to have someone to talk to," Mrs. Reeve added, noting that the HI Neighbor rep is a good listener as well as one who arrives with lots of helpful advice.

"There are rewards in meeting people and helping them get involved," Mrs. Gillespie commented.

One way of coming out of the post-move blues, she suggests, is by getting involved with the community as a volunteer.

"It's one way of making a lot of friends," she said.



LINDA REEVE

where the stores are located, who are the owners

Focussing on recruitment

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Mrs. McCallum: "That's exactly right. Well I guess recognition is the name of the game. That's what Volunteer Week is all about - is trying to encourage the agencies. By us recognizing them is one thing but if the agency you work for appreciates you, then that's going to mean a lot more than the volunteer centre."

The Herald: "What about the future of the Halton Hills volunteer centre in terms of its own growth are there any certain areas you would like to get into?"

Mrs. McCallum: "Well certainly the recruitment - I guess we're just about through our second year and I see the recruitment and referral and resource centre as being my main focus for the next little while. I think getting information out to the community, to the agencies through the resource centre and through the media are very important. Certainly in the future we would like to get into training programs with agencies...courses that might be a benefit to several of the agencies at once."

had some teenagers that were teaching computers to other kids and you know you get scouts and guiding and I could go on forever I guess! It's all volunteer work and it's really the backbone of the community. So I suppose what you say about the typical volunteer, I don't think there really is one."

The Herald: "What about the future of volunteering. There seems to be a trend when you look in terms of straight economics. People don't have the money now to rely on services where there are paid people. Do you see the volunteer movement growing?"

Mrs. McCallum: "Well I can see there is certainly a need, but I think the agencies are going to have to put a lot of emphasis in terms of benefits (such as) training volunteers."

If they want competent, qualified people, they're going to have to put their time into supporting them (the volunteers)."

The Herald: "They have to feel that they're appreciated as well."



What Are Volunteers?

- Volunteers are like Ford - they have better ideas
- Volunteers are like Coke - they're the real thing
- Volunteers are like Panam - they make the going great
- Volunteers are like Pepsi - they've got a lot to give
- Volunteers are like Standard Oil - you expect more and you get it
- But most of all... Volunteers are like Frosted Flakes - they're GRRRRREAT!

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