

JUVENILE DIVERSION: Pilot project favors community service over court process

By ANI PEDERIAN
Herald Staff Writer

Since the juvenile diversion program began in January, 40 young people caught transgressing the law were spared criminal records in Halton Hills and Milton.

Diverted from the full impact of the criminal justice system, these youngsters are making up for their offences through community service work, restitution or other appropriate solutions.

"These kids haven't been involved in dangerous offences like assault or sexual abuse or weapons. Most are minor offences like shoplifting, and it's their first time," juvenile diversion co-ordinator Lori Chapman said.

The program is a one-year pilot project funded with an OCAP grant, and is intended to take some of the work away from the courts. It's in step with the upcoming implementation of the Young Offenders' Act in which communities will be required to provide community work for juveniles who have been in trouble with the law.

Working hand in hand with Halton regional police youth bureau sergeant Tom Johnson, Mrs. Chapman meets with the juvenile offender, his parents and the victim to discuss the diversion process. A voluntary program, it is a way of avoiding the formal and costly court process which results in a criminal record.

Juveniles referred to the program by Sgt. Johnson are made to realize that they are responsible for their actions.

"The support of the parents is wonderful," Mrs. Chapman, a petite blonde said. "It's much more effective than



LORI CHAPMAN having the parents pay."

Working out of Milton, Mrs. Chapman has a roomy office on Main Street next to the United Way.

Recently a youngster shot out the back light and a window of the building with a pellet gun. Although it was a matter of \$20, the boy was made to apologize to the manager and replace the light and window.

"It wasn't just an 'I'm sorry'," Mrs. Chapman said with satisfaction. "They had a discussion."

The case is typical of how youngsters are treated through the program for anti-social behavior.

Since the program began in January, 40 kids have put in time doing volunteer work

for various organizations in the community including the YMCA and the Acton Legion. Service work varies, although it can be as high as 200 hours.

CRUCIAL
The crucial ages for getting tangled up with the law seems to be 13, 14, 15, and 16, Mrs. Chapman noted.

"After 16, if they haven't done it, 90 per cent of the time, they won't," she said. "Between 13 and 16 are the magical numbers when kids are likely to get involved for the first time."

Knowing a lot of people in town helps Mrs. Chapman land placements for the youth. However, it's tough to overcome the attitude people have about juvenile offenders. Many are reluctant to take in the youths and put them to work.

"We do a lot of maintenance help for the seniors in town," Mrs. Chapman said. In some cases a friendship has sparked between the two age groups and carried on after the work term was completed.

Part of the program is victim assistance, but in some cases a victim is reluctant to have the youngster working for him.

Four out of five of the youths in the program are male. Most of the girls tend to be runaways or shoplifters, Mrs. Chapman said.

For more information about the juvenile diversion program contact Mrs. Chapman at 878-4592.



George Kennedy Public School students took to the outdoors last Wednesday afternoon, taking advantage of the warm weather to compete in a variety of contents and games. Here, Jack Mashinter (front, left) and his pal Randy Barrett prepare themselves for an event where they must carry a variety of items in their grasp, including hockey sticks, past the finish line. (Herald photo)

Women's shelter lacks funds

Halton Women's Place is reaching out for community support. The three-year old shelter for physically and mentally abused women and their children needs money. Located in Milton, the residence has 13 beds, and has periodically squeezed in 23 women and children under its

roof. Hanging in financially is a continuing difficulty for the home. Regional funding is received according to the number of residents. However, as the number of residents fluctuate from week to week, hydro, heat and mortgage expenses don't

hostel co-ordinator Jo Davis explained. She's hoping the region will move to block funding, which will mean a set budget for the year. An annual budget of \$160,000 is being sought, Mrs. Davis said. For more information or donations, call 878-7757.

Lungs Week Oct 2-8

The Halton Lung Association announces "Lungs Are For Life" Week Oct. 2-8. This special week is designed to make the public aware of respiratory disease - how to avoid the problems and how to cope with it when present. This year's theme is "Breathe Free"

which is also the name of a record-book with a focus on asthma. "Breathe Free" is the story of two children with asthma, their experiences and how they learned to cope with their problem. The program was originally funded by Gulf Canada and in order to maintain

it a donation of \$5 is requested. The Lung Association has re-opened their gym-swim programs for children with asthma in Burlington, Georgetown and Oakville - a better breathing club for adults with respiratory disease in Burlington and is sponsoring "Asthma Awareness"

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Smoke detectors may be defective

Halton Hills Fire Department advises that Honeywell battery operated smoke detectors, model TC89C and model TC89B have been voluntarily recalled by the manufacturer. These detectors were distributed in Canada between January 1978 and May 1978. The models TC89C and TC89B, because of the way the circuit board is mounted, may malfunction when smoke is present, though the unit would still alarm if the test button is pressed. The affected models will be replaced with a comparable model at no charge by returning it to Honeywell. The model numbers and date codes can be found under the smoke detector cover, inside the detector on a piece of gray cardboard. Owners of the TC89C and TC89B are urged to call Honeywell toll free at 1-800-268-5554.

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