

The message is clear, but is anyone out there listening

By NICK ZUBACS
Herald Special

I've never been a great public speaker or a great writer, but I feel that it is my responsibility to write about a rapidly growing problem in Georgetown.

It could be creeping into your home or already be there without you knowing it. Teen alcoholism is a problem all over North America, but I think you'd find we've got the same problem to an ever higher degree right here in Georgetown.

Parents and teachers, I'm speaking to you. Don't start scoffing, laughing or shaking your head just yet. Open your eyes and read on because I'm quite serious.

It would be safe to assume that the percentage for teenaged drinkers in Ontario has probably doubled in our community. There are many kids in our high schools who drink on a regular basis, maybe not every day, but certainly every weekend, and if you think that doesn't constitute a problem, you're wrong. It is a problem, and one that's been allowed to grow for too long. It is hard to say



whether it has grown to this proportion due to lack of information, lack of awareness or lack of concern, but it is a problem all over the same, and before you can try to solve it, you've got to find the causes.

Simply put, from a teenage point of view, Georgetown is boring. Sure, it's nice, fairly quiet and has that small town appeal. Everything you need is nearby without any hassle and it is still a large enough community to be interesting on special occasions. In general, it seems to be the perfect place to raise a family. But for someone who is 13 to 16, in high school and not old enough to get into bars to socialize, this small town presents a problem. Even on weekends, there is very little happening that involve the average teen.

Mind you, there are other factors that affect how the teenager feels about alcohol. Peer pressure is one example but there's another that might hit home a little stronger and it's less obvious. If a kid sees his or her mom or dad come home after a long day and immediately head for the booze, what is he or she going to think? That teenager could believe that it's all right to grab a bottle after a long week at school.

So there are two more important factors that contribute to the problem, but the big one is the lack of teen-oriented activities in Georgetown and this leads teens to the most popular alternative-alcohol. What better way to forget your problems for awhile? What better way to celebrate the weekend? You can't go out and dance because there is no dance club. You can't go hang out on the streets for fear of being accused of being a troublemaker. Besides, it's cold outside at this time of the year!

Perhaps what we need is a youth drop-in centre, a place for kids to go. A place like Open Door is great, but

funds can be kind of low and it's not open in the evenings, when most alcohol consumption takes place. School dances, dances by independent deejay services, parties while the parents are away - all of them include enough alcohol to keep a small army drunk for a week. There must be a solution, and here is one that I'd like to propose.

Keep the kids off the streets by opening up a drop-in centre in the evenings. Butter yet, open the high school doors a couple of nights every week. If the kids had a place to go and something to do, they might not be so interested in drinking. It is necessary though, to provide more funding for programs like these.

However, if people will think about what sort of outcome this could have, I don't think they'd mind.

Furthermore, if you suspect that your child is drinking or you're curious to know if they ever have, ask them! But make sure you don't act hostile towards the situation. Approach them calmly, show your concern and when you get your answers, don't yell and scream and carry on, or you may be giving them another reason to drink! Of course not all kids are drinking, and just because a child has tried drinking before, it doesn't mean that he or she is an alcoholic now.

Keep in mind what I've said - there's not much for teenagers to do

in this community. Believe me, I'm 17 years old and I know what it's like to be bored and tired of Georgetown. I've lived here for almost eight years now and I can remember times when I was getting drunk two or three times a week, but I don't anymore. I spend a lot of my time watching hundreds of kids drinking more and more. Perhaps you are the parent of one of them.

Still scoffing? If so, that's unfortunate because you've got as much of a problem as the kids who drink. Adults and teens alike cannot go on denying that there is a problem any longer. It's time to put a stop to this problem - not soon, not later - now!

Caught in the Timescape



Members of the Kensington Youth Theatre Ensemble of St. Stephens (KYTEs) work through a scene from their play entitled "Timescape" during a performance at St. Andrew's Church recently. The Toronto-based group teaches young adults job readiness skills by having them write and perform their own theatrical plays.

"Timescape" deals with people and how they cope with the stress and struggles of life. Shown in this scene are cast members Gillian Mals, Mark Lewin, James Wilson, Tom Kirby, Elena "Ziggy" Junior, Brennan O'Connor, Susan Milford, Mark Bailey and Christine Cruise. (Herald photo)



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The Brampton and District Branch of the Canadian Diabetes Association will be holding a pre-Christmas Bake Sale and Bazaar.

The date to remember is Saturday, Dec. 3, 9:30 to 3 p.m. The place is Bramalea City Centre near Tea Masters on the first level.

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