

Volunteer visitors address needs of terminally ill

Concern over the rise in the AIDS epidemic and addressing the needs of the terminally ill is the motivating force behind the Volunteer Visiting program of the North Halton Hospice.

Meningitis still found

Parents are often faced with the puzzling question of when to call the doctor about a sick child. We picture that familiar wait in a crowded office for the doctor's opinion about a feverish child with a cold. Thankfully the diagnosis is usually 'a virus' and in a few days everything is back to normal.

Occasionally, however, these symptoms may signal a more serious problem. One of these is meningitis, an infection which affects the membranes covering the brain and spine. An acute form of the illness is caused by various bacteria. Symptoms appear suddenly - fever, intense headache, nausea and often vomiting, stiff neck and sometimes blood blisters the size of a pinhead appear as a body rash. In rare cases shock and coma appear immediately, the bacteria invade the bloodstream and despite all support measures, the child may die.

In most cases, however, prompt diagnosis and hospital treatment with antibiotics ensure complete recovery.

Meningitis is relatively common in our temperate climate with cases occurring in both urban and rural areas. The greatest number of cases occurs during winter and spring and sometimes a cluster of cases occurs in a community. The germs that cause meningitis are common ones. Usually, there is no obvious reason why one child will get a simple cold whereas another infected with the same germ will go on to develop meningitis.

Since this disease is usually seen in children and young adults, parents wonder how to protect their youngster or teen. The bacteria are transmitted by direct contact, including droplets and discharges from the nose or throat of infected persons. Often this person is not ill, but is a carrier of the germ. This, of course, means that medical staff are rarely able to discover the source of the meningitis. It could be the result of a sneeze on a crowded bus or at a shopping mall or theatre. This also means that the family, friends and classmates of the sick child are unlikely to catch the infection from the child.

Since there is therefore no specific way of avoiding this unusual infection, the health measures we have learned since childhood are still best:

- covering your mouth when you cough or sneeze
- a well balance diet
- rest, relaxation and exercise
- frequent handwashing especially after using the toilet and before eating or preparing food

In the Region of Halton during 1987, there were twelve cases of meningitis caused by different types of bacteria or viruses. These people recovered.

During 1988, seven cases have been reported and one child died of an acute, overwhelming infection.

Lifestyles

The program is offering a training program for people interested in the needs of terminally ill people. It is a 10-week session designed to teach volunteers communication skills, how to handle the emotional needs of clients and how to help with the practical aspects of living as a person coping with terminal illness.

The training program is a 10-

week course, with eight of those weeks devoted to the regular course, and an extra two weeks added to train volunteers to deal with AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) patients.

Volunteers who do not want to deal with people with AIDS are allowed to opt for the eight-week session.

The two-week training program

concerning AIDS has just been introduced to the visiting program in response to a very major concern.

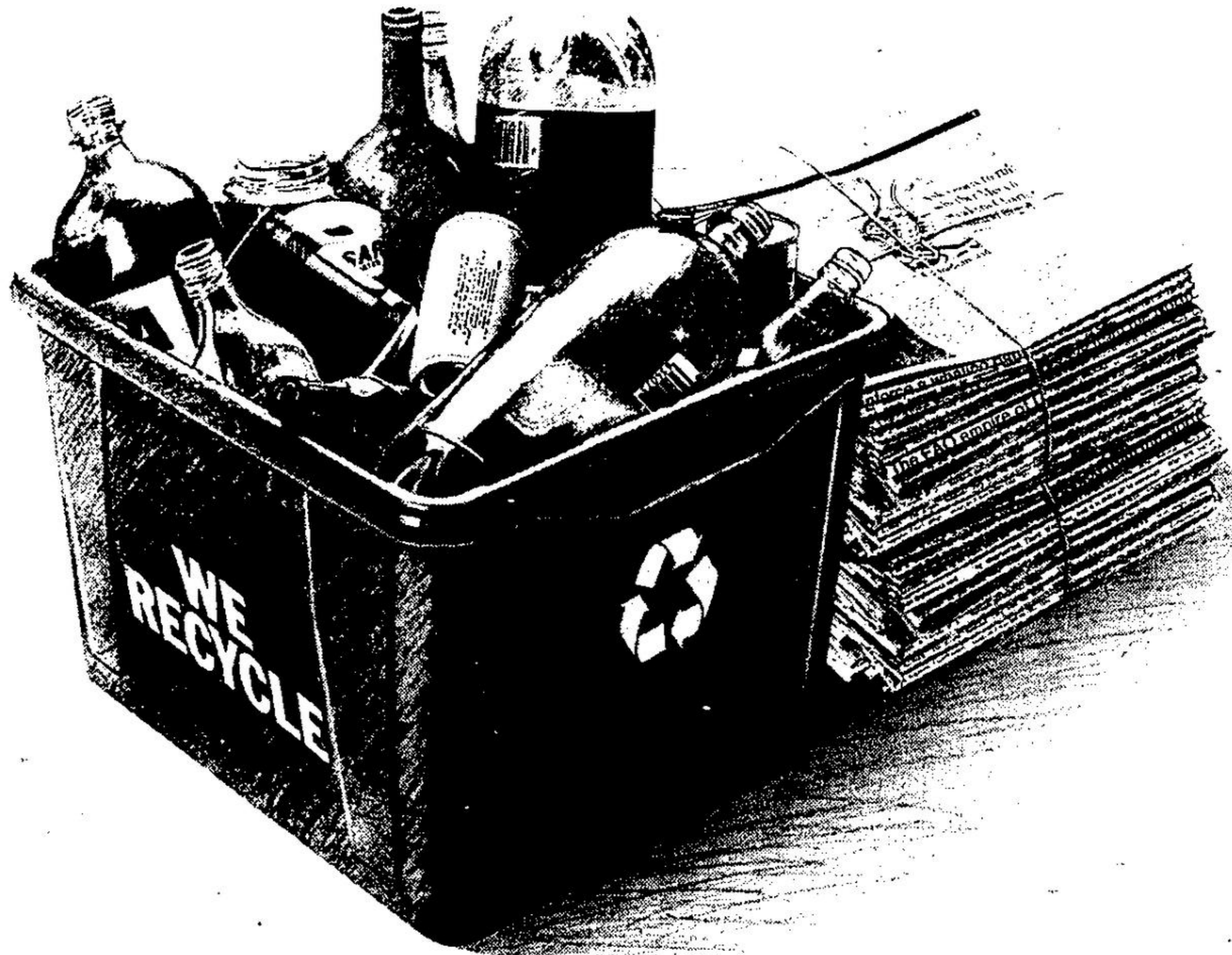
"They're predicting an increase in the disease," said Donna McClure, who is helping co-ordinate the program. The two weeks are designed to get volunteers to understand AIDS, and to dispell many of the fears and myths that have arisen through panic.

To date, the program has dealt mainly with cancer patients. Public reaction has been favorable, but the organization needs donations. "It's been quite supportive," said Ms. McClure,

"but we have to get the public involved." So far, the visiting program has been relying on the United Way, private donations and fund raising events sponsored by the North Halton Hospice. "There is a need for additional funding," said Ms. McClure.

The training program will begin Jan. 12, at 7 p.m., at Hopedale Mall in Oakville.

Anyone wishing further information should contact Donna McClure at the North Halton Hospice. at 853-3310.



You and Your Blue Box!

Blue Boxes have been added to Halton Hills' "Divide and Conquer" recycling program. By now you should have received your own Blue Box. It's part of an important community project to help reduce the household waste that goes into landfill sites and to conserve our precious natural resources.

You can be part of it. Simply collect and store newspapers, glass bottles and jars, beverage and food cans and plastic soft drink containers in your Blue Box.

Then put it at the curb for pick-up by 7 a.m. on your regular garbage collection day.



Please bundle all newspapers and inserts or place them in a grocery bag on top

of or beside your Blue Box. To avoid attracting pests, remember to rinse out all containers.



Our Halton Hills recycling program will only be a success if we all participate.



If you have any questions, call the "Blue Box Line"

877-5185 ext. 226.

Recycling.

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