



50th anniversary

There's nothing as golden as a 50th anniversary. An anniversary celebration was held in honor of Jane and Frank Whitmee of Norval at the Oddfellows Hall on Wesleyan Street Saturday afternoon. (Herald photo)

Literacy group celebrates special year

By GERALDINE BARNES
Public Relations Committee
North Halton Literacy Guild
September 8th heralds International Literacy Day - a special occasion in this year of celebration of International Literacy Year.

On this day we at the North Halton Literacy Guild, salute all practitioners, advocates and tutors, and pay particular tribute to the courage and hard work of learners, who through their willingness to retrain, are exercising their rights as citizens more fully.

The Guild is now in its third year of operation, and has tutoring venues in Georgetown, Acton and Milton. Its aim is to reach out to the one in five adults in this community who cannot read adequately to cope in our ever-changing society.

Individual tutoring is conducted in an atmosphere of confidentiality, and the focus is on the learners' needs. This makes for varied programming, and funding is provided by the Literacy Branch of the Ministry of Education.

Local service clubs have been generous with their interest and support, and this allows the project manager Maureen McCallum, and tutor-learner coordinator Ave Edington, to choose multi-media resources for the 35 students whose ages range from sixteen years to 70. Tutoring workshops are conducted by the aforementioned staff and Eileen Evans - a valued

member of the Guild Executive.

Volunteer tutors become aware quickly of the negative consequences of illiteracy for the individual, families and all of society. For example, lack of reading skills becomes very obvious on the labour front. A recent survey by the Canadian Task Force on Literacy reveals that technology is redefining job requirements. Thus the level of reading and comprehension ability calls for a minimum of Grade nine, but usually the standard is closer to grade twelve.

The report goes on to state that illiteracy costs Canadian business an average of four billion dollars annually. This staggering figure is attributed to some workers' inability to read job related materials, and results in absenteeism, industrial accidents, unemployment and long rehabilitation.

The establishment of Workplace Literacy programmes, and the encouragement of managers, bosses, and union leaders, has helped alleviate these problems.

With that in mind, the North Halton Literacy Guild has hired a workplace literacy coordinator, Karen Bongard. Karen would be pleased to discuss such upgrading projects with business and labour personnel in this community. Watch for an article by Ms. Bongard on this vital and timely topic.

The U.S. educator Jonathan Kozol says "Illiteracy makes its victims half citizens, their rights exist in print, but not in fact."

Many Canadian born citizens are in that category. Their ages run from sixteen to forty-five - potentially their most productive period, yet many have difficulty reading highway signs, a driver's manual, government forms, the voting procedure, fire and medical warnings. Because most non-readers are intelligent, they develop coping strategies which work, some of the time, but there is always the fear of being found out.

Non-literate parents experience embarrassment and frustration when faced with their child's report card, or a note from the teacher.

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