

Community

Georgetown gains new transportation service

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By LISA BOONSTOPPEL-POT
 The Herald
 Seniors, single mothers and other financially restricted persons who have found Georgetown's sprawling lay-out creates costly transportation problems, will soon have an affordable transportation service to make use of.

Four Halton Hills' residents have decided to tackle the transportation problem for needy persons by establishing a transportation pool which will begin service April 6, during the daylight hours of Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.

"It's for seniors, and other needy people who can't afford a taxi and need a ride to get to a doctor's appointment, a hair appointment or even a ride downtown for some shopping," said Linda Berry, who heads up the Volunteer Centre in Georgetown.

It was she, along with Judith Rasanen, co-ordinator of the North Halton Distress and Information Centre; Marilyn Sergeantson, Town councillor and Gerald Rennie, teacher, who've worked many months to establish this service.

Mr. Rennie was the person who instigated the process of establishing the service in Georgetown. Being an Acton resident, he was familiar with the transportation service Acton Social Service and Information Centre (ASSIC) offers.

"I thought if Acton needed such a service, there must be three times the need in Georgetown."

But arranging the service in Georgetown wasn't easy. First of all, there was no organization in Georgetown comparable to ASSIC to operate the program. Through Ms. Rasanen's involvement in the project, it was decided that persons needing rides would call the Distress and Information Centre but persons wanting to volunteer would contact the Volunteer Centre, an awkward but workable solution.

The next snag they ran into was how to receive payment for the

rides. In Acton, the money is paid to ASSIC who keep half and give the rest to the driver. Again, Georgetown didn't have a service to accept the fees so the committee decided to charge \$2.50 each way (\$5.00 return) paid directly to the driver.

But this act of payment almost blew the whole plan since car insurance companies have different insurance policies regarding such instances. The situation where a driver makes money providing rides could possibly mean increased insurance costs and a lot of hassle for volunteer drivers. Eventually through several meetings with local insurance companies, the committee learned most companies would like to be informed that volunteers were offering rides for no monetary gain and wouldn't increase their insurance fees.

"There might be an occasional company that charges an addition \$30 for people who volunteer rides," said Ms. Berry and if this occurs, she said it will just be another small obstacle this committee will have to overcome.

Ms. Berry is quick to say the volunteer drivers are not trying to compete with taxi drivers. "It's for people who can't afford to use a taxi," she said.

The service is filling a gap in Georgetown left by other transportation services such as Pegasus, Red Cross and the Halton Children's Aid Society.

Pegasus is an Inter-Municipal Transportation service for the mobility disabled; Red Cross provides a transportation service for persons unable to obtain public or family transportation to out-of-town medical appointments and the Children's Aid Society provides rides to children for their appointments throughout Halton. There is also Acti-Van for people in Halton Hills who cannot climb steps or stairs or cannot walk 175 metres.

The new service will be promoted at the Halton Lifestyles Show on April 6 at Georgetown and District High School. Though Mr. Rennie and Ms. Berry aren't

sure how great the need is for such a service, they'll be recruiting as many volunteers as they can that day.

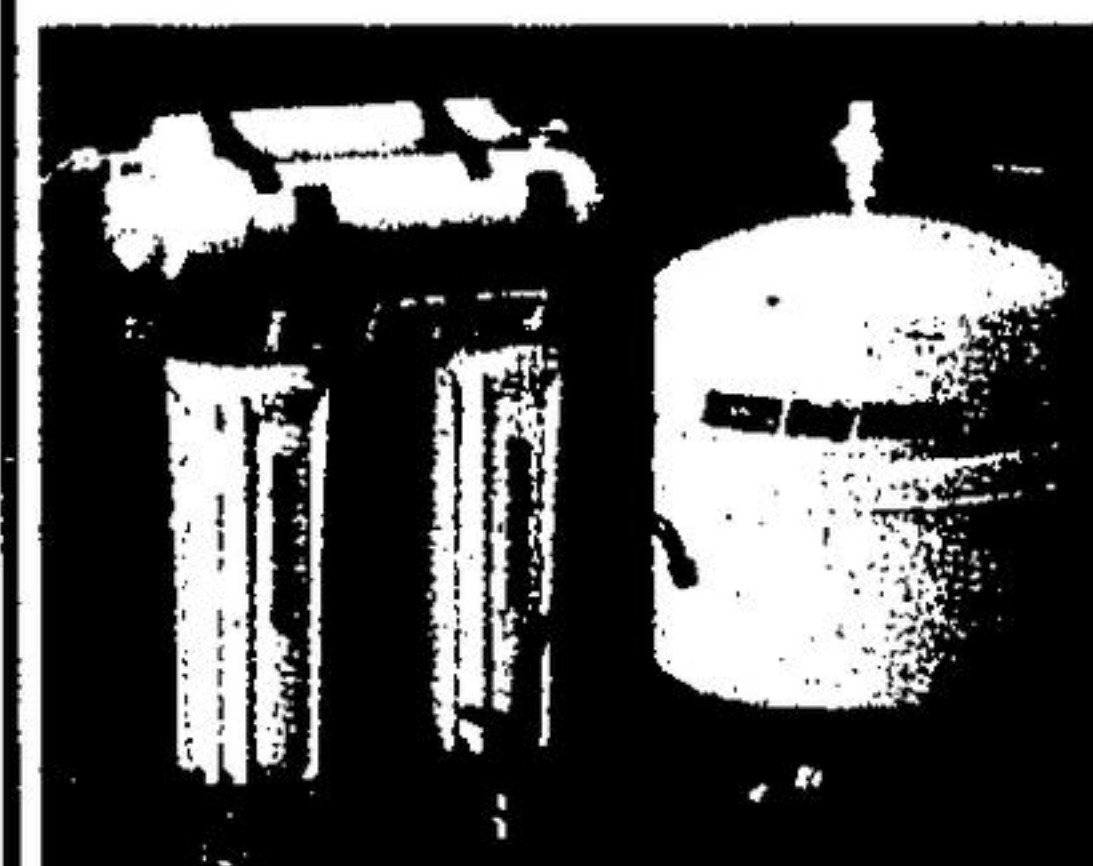
As it stands now, in the service's early stages, anyone who requires a ride for a medical appointment, shopping trip or per-

sonal trip within the Georgetown, Norval, Glen Williams, and Stewarttown urban boundaries can call the North Halton Distress and Information Centre at 877-1211.

Anyone interested in being a volunteer driver should call the Volunteer centre at 877-3219.

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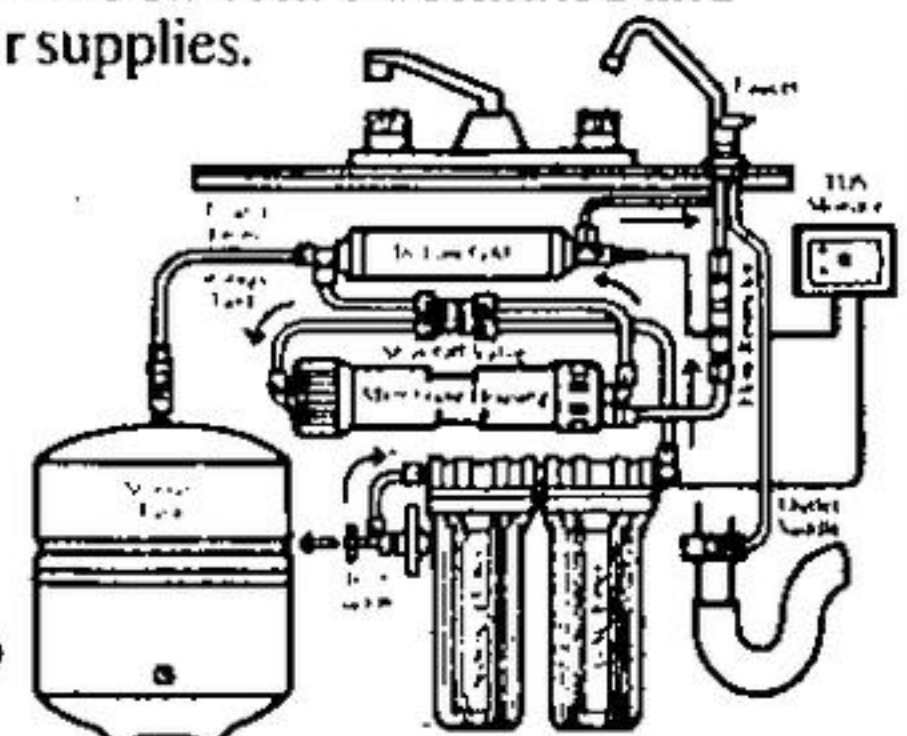
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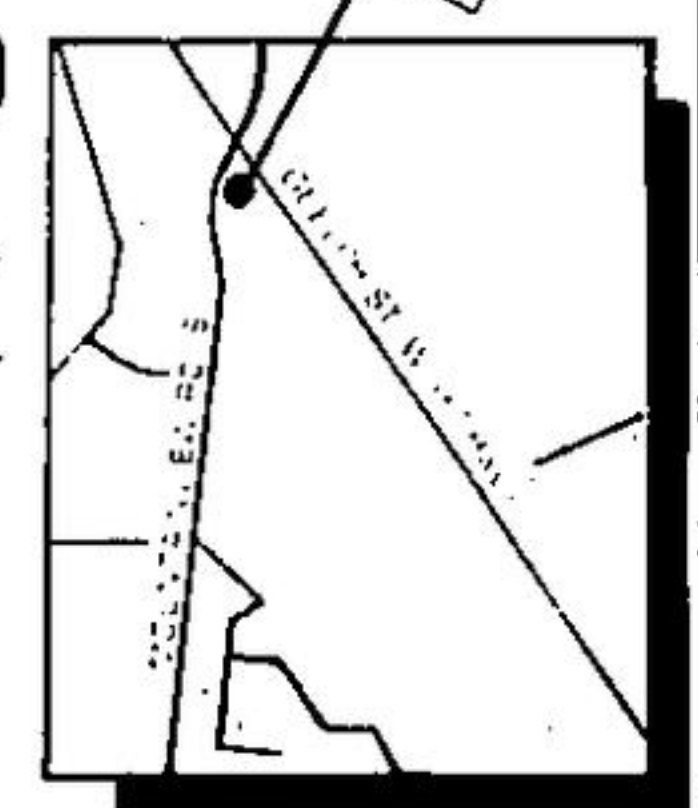
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