

Auxiliary police provide important town function

By LISA BOONSTOPPEL-POT
The Herald

On their own, they're just regular citizens with families and jobs. But under the direction of a police officer, they become citizens on patrol and upholders of the law as Auxiliary Police.

Last week, several Halton residents were sworn-in as auxiliary police officers in a special ceremony at Halton Regional Police's 11 Division station in Georgetown. Five of them were assigned to the North Halton area and made their first appearance as Auxiliary police at the popular Lions Club Crazy Boat Race down the Credit River Saturday.

Constable Andy Pink, formerly of Georgetown, Constable Wade Gramada of Milton, Constable Grant Taylor of Milton, Constable Pam Douglas of Georgetown and Sergeant John Tatham of Georgetown were busy directing traffic, controlling crowds and keeping the peace at the event.

Sergeant John Tatham was in charge of the crew. He helped train the new Auxiliary officers and was promoted to the position of Sergeant at the special ceremony Thursday night after serving the community as an Auxiliary Constable for several years.

One of his trainees, Constable Andy Pink, said "it's fun being out there as an Auxiliary officer." Though some of the duties the officers are required to undertake, like traffic control and searching for missing children, aren't exciting tasks, Constable Pink said he didn't join the auxiliary ranks for a thrill.

"I like to help the community," he said. "I've always done a lot of volunteering and I thought this would be a novel way to give service."

That sentiment is echoed by Constable Douglas. "I was born and raised in Georgetown. I like this town and I wanted to volunteer to give back to the community," she said. "Since I knew a lot of officers on the force, I thought this would be a good way to do that."

The chance to deal with the public drew Constable Gramada to the force. "I just moved to North Halton last year so I thought this would be a good way to meet people and get to know the area."

And meet people they will, said Staff Sergeant of the North Halton Auxiliary police force, Jim James. He explained that Auxiliary officers are out there to assist police officers and the public in anything from point duty at town parades to controlling traffic during a hydro failure.

But he stresses the Auxiliaries

are not police officers. "Auxiliary officers are under the direction of police officers. They are there to assist the police and

public and have the same powers of arrest as citizens," he said.

The Auxiliaries do not carry a weapon but are given firearm

Proud to serve

By JOHN TATHAM
Auxiliary Police

Georgetown is a community built and held together by the work of many volunteers, which in itself is one of the contributing factors to making this such a unique and pleasant place to live and work. Volunteers are found in the hospital, Fire Department, Ambulance Service and in many of the community homes and services for the aged. The Lions Club, Kinsmen and Optimists thrive on the work of volunteers.

I have always wanted to make a meaningful contribution to the community but by virtue of the fact that I work as a Supervisor with the Toronto Transit Commission in the city, I was unable to contribute with many of these services. The travelling distance and the shift work made most of them impossible to make a serious commitment to.

At the same time, I always appreciated the work that was being done by the members of the Halton Regional Police. The job of a police officer is becoming more and more complex and demanding as time goes on. We see the spread of violence in the city encroaching on our borders and whilst we have been sheltered to a point, because of our isolation from the city, I am sure that most of us realize that it is only a matter of time. I credit the Halton Police to a very high degree, with staying off the influx of the criminal element for as long as this.

It is one of the easiest things in the world to be an "armchair quarterback," and the Police certainly have their share of critics. I venture to say that the most vocal of these have absolutely no idea of what is really going on in their community, and are doing very little to find out for themselves. These are the people who are forever saying, "Why doesn't somebody do something?" but never think of doing anything themselves.

I am not suggesting that these people rush out and sign on as Auxiliary Police Officers, for this is not for everyone. However, there are many other areas to which their expertise could be put to good use. I have learnt so much in the last 2½ years of my association with the Halton Police and the benefits of this learning has been immeasurable, both with respect to the Police and my



Sgt. John Tatham

private life. Extensive courses in First Aid, C.P.R., rescue training both with the Fire Department and the Coast Guard, an in-depth study of municipal, provincial and Federal law. An education that would have cost a fortune elsewhere. I now feel much more confident when I arrive on the scene where help may be needed. We may be called upon to assist in searches and rescue work should it become necessary.

I have always had the greatest respect for our Police Officers, and this respect has been reinforced tremendously in the time that I have been fortunate enough to work with them. I have seen their professionalism show through many times and in countless different ways. The agony they feel at the scene of a particularly bad accident or the frustration of a lost court case on which they have worked hard, only to see it thrown out for the sake of some small technicality. As an Auxiliary I can walk away. As a professional Police Officer, they must stay and see it through.

The police need our support now as never before and I am convinced that being an Auxiliary Officer is the ultimate way of showing that support. I have heard it said that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. So be it.

training so that he or she is capable of taking control in a situation where an officer is rendered incapable. "We teach them how to safely handle the firearms," said Sergeant James.

Firearms training, criminal code, powers of arrest, first aid and how to deal with an emergency situation are all taught to Auxiliary officers during their 26 week training course. Officers are required to take 96 hours of training, pass a physical fitness test, undergo interviews and pass

course tests before receiving their certificates and uniforms.

Last year, the Auxiliary officers in Halton gave 3,000 hours of service to the Region said Staff Sergeant James.

The Auxiliary police force has been in Halton for three years now and there are approximately 20 civilians acting as police aids. Training sessions are held once a year and citizens interested in servicing their community are invited to join the ranks of citizens on patrol.

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Auxiliary Constable Andy Pink helps visitors to the Lions Crazy Boat Race make it safely across the roadway last Saturday afternoon. Constable Pink is

one of four new Auxiliary Police Officers in Halton Hills. (Herald photo)