

Community

Acton High student learns firefighting

By LISA BOONSTOPPEL-POT
The Herald

With his past-the-shoulder length blonde hair and tight blue jeans, Greg Waller doesn't look

like a firefighter in training. However, this Acton High School co-op student is learning how to fight fires alongside the department's other rookie volunteers. Because Greg is learning to

become a firefighter as a student, he isn't required to cut his hair or wear a firefighters uniform, so staff at the department were eager to let the public know who Greg is as he'll be driving around Halton Hills in department vehicles.

"We don't want residents calling the police and reporting one of our vehicles stolen," joked the department's Fire Prevention Officer, firefighter David Ford. The camaraderie between Greg and his training officer is evident and Greg says this brotherhood is one of the many reasons he's enjoying his co-op placement.

"Everyone is pals here," he said. "I feel really welcome."

The three weeks he's been with the department, however, hasn't all been fun and games.

Greg trains with new volunteers learning how to use the water hoses, prepare for an emergency, auto extrication, climb up on roofs and test equipment during the Monday and Thursday night two-hour training sessions. He also spends afternoons at the department.

Officer Ford said at first, Greg was a little taken back by the amount of equipment the department needs to suppress a fire. Greg admits he was also surprised at the power water hoses had.

Once Greg gets more experience, he may be allowed to respond to a fire call with the volunteers but for now, he'll be kept busy learning how the department runs, drafting scale drawings of industrial buildings for pre-planning purposes and dealing with the public.

Doing this kind of work has been a long-time ambition for Greg who said he always had an interest in firefighting. He plans to go to Seneca College and enroll in their firefighting course and thought the high school's co-op program would give him a chance to either confirm his desire to be a firefighter or convince him to enter another career

field.

So far, the co-op placement has been fulfilling, not only for Greg, but for the department as well.

"The station benefits. We get work done, like the building plans, and it gives us a good feeling to assist a young person in obtaining their career needs," said Mr. Ford.



Chess concentration

Concentrating on his next move at the Halton Public School Chess Tournament held Thursday at M.Z. Bennett Public School in Acton, is Matt McCullen of Harrison Public School in Georgetown. (Herald photo)



Greg Waller, a Grade 12 student at Acton High School, is training along with all other rookie firefighters as he co-ops at the Halton Hills Fire Department. (Herald photo)

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