

# Community

## Foster parents essential part of child welfare system

By TERESA PITMAN  
Herald Special

Foster parents are an essential part of the child welfare system - the people who provide caring homes for children who cannot live with their families. Because it recognizes how valuable these dedicated people are, the Halton Children's Aid Society presents annual awards to those foster families who have provided exceptional care.

The 1991 awards were presented on Friday, May 10th at 7:30 p.m. at the Tyandaga Golf and Country Club in Burlington.

This year's C.A.R.E. Award was given to Don and Donna Croft of Acton. The Crofts had fostered for several years back in the 1970's then took a break; now they are caring for a sibling group of three adolescents. With two teenagers of their own, they have five children between the ages of 12 and 16 at home. The social worker commented: "Occasionally we are fortunate enough to find the perfect match between a foster family and the children in care. Such is the case with the Crofts."

The 1991 Family Unity Award was given to Evelyn and Miles Ross of Burlington, who have been fostering since 1987. To them, fostering is a partnership, and they work together to provide a secure home for children in need. They are commended for their ability to extend themselves to the natural parents; as their social worker explains: "Their genuine concern and love of children makes them effective in including natural parents in their style of fostering."

The Betty Hill Memorial Award was presented to Bill and Carolyn Booth of Oakville. They were foster parents from 1972 until 1988, caring for many foster children. One girl was in their home for six years and still considers them her family now that she is an adult. They decided to

return to fostering again in October, 1990, and are once again providing dedicated care for foster children.

The Rookie-of-the-Year Award recognizes a family who have been fostering for less than a year but have already demonstrated outstanding skills as foster parents. This year's recipients are Bonnie and Steven Kay.

The Outstanding Service Award was given to Joe and Judy Lamb of Burlington, who have fostered more than 40 children since they were approved in 1979. Their foster children have been primarily teens and pre-teens, many of them with serious behaviour problems. Their home is welcoming, and foster children

are invited to be part of their family yet encouraged to maintain good relationships with their natural families. Social workers comment particularly on Joe's ability to demonstrate "gentle, accepting fathering to kids who are often unused to such an excellent male role model." Judy is commended for her sense of humor and clear communication with foster children, CAS staff, and colleagues.

A special 15-year service award was presented to Ralph and Sandy Edwards of Burlington. The Edwards began fostering adolescents when their own children were very young. Now that they have grown, Ralph and Sandy are fostering younger children, including a number of short-term and emergency

placements.

The highlight of the evening was the presentation of a slide show and personal memory bank to Don and June Ashwell of Oakville who have fostered children for 25 years. The Ashwells have cared for 68 foster

children during that time and are described as "outgoing, brimful of energy, enthusiastic, committed people who not only cope but seem to thrive on stresses that many people would have found insurmountable."

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### CAS receives donation

On Thursday, at the Halton Children's Aid Society offices (465 Morden Road, Oakville), John Gallagher of the International Order of Foresters presented a cheque for \$2,500 to CAS Executive Director Ron Coupland. This donation will go towards funding a conference planned by the Halton Family Enrichment Project, coordinated by Anne Day.

The conference is intended for those in various fields who work with families. The focus will be helping all parents learn more about raising children and coping with the stresses of family life in the 1990's. Keynote speaker at the

conference, planned for Thursday, November 14, 1991 will be Barbara Coloroso. She will also speak to parents at a free presentation at White Oaks High School (Oakville) that evening.

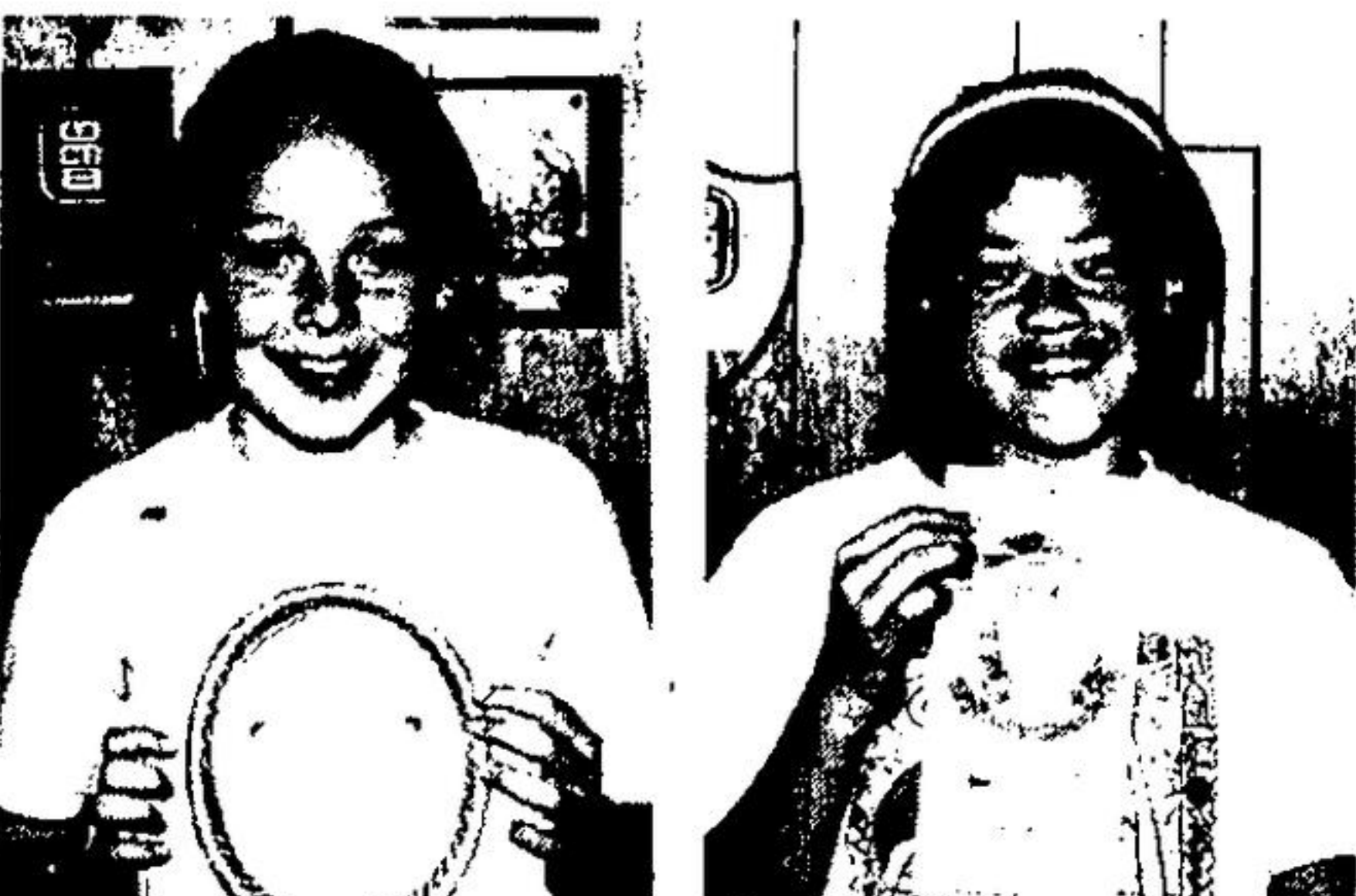
The work of the Halton Family Enrichment Project has been strongly supported by the Halton CAS. Susan Stuart, who runs several programs at the CAS and who is also on the Family Enrichment Project committee says: "Programs like these can help parents solve their problems before they become serious. It's a real challenge to be a parent today, and I don't think it's going to get easier. Parents need the support these programs can give."

### Lung Association offering summer day camp

The Lung Association - Halton Region is again offering a day camp for children with asthma who are between the ages of 5-12, siblings are also welcome to attend.

The camp will run in Georgetown from July 2-12, in Oakville from July 15-26 and in Burlington from July 29-August 16. For further information or to register call The Lung Association at 632-8499.

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