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Acton student says give "PEACE" a chance

By LISA BOONSTOPPEL-POT
The Herald

As a Spanish-born student, Sonia Bujan of Georgetown fit the criteria of a Police Ethnic and Cultural Education Project (PEACE) program of the Halton Regional Police. The police knew it, her

school councillors knew it, everybody knew it, except for her.

"I'd never heard about the PEACE program," she admits now, sitting in the Halton Regional Police station in Georgetown wearing dark pants

and a blue shirt like the police patrol officers. "The councillors at Acton High School where I go said I should take part in the program."

Since she had an interest in criminal investigations, she decided to take the police service

up on the offer and started her job July 2.

"I started the job without any idea what it was all about," she said. "Now I'm glad I did."

Miss Bujan is one of nine students of minority, ethnic and cultural backgrounds who were hired by Halton Police in July to take part in the PEACE program, a project the police believe is helping them address the challenge of the times.

"The project was designed to provide an opportunity for students of ethnic and cultural minorities to gain first hand experience of the role and function of the police officer in the community," states the Halton Regional Police's annual report. "By definition, the project also introduces police officers to this representative group, an important segment of the population."

The students are divided into the various police stations in Halton. For eight weeks, they'll be paid to experience hands-on, the role of the police officer in the community.

Now into her fourth week, Miss Bujan has already met Halton Chief of Police, James Harding; worked with the identification department; shot a firearm; trained at Ontario Police College; rode in a police helicopter; went to court and patrolled Acton with Acton Village Constable Bill Riddell.

"Police college was great. They didn't try to hide anything from us," she said. "They wanted us to know the reality of what being a police officer is like."

Miss Bujan spends much of her time at the station with Village Constable Riddell who's been teaching her how to fill in police reports and operate the police computer.

He's found that although they don't have too much in common, since she's only 17 and he's middle-aged, they have no pro-

blems relating, and get along great.

"I've learned about her and her family and it changes your outlook," he said. "You learn to accept someone for what they are and learn not to judge them."

Miss Bujan and her family arrived in Canada two years ago from Spain where Miss Bujan learned to speak English and Euzkera, the language of her Bask ethnic group.

She is also familiar with the East Indian and Portuguese culture through her mother and the Spanish and Scottish culture through her father.

In the short time she's been working at the station, Miss Bujan said she's also learned about police officers.

"I now realize how many rules police have to follow, especially the rules they have to consider before they shoot their gun," she said. "I was also taught how important it is for police officers to be friends with each other, so they can rely on each other as a team."

Being at the station has also erased a stereotype she held about police.

"I had an image of policemen, in cruisers. I thought that was all they did," she said. "Being at the police station has made me realize that so many people do so many things. There are a lot of different duties than just cruising."

She's come a long way from the first day she started when she had no idea of what being a PEACE student was all about. Now, she says, she wonders why more students don't apply for the PEACE job.

"It's such a privilege. I'm so proud to be involved with this program," she said. "It's everything you could want for a summer job because it pays, you learn new things and gain experience."

This is the third year Halton has run the PEACE project.



Acton Village Constable Bill Riddell shows Sonia Bujan, a student of the Police Ethnic and Cultural Education Project (PEACE) how a breathalyzer works at the Halton Regional Police station in Georgetown. Sonia, a Georgetown resident, is one of

nine ethnic and cultural minorities working with the police service this summer as part of PEACE. The program started three years ago to establish mutual respect between a changing community and the police station. (Herald photo)

Local swimmer on her way to compete in San Francisco

By ROBERT RISK
Herald Sports Editor

For 12-year-old Georgetown resident Robyn Miller, her first big swimming competition is also a long, long way from home - all the way to San Francisco, in fact.

Miller, a member of the Mississauga Swim Club for the last four years, was the only one from the club to be selected to represent Ontario at the Far Western Long Course Championship Swim Meet, being held from August 1-4.

The meet is for swimmers aged 11-14, with Ontario the only team from outside California.

She said the furthest she had ever been before was to Cleveland for a meet and Ottawa for the provincials, both with other members of her team. This trip she will be accompanied by less familiar faces for seven days (July 30-August 6).

"I'm a little scared about going, especially since it's so far away. I don't think it will be too bad, since I know some of the people from other clubs that I've become friends with at some of the swim meets."

Her father, Les Miller, said Robyn is only the second one in the history of the Mississauga Swim Club to be selected for the California meet. To qualify as one of the 24 swimmers, Miller, competing at the Long Course Championships in Ottawa in the 11-12-year-old group, placed second in 200 metre individual medley, third in 50 metre freestyle, third in 100 metre freestyle, fifth in 200 metre freestyle and sixth in 100 metre fly.

"The trip is all paid for by the Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Recreation. Robyn has some money from us to buy some things, but that's about it. We're hoping she'll do well because we're told the teams from Ontario usually bring home more

than its share of medals from that meet."

Robyn also said she is hopeful of winning, most likely in 50 metre freestyle, her favourite event. She speculated that the 200 metre individual medley might be another good race for her.

"I'm really looking forward to swimming there. It's supposed to be a really nice pool. It'll be nice meeting new people and seeing how I can do against them."

This is the last event of the year

for Robyn, who will have a break in club activities until the next season resumes on September 26, when she will move up to the 13-14 year-old level since she turns 13 on August 26. Having to compete against older swimmers is also something Robyn said she is looking forward to.

"It will be tougher, but I know my times will improve since I'll be challenged to do better. I plan to keep on swimming for quite a few more years so I have to keep getting faster."



Robyn Miller, 12, is on her way to San Francisco to compete as a member of Team Ontario at the Western Long Course Championship Swim Meet, held Aug. 1-4. A member of the Mississauga Swim Club, Miller was selected for the provincial team due to her top placings at the Long Course Championships in Ottawa earlier this summer. (Photo submitted)

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