



Promenading at the hoedown

Margaret and Trevor Thorne of Georgetown had a great time square dancing at the Harvest Hoedown Dance hosted by the Pine Valley Square Dancers of Halton Hills. Over 60 swirlers and twirlers from square dancing clubs in Halton whirled their partners round the floor at the Cedarvale Community Centre Saturday night. (Herald Photo)

Foster parenting rewards outweigh the difficulties

Meg Antonini of Acton is thoughtful when she talks about being a foster parent.

"Sometimes the hardest part is dealing with the general public - there seems to be a stigma about being a foster parent," she says. "And certainly there are many challenges. Children who have been through what some foster children have been through can behave in very difficult ways. It can take a long time before you feel that you're getting through to a child."

But for Meg and her husband Frank, the rewards of fostering have outweighed the difficulties. They became foster parents five years ago, and have cared for three foster children since that time, most on a long-term basis. At the moment, the Antoninis are fostering a 13-year-old girl and a 13-month-old baby boy, as well as raising their own three children

(16-year-old twins and a 14-year-old).

Meg makes a point of treating her foster children as part of the family.

"You can't expect them to accept you as family, because of course foster children still have their own families. It's a big adjustment for them to make. But I try to treat them the same way I would my own."

It takes time, she says, but she finds that eventually she is able to build up a sense of trust with her foster children so that they will talk to her about their problems and concerns. She's also excited when she sees the children grow in self-confidence and self-esteem.

"The foster children often come into care blaming themselves for whatever has happened. They think it's somehow their fault. One of my goals is to help them get past that, and to

feel good about themselves."

The baby who is currently living with the Antoninis has also made some real gains developmentally in the seven months he has been in their home.

"He was understimulated before, and a bit behind," Meg says. "But the older kids have been a big help with him, and now he's a happy, active boy who chatters away all the time and even sings. Of course, he doesn't sleep much..."

The Antoninis have found foster parenting to be very rewarding, despite the fact that, as Meg says: "It's not an easy job." Their love for children motivated them to give fostering a try five years ago, and the satisfaction they've experienced keeps them fostering today.

If you'd like to know more about becoming a foster parent, contact Kim Elliott at 878-2375.

Greeting cards popular fundraiser

The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), Halton, has a great idea to help you get at least one task off of your Christmas "to do" list.

Once again, CMHA, Halton, is selling holiday greeting cards as a fundraiser.

Designs by artists Joyce Kellock and Audrey Matheson which were available in past years are back by popular demand.

Also, new this year is a lovely design by Milton artist Roisin Nelson, entitled Trees for Sale. The card is a reproduction of an

original watercolor depicting little children choosing that very special tree.

Cards in packages of 10 are \$8 including PST and GST. Ten or more packages are \$7 each and 20 or more are \$6 each (both including taxes). Payment can be by cash, personal cheque, Visa or Master Card. The greeting inside all cards reads "Best Wishes for a Happy Holiday Season."

As well as for use on your personal greetings list, CMHA suggests that these cards would be an appropriate way to send

wishes for the season from a business or community agency, while supporting the work of CMHA.

CMHA is a local branch of a national, voluntary organization dedicated to providing quality mental health services. The branch offers programs in Burlington, Halton Hills, Milton and Oakville.

For more information, or to order cards, call Margaret Howard at CMHA at 845-5044 in Oakville or call 681-6776 in Burlington and 519-853-4477 in Acton.

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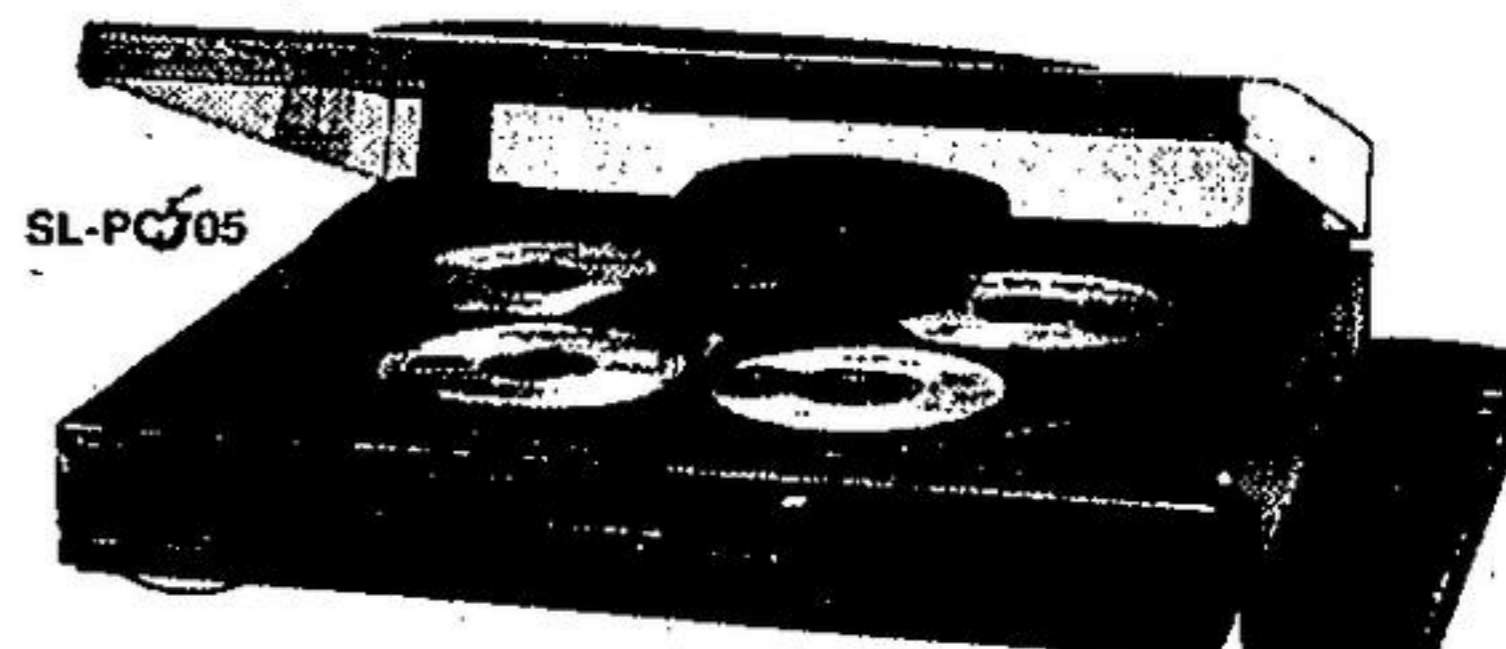
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