*Crime Stoppers unveils poster*

# Campaign focuses on guns, gangs

**By DAVID LEA**
*Metroland Media Group*

Crime Stoppers of Halton is calling on area residents to help keep their neighbourhoods safe by telling police what they know about illegal guns and gangs in their community.

The crime fighting organization used a special Crime Stoppers Month kick off presentation at the Halton Regional Police Headquarters on Tuesday to unveil a new campaign that will see anti-guns and gangs posters displayed on the side of buses at schools, college facilities, parks, recreation buildings and various other locations throughout Halton.

The poster depicts a gun about to be pulled and is accompanied by the message, 'Guns & Gangs are not welcome here!'

The poster also provides the phone number; email and text address for the Crime Stoppers of Halton tip line and notes that if the information provided is useful the person who provided it may be eligible for a cash reward of up to $2,000.

"Although we live in one of the safest areas in Canada, we must always be vigilant and take a proactive approach to combating gang and gun violence," said Tom Suddaby, the chair of Halton's Crime Stoppers program.

"Crime Stoppers also wants to take a leading role in targeting specific types of crime before they take a foothold in our communities."

Halton Police Chief Gary Crowell echoed these statements noting that while Halton is fortunate not to have the same level of gun and gang crime as some of its neighbouring communities, the region is not immune to their dangers.

A recognition of this fact resulted in the creation of the Halton Police Guns and Gangs Unit in 2009, which is charged with investigating gang members, their associates and illegal firearm activity within the Halton Region.

"Their work has been very impressive indeed," said Crowell. "Over the past year our Guns and Gangs Unit has investigated over 150 tips and those investigations have resulted in the arrest of more than 30 individuals, we've laid more than 120 criminal charges, executed 18 criminal and drug search warrants and removed over 20 illegal firearms from our streets."

Crowell said the unit has also recovered a number of firearms stolen from the homes of Halton residents and seized of more than $90,000 worth of street drugs including marihuana, cocaine, crack cocaine and ecstasy.

He said these results were achieved in part thanks to the anonymous tips received by Crime Stoppers of Halton.

"A call to Crime Stoppers is often the very first step in many of our police investigations that may have gone unresolved," said Crowell.

Crime Stoppers spokesperson Gary Gold noted Crime Stoppers of Halton has proven to be an effective way of combating crime.

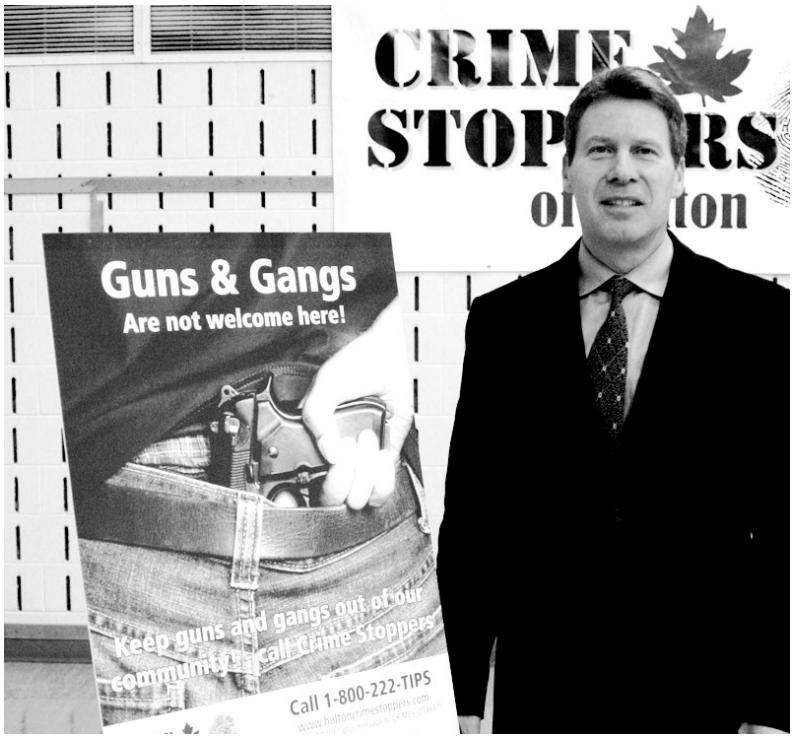
"For the third consecutive year there was an increase in the total number of tips received by our program. This is due in part to the tremendous co-operation we receive from our community partners," said Gold.

"Last year tips to our program increased an impressive 11 per cent over the previous year bringing last year's total number of tips to 786. These tips led to the arrest of 26 individuals and 65 charges being laid. In addition, $841,000 worth of illegal drugs were seized and $32,000 worth of property was recovered. Tips also allowed us to take four illegal weapons off our streets."

Gold is hoping the new anti-guns and gangs campaign will be just as successful with the new posters intended to achieve three important objectives:

- Publicly speaking out against guns and gangs;
- Encouraging citizens to report information about illegal guns and gangs
- Diverting young people away from gang activity.

Crime Stoppers of Halton can be reached at 1-800-222-TIPS (8477), www.haltoncrimestoppers.com or text: 'TIP201' plus message to CRIMES (274637).




Sergeant Gary Gold, Halton Crime Stoppers spokesperson, poses beside a newly released poster calling on area residents to report guns and gangs activity. *Photo by David Lea*

# Ockenden to run again

Halton Hills public school trustee Gerry Ockenden has filed his nomination papers on Tuesday to vie for the Wards 1&2 seat in the 2010 municipal elections

Ockenden is currently serving his first term as trustee for Acton and the Halton Hills rural area.

Nominations for the Oct. 25 election opened Jan. 4, and will close on Sept. 10. Nomination forms are available from the Clerk's Office at the Civic Centre.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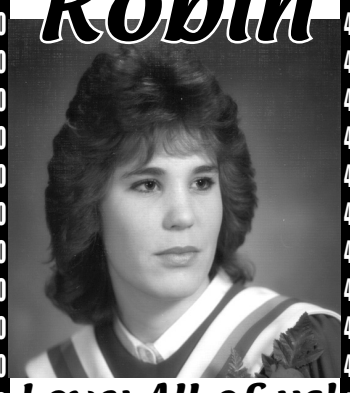

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