

A soldier's life

No matter where you stand on Canada's military involvement in Afghanistan, supporting the men and women who put their lives on the line half a world away is the right thing to do.

As they serve our country and when their lives are sacrificed in that service, Canadian soldiers deserve our respect and our gratitude for representing Canada with pride and honour, while helping to elevate our international reputation as a leader among free nations.

Although civilians typically only hear the bad news associated with Canada's participation in Afghanistan— to date 139 of our soldiers plus four civilians have been lost serving the cause— occasionally we are granted a brief glimpse into the understandably guarded lives of the Canadian military.

Last week was one of those rare opportunities.

Reporter Christina Commisso of our sister *Burlington Post* paper, and a handful of other members of the media, boarded a CC 144 Challenger flight from Toronto to the southern California desert, where more than 3,600 Canadian Forces personnel conducted the final phase of a two-month, pre-deployment training exercise before leaving for Afghanistan this spring.

Among the Canadian soldiers were 21 members of the Lorne Scots Regiment covering Halton, Peel and Dufferin regions, including representatives from Halton Hills.

Commisso was among a handful of media types invited to spend about 96 hours experiencing the realistic simulation of life on and around the Kandahar Air Field in an exercise dubbed *Maple Guardian* by the Canadian Forces.

This was no day at the beach. She was issued Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and a sleeping bag and was treated as if she were embedded with the troops in Afghanistan.

The final phase of the pre-deployment exercise will see Canadian soldiers training in counter-insurgency and urban operations.

She hopes to be able to provide our readers with a better understanding of who some of these local soldiers are and what they hope to accomplish once deployed to Afghanistan. Look for her report in an upcoming edition.

Letters to the editor policy

Letters must include an address and daytime telephone number. Anonymous letters will not be published. Letters should not exceed 150 words and may be edited for content and/or length.

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The Independent & Free Press

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WEB POLL RESULTS

In the wake of the scandal involving ex-mayoral candidate Adam Giambrone in Toronto, do you think politicians' personal lives should be a factor when determining their worthiness to hold office?

- Yes (65%)
- No (35%)

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Letters to the editor

Neighbours thanked for tolerating display

Dear editor,

We would like to extend a sincere thank you to the residents of Georgetown for the donations for Georgetown Hospital Foundation, totaling \$7,910.50 which we received as a result of our Christmas light display.

You all are truly wonderful and without you the donation would not be possible. It really makes us proud to see what can be accomplished when the community comes together. We truly hope you enjoyed the lights as much as we enjoy putting the show on for you all.

I would like to also extend a special thank you to all our neighbours on the street who had to endure some evenings of heavy traffic. I realize this may have been frustrating at times and from the bottom of our hearts we appreciate your patience and support. As for the individual who sent us a disturbing letter of complaint, and who chooses to remain anonymous, we sincerely apologize to you. It is unfortunate that you feel the way you do, but our lights were never meant to

cause grief to anyone, only joy and happiness. Again we apologize and maybe next year you will be able to find yourself enjoying our display.

*Darryl & Kathy Lambert,
Georgetown*

Jumpstart thanks

Dear editor,

The Halton Hills Chapter of Canadian Tire Jumpstart would like to sincerely thank the efforts of everyone who made the Jr. A Raiders Jumpstart Game on December 19 a great success.

Together with a team of amazing volunteers and community sponsors, The Georgetown Jr. A Raiders and Kingston Voyageurs raised almost \$1,000 for Canadian Tire Jumpstart. A big thank you also to Heather's Bakery for baking the yummy cupcakes, and to the team of fantastic kids who volunteered their time to make sure the evening was fun and successful: Robbie Abrams, D.J. Gillespie, Ryan Coulter, Jason Young, Katie Abrams, Kaileigh Cook, Jacob Mandel, Shaela McCracken, Chloe Whitham, Erin Chubb.

Many Raiders fans also donated new hockey equipment to help children in need participate in recreation and sport programs.

Because of the efforts of everyone involved, Halton Hills is helping Jumpstart to give children in need the chance to run, skate, play and grow.

*Joy Thompson,
Chair, Halton Hills Chapter
CT Jumpstart*

New program unfair

Dear editor,

The new early learning program for our Junior and Senior Kindergarten children is not taking into account all Ontario families.

Five, full days of school a week is not necessarily the best option for the child. There are many family situations that have two working parents or one single parent. In these families, full-day learning will be beneficial. However, there are other family situations— including those with one stay-at-home parent and one working parent. In these families, full-day learning is far from ideal.

There must be a way for parents to choose a half-day program without having to drive them to another school in a different city. I sincerely hope that as the new program is being developed, families such as mine will be considered. I hope that we will have a half-day option.

Angela Butler, Georgetown