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FAMILY ESCAPES BLAZE

A family of six managed to flee their home safely when fire broke out Friday

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HOME & ENERGY

Spring is coming! Look inside today's special section for home tips

4-PAGE SECTION

THE INDEPENDENT

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Students
 celebrate
 Black History
 Month

Ranisha Verma was among the many George Kennedy Public School students who performed traditional dances at the Black History Month Assembly at the school Friday. The assembly featured various aspects of the Black History unit, including Cuban songs, skits and stories about famous black people who helped eliminate discrimination throughout the years.

Photo by Ted Brown



Drop in auto thefts highlights sharp decrease in crime

By **TIM FORAN**
 Metroland Media Group
 and **LISA TALLYN**
 Staff Writer

Getting the right bad guys off the street is one of the reasons Halton saw a one-third drop in the number of auto thefts last year, according to one of the region's top cops.

The regional police service has scored a "significant number of arrests" of individuals affiliated with or in organized crime groups involved in the sale of stolen automobiles, said Bob Percy, deputy chief of operations for the Halton Regional Police Service.

Targeting such "repeat offenders" involved in crime networks rather than young "joyriders" partially led to the healthy decrease in auto thefts, from 799 in 2008 to 538 in 2009, Percy stated.

"It's not necessarily the quantity of arrests at times, sometimes it's the quality of arrests," he explained.

Percy said Halton's police service has participated in cross-boundary programs

with other services targeting auto theft.

Although many stolen cars are shipped abroad, Percy didn't believe the global economic recession might have led to a reduced market for such automobiles and thereby reduced theft.

"In fact, it could be argued the other way," he said, suggesting the recession could have encouraged a greater market for cheap, stolen automobiles.

Despite new anti-theft technology, police efforts, and education of the public on how to protect their automobile, Percy admitted the service still gets calls about vehicles stolen after the owner has left them idling and unlocked.

"That's an age-old problem," said Percy.

The reduction in auto thefts contributed greatly to the 8.4 per cent decrease in the number of property crimes in Halton in 2009, according to a statistical summary presented to the police services board Thursday.

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