

Vandalism to soccer field creates 'logistical nightmare' for club

By **LISA TALLYN**
Staff Writer

About \$2,000 worth of damage was caused to a soccer field at Gellert Community Centre early Wednesday morning when someone tore around the field in what is believed to have been a pickup truck.

Halton Police report about 1:30 a.m. someone left the Gellert Centre parking lot and used a vehicle to cause major ruts and damage to the turf of a soccer field located to the south of the Centre. Surveillance cameras captured a dark pickup truck on the field at that time.

Warren Harris, the Town of Halton Hills Manager of Parks and Open Space, said the damage will cost the loss of field play early in the season, which begins at the end of May.

"It will take at least a month, depending on conditions, to get the field back to anywhere near ready for regular soccer play," said Harris. "Staff have enough challenges in early spring with regular maintenance without doing needless repairs to sports fields."

The damage could cause some scheduling headaches for the Georgetown Soccer Club when soccer season starts next month.

Alice Strachan, president of the club, said the field that was damaged is used by the under six-year-old soccer players.

She said the impact of the damage "is huge."

"To take those three fields (one large field used as three) out of commission, we don't have another place to put them. It becomes

a logistical nightmare," said Strachan, adding all the work of the club is done by volunteers.

Town staff oversee maintenance of more than 35 soccer sports fields on Town and school properties.

"We have a challenging year ahead due to the potential loss of both Georgetown District High School and Christ the King Secondary School sports fields due to closures for reconstruction," said Harris. "Any further loss of fields at this point will impact at least 35 hours of field play for each month it is out of service."

Vandalism costs the Town an average of \$15,000 each year, and ranges from playground damage, graffiti and portable toilet fires.

"We would much rather use these funds for regular park maintenance than senseless acts of willful damage," said Halton Hills Mayor Rick Bonnette. "These idiots have to realize they are impacting hundreds of kids and denying their right to have a safe place to play."

Harris said, while surveillance cameras have been installed where facilities exist to house them and park shift crews are available to do surveillance during the parks season, vandalism continues to occur each year.

Halton Police are investigating the damage at Gellert Park. Anyone with information is asked to call police at 905-878-5511 ext.2105 or Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS (8477) or submit a tip online at www.haltoncrimestoppers.com or, Text "TIP201" plus the message.



Susan Wilson from the Town of Halton Hills surveys the \$2,000 worth of damage done to one of the soccer fields at the Gellert Community Centre during the early morning hours last Wednesday. It's likely that the start of the 2010 season for dozens of youths in the Georgetown Soccer Club's six-and-under age group will be delayed due to the vandalism to the grass.

Photos by Eamonn Maher



Do you have a friend or loved one that is being torn apart by addiction?

Alcoholism • Pornography • Substance Abuse • Codependency
• Eating Disorders • Food Addiction • Gambling

Celebrate Recovery

A Christ-Centered 12 Step Recovery Program
Information Evening

Friday, April 23, 2010 from 7 to 8 pm
Georgetown Alliance Church
290 Main Street S (8th Line)
905.873.0249

Hear live testimonials from those who were once addicted, and have the opportunity to ask questions. Come and see how this program can help you and your loved ones.

- No Pressure
- No Questions Asked
- 100% Discreet

www.celebraterecovery.ca