

# Open discussion of suicide is breaking down barriers

By **CYNTHIA GAMBLE**  
*Staff Writer*

In 2007, after the suicide of a young Halton Hills woman, a small group of survivors became determined to change a 'legacy of pain into a legacy of hope.' Subsequently HEAL—the Halton Hills Suicide Prevention Group—was formed.

"Suicide is a serious community health problem that affects everyone, and anyone can be at risk of suicide—our co-workers, our neighbours, our friends, ourselves," said Wallis Balogh, of LivingWorks, a suicide prevention trainer at a recent Halton Hills council meeting. "Because of this, preventing suicide is everybody's responsibility."

The barriers of stigma and taboo can only be broken through open education and conversation about suicide, she said.

HEAL and the North Halton Distress Centre are leading the charge against these barriers by hosting safeTALK training sessions in high schools, businesses and the community. The training teaches people how to recognize the signs of suicide and how to connect at-risk people to trained health professionals.

Their vision of a suicide-free Halton Hills was embraced by the council and staff of the Town of Halton Hills, said

Balog. The Town provided space for programs and allowed employees and their families to participate.

To date nearly 350 people have completed the three-hour training in Halton Hills.

"This sets an inspirational example for municipalities everywhere," said Balogh, "This is a community that values life and is working to prevent suicide together."

LivingWorks presented a special plaque of appreciation to the Town, HEAL and NHDC for their work on suicide prevention in the community.

"Thank you for what you do in our community," said Mayor Rick Bonnette, who had attended the first safeTALK session. "Suicide doesn't know any skin colour, doesn't know any religion, doesn't know any financial boundaries. ...It doesn't matter where you are in life, it can happen to anyone."

"I really learned from safeTalk," said the mayor, "...to become more aware and look for the signs (of suicide). ...So often, we have people that have taken their life and we say, 'Gee, what could I have done differently?' And by taking safeTALK you can find out what you can do differently."

For more information contact the North Halton Distress Centre, 905-877-0655. The crisis number is 905-877-1211.



LivingWorks, a suicide prevention training group, presented the Town of Halton Hills, HEAL and North Halton Distress Centre with an Appreciation Award for their work in the community recently. From left, Rev. Paul Ivany, HEAL; Wallis Balogh, Living Works, safeTalk trainer; Gail Cartwright, North Halton Distress Centre; Mayor Rick Bonnette and Sue Culp, HEAL.  
*Photo by Cynthia Gamble*

## Police offer various tips to avoid being a victim of scam artists

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Andrew said since May the Canadian Anti Fraud Centre has received a reported dollar loss of \$580,000 involving 79 victims of sale and purchase on line.

To avoid being the victim of fraud Andrew said:

- Only give out personal information where it is absolutely necessary and to people you trust

- Shred personal papers

- Never send money to anyone that you don't know or trust

- If you receive a telephone call requesting money for any reason— verify the caller by calling the company or in-

dividual yourself

- Do not give your personal, credit card or online account details over the phone or through an email

- Never follow a "link" to a website - type the address in yourself

- Verify any concern you may have by phone first - it might save you a lot of heartache in the long run

- If it's too good to be true, it usually is!!

- For info on reported scams go to [www.antifraudcentre.ca](http://www.antifraudcentre.ca) and [www.snopes.com](http://www.snopes.com)

- If you feel you have been victimized, immediately contact your bank to stop payment and report the incident to police.

## Public board to hold special meeting

Halton District School Board trustees will hold a special meeting tonight (Tuesday) and an update on negotiations between the board and its teachers will likely top the agenda.

The meeting will take place at the J.W. Singleton Education Centre, located at 2050 Guelph Line in Burlington.

Education Minister Laurel Broten angered unions, school boards and teachers last week by saying the Liberal government will use legislation to force

labour peace if they don't sign contracts by the end of August.

Last Thursday, Premier Dalton McGuinty stressed he is "hopeful" the school boards can do what ministry of education officials couldn't— negotiate agreements with the province's teaching unions. So far, only the Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association (OECTA) and a small support staff union have worked out agreements.

—With files from Torstar News Service

## Happy Birthday and 2<sup>nd</sup> Retirement

You are a great role model, always there to help and the best Husband, Dad & Grandpa a family could ask for! Thank you for always being there for us in every way you can. Now is your time to enjoy life and catch up on that list of dreams!

Love & Congratulations from:  
Karen, Amy & Bob, Mason, Matt & Lauren, your family and friends



*Bill Sykes  
August 7, 1951*

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13619 Hwy 7 West  
Email: [vbs@gcfchurch.ca](mailto:vbs@gcfchurch.ca)  
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