

Ben Johnson to attend cook-off

Ben Johnson will join Miss Canada, Leslie McLaren, as an honored guest at the Mohawk Festival Country Chili Cookoff, sponsored by the United Way, today (Saturday) August 24. The event will be held 11 a.m. - 5 p.m. at Mohawk Raceway, Guelph Line north of the 401, Campbellville.

Ben will be there between 1 and 3 p.m. and tour the competitors' booths, ride in the antique car parade, and meet the public. Organizers hope to arrange a 100 metre jog on the racetrack in front of the grandstand, inviting visitors to join Ben Johnson in a Charity Jog. Bring your running shoes. You might well be able to say, "sure I ran the hundred metres with Ben Johnson - pretty close finish too!"

Ben is donating his time to support this charity event, organized by the United Way of Milton, but organizers are insisting that he accept, as his fee, a hug from Miss Canada.

"We think he'll accept the fee we've offered," said Walt Elliot, Milton United Way Chairman, "but if not, everyone on our organizing committee has offered to stand in for him."

Leslie McLaren, Miss Canada 1991, will participate in the Opening Ceremonies, sample chili, and award prizes to the Cookoff winners. She has also graciously agreed to pose for photos with visitors to aid The United Way. As a 22-year-old from St. Albert, Alberta, Leslie was attending the University of Alberta majoring in Native Studies when she entered and won the Miss Edmonton Pageant, leading to the Miss Canada title.

Over 30 antique cars will be featured in the Antique Car Parade at 1:30. Other entertainment will include Ventriloquist



Leslie McLaren, Miss Canada 1991, joins Ben Johnson as a honored guest at the Mohawk Festival Country Chili Cookoff, sponsored by the United Way, Saturday, August 24, 11 a.m. - 5 p.m., at Mohawk Raceway, Campbellville.

Mike Sharpe; Polkaroo of Polka Dot Door; live bluegrass, country, jazz and folk music; clowns, face-painting and dunking booth, and the Milton Fire Department's Aerial Ladder Brigade with their exciting routine. And of course, the competing Chili Teams will entertain with their antics.

"We are encouraged by the number of teams entered," says Alec Kitson, member of the organizing committee. "Mayor Gord Krantz of Milton, the Region of Halton led by Bill Johnson, and the Region of Peel led by Chairman Frank Bean are all fielding teams, and issuing challenges to other municipalities. The Campbellville Business Association and

Rick Renaud who took first prize for his chili at the last cookoff three years ago are among those coming back to compete again. Chili enthusiasts from other areas, media teams, and new contenders have registered already. We are expecting a great turnout."

Local teams entered include the Julian Reed family, the Gord Dawe family and the Knights of Columbus of Acton.

As well as competing for the best chili, teams will also be vying for The Best Costumes, Most Entertaining and Best Decorated Booth awards. While the costumes and antics of the teams add to the entertainment, the cooking of chili is a serious matter. Cooks labor for hours preparing their special recipes from scratch in their booths. A team of experts and celebrity judges will sample the results. Visitors can also sample the chili and vote for their favorite by purchasing a People's Choice ballot. Regular and Gourmet chili will be among the food and refreshments available for visitors.

"We are pleased with the enthusiastic support we have received from volunteers and local business," explains Walt Elliot, United Way chairman for 1991. "It is encouraging to see business and community volunteers pulling together to support the United Way in this effort. We hope to raise \$10,000 that the United Way will be able to turn back to serve the community."

The Mohawk Festival Country Chili Cookoff offers an affordable afternoon of family fun supporting a worthwhile community service. Admission button is \$4 for adults, \$2 for children. For more details on competing or participating, contact Alec Kitson (416) 876-1570 or Walt Elliot (416) 876-3377.

Halton's welfare roll shrinks

The good news is the bad news has stopped getting worse.

For the first time since July of 1990 the number of welfare cases in Halton Region has actually

gone down. Not by a great deal, not even by much really, but the alarming growth in the welfare rolls that has characterized the last year has, at least for now, stopped.

But that doesn't mean it won't pick up again, cautioned Bonnie Ewart, Halton Region's social services commissioner.

There are still a great many people collecting unemployment insurance, she pointed out, and when their benefits expire, if they don't find jobs they'll probably be moving into the welfare system.

However for the moment "we're delighted the caseload has gone down," albeit by "modest" proportion, Ewart said Wednesday.

In July there were 2,409 welfare cases in Halton (each case can represent an entire family). In June there were 25 more than that, 2,434.

The number has been steadily rising since August of 1990, when there were 1,381 cases. In January of 1991 the figure topped 2,000 for the first time at 2,136, a 70 per cent jump from the previous year. Today, at 2,409 cases Halton is up more than 86 per cent compared with the same period in 1990.

Ewart said it would be difficult to predict a trend toward fewer welfare claims for some time, especially since "the welfare system is much slower to respond" to upturns in the economy.

Total wealth expenditures in 1991 so far are \$9.3 million, close to the amount spent in all of 1990 (\$10.7 million). In 1990 about 48 per cent of welfare cases involved people considered "employable" by Halton Region. In 1991 that has risen to almost 62 per cent.

The Region pumped an additional \$800,000 into its welfare budget to cope with the rising caseload earlier this year.

There had been some concerns about possibly needing even more money if the upward trend continued.

But so far, Ewart said, it appears the extra \$800,000 will be enough.



Mickey Mouse, (who looked a lot like Kelly Rae) was among the crowd of ghouls, pretty maidens and ninja turtles who turned out in large numbers in Acton recently at an early Hallowe'en activity day at Prospect Park. Children participated in numerous activities, including making tie-dye T-shirts, going to a haunted house, a pumpkin throw, bobbing for apples and making crafts.

JANET BAINE/Halton Hills Weekend

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