

Livingstones looking to retire

By JANET DUVAL

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This Halloween, some local children carried the familiar UNICEF boxes door to door. But the program is in peril here, and some neighborhoods didn't see the boxes at all.

Phyllis and Bud Livingstone, UNICEF's volunteer co-ordinators for Halton Hills, told UNICEF they wanted to resign two years ago.

"Bud is in his eightieth year. He just can't carry those coins any more," says Phyllis.

But no one has offered to take over for them. They continued reluctantly this year, but "it will be just hit and miss. We haven't been calling the schools like we used to do."

Local principals praise the Livingstones for their help over the years. The couple deliver and pick up boxes, then count the thousands of coins that roll in. They say they'll count only on request this year.

In the past, they've also placed boxes with churches, nursery schools, and commercial outlets, and they acted as "cheerleaders" for UNICEF, encouraging principals to support the program. But

not this year - it's just too much.

So, this year's returns will be dependent on the interest of the principals. "If they believe in it, you're away to the races," says Phyllis.

"We don't get a lot of students participating here," says Steve Fraser, principal at George Kennedy Public School. "I don't think students have a good appreciation for what UNICEF is. Personally, I like UNICEF - it keeps Halloween from being just a candy thing."

He recalls an assembly at his daughter's school some years ago, where someone brought slides and maps with information about UNICEF projects around the world. "After that, participation went up dramatically."

That's the kind of education that a new local coordinator might provide in schools, with lots of help from the Toronto UNICEF office. Children carrying the boxes locally seem to have little concept of the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, set up after the war to provide food, medicine and clothing for young-

sters around the world.

"It's very important that kids be taught to think of others. It's no hardship for them to carry a box, and it's such an easy way to help," says June Tribe, a kindergarten teacher who runs the program at Robert Little School in Acton.

Thanks probably to her own promotion of UNICEF, participation at Robert Little has increased yearly. "We've sent out 200 boxes this year."

If there's no one to replace the Livingstones next year, she says she'll ask parents to help, or roll the coins herself. Steve Fraser says he would try to promote it some way too. "I wouldn't want to see it die."

Promotion seems to be the key. Fraser knows of one school where almost every child used to take a box. But that's not the way now.

"I feel very badly - only my conscience keeps me doing it at all this year," says Phyllis Livingstone. "There's such need in the world. I'd hate to see it go down the drain."

Parents who would like a box for their child can pick one up from the Livingstones today, at 8 Lewis St. (near Mountainview and Delrex) or call 877-5033.

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