

School boards, towns, and police join forces to 'turn off the violence'

By ANGELA BLACKBURN
Special to the Independent/Free Press

Residents were urged to turn off violent television shows, music, videos and movies as part of the first Turn Off the Violence Day in Halton, Thursday (Nov. 5).

Turn Off the Violence Day is a Halton Board of Education initiative which is supported by the Halton Regional Police Force, Halton Region, all four regional municipalities and a growing list of 30 regional community organizations.

"We're not providing community standards. We're not a censorship program. We're asking people to make a conscious decision about what violence is to you," said Halton Board of Education race and ethnocultural equity consultant Bryce Leggatt at a Monday press conference.

Turn Off the Violence Day, a Crime Prevention Week program, was touted as a chance for people to

look at the violent messages they're receiving and make alternate choices.

"Turn Off the Violence is a coalition of individuals, organizations and agencies working together to prevent violence by convincing people to turn off violent media entertainment and choose non-violent ways to resolve conflict. We believe exposure to films, television programs and music that glorify violence desensitizes people to escalating violence in our society, and in some cases, promotes violent behavior," explained Leggatt.

'It's time, we as a community got behind something like this ..'
Mayor Miller

Leggatt is chairman of the public school board's Personal Protection Task Force, started by education director Bob Williams in August 1991 after the murders of Burlington teens Nina de Villiers and Leslie Mahaffy.

"The campaign is designed to raise awareness in schools and the community about the influence of violence in the media at large," explained Leggatt.

Turn Off the Violence Day was formally introduced at Halton Regional headquarters Monday, with speeches from the four Halton mayors, regional chairman Peter Pomeroy, Halton regional police chief James Harding and CAVEAT (Canadians Against Violence Everywhere Advocating its Termination) spokesman Glenn Roche. Billed the first of its kind in Canada - a similar program was launched two years ago by a community group in Minnesota - the project has been in the works for seven months.

"It's (Turn Off the Violence) a very significant program for the residents of Halton Region and as far as I'm concerned it will show leadership country-wide," said regional chairman Peter Pomeroy.

"We should not be guilty of the good things we ought to do, but take care to be remembered for the things we do do," said Harding.

"As a father and grandfather I see violence increasing," said Halton Hills mayor Russ Miller.

"It's time we as a community got behind something like this to work together to see what we can do. I think, collectively, we can make a difference."

CAVEAT which attempts to end violence through education and legislation sees Turn Off the Violence as a start on the educational front, said Roche.

"We made a difference with drinking and driving, we can make a difference on violence," said Roche. "Don't watch violent videos, don't listen to violent music, don't attend violent movies. Make an effort in your community to turn off the violence."

To that end Harding recently sent a letter to local video retailers outlining the Turn Off the Violence Day. "I am not suggesting that you do not do business on that day, but encourage you to take the time suggesting to your customers the titles of movies and videos which you feel are non-violent," read Harding's letter.



Re-dedication

The 25th anniversary of Acton Library was celebrated with a re-dedication ceremony recently. Cutting the anniversary cake were from left, Esther Taylor, former librarian, Isabel Watson, former librarian - the longest serving chief librarian in Ontario (50 plus years), and George Lee, former Acton library board member and Halton Hills library board member (20 plus years on both).

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