# Community s newest residents meet with the region s finest

By Melanie Hennessey Metroland Media Group

Halton Regional Police opened the doors at 12 Division to new Canadians in an effort to build relationships and dispel any negative perceptions they may have about law enforcement.

The well-attended open house Wednesday offered some of Milton s newest citizens a chance to tour the station on Childs Dr., get an inside look at police vehicles and meet a variety of police officers, including K-9 services, criminal investigators, uniformed and auxiliary officers.

Some people come from countries where they are afraid to talk to police officers, said Halton Multicultural Council (HMC) Connections community worker Shinobu Yajima, who helped organize the event. There are a lot of newcomers in Milton, and I think this is a great introduction for them to learn about the police and meet officers. A lot of people who come to Canada don t know about the services provided by police.

The open house the first of its kind at a local detachment was spearheaded by Halton Regional Police Sgt. Paul Harrower, who became involved with the HMC as the group worked to welcome Syrian refugees to the community.

Then we decided this isn t just about Syrian refugees, but all new Canadians in the Town of Milton and Halton Hills, he said. The underlying purpose of this event is to not only meet our newest community members, but to also ensure them that police are here to help. As most people know, the way police are viewed in different parts of the world is very much different than it is in Canada. We want to work in partnership with them (new Canadians) in preventing crime and fighting crime.

Among those in attendance on Wednesday were Seher Khan and her two boys, who came to Canada from Kenya 18 months ago.

I thought the kids would be interested in checking out what the police station here is like, she said.

The new Milton resident has quickly discovered that Canadian law enforcement is a far cry from what she and her family were familiar with in Kenya.

It's really corrupt there. You're kind of scared of even going to the cops, she said. Here, you respect them and they can help you. That s really different for us. You feel safe

With both police and the HMC receiving an overwhelming re-



Adela Enache pets Police Service Dog Parker during a tour of Halton Polices 12 Division in Milton Wednesday.

Photo by Jayson Mills

sponse to the open house concept, Harrower said it could very well become a regular event.

I ve received emails and phone calls asking for another event already, said Harrower. There's quite an interest out there.

All local residents will have a chance to get up close and personal with the regions officers soon at their annual Police Day, which will take place on Saturday, May 14. The event will run from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Halton Regional Police Service headquarters, 1151 Bronte Rd., Oakville, and will include a chance to interact with officers and their vehicles, watch live demonstrations and other festivities.

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