

Acton woman to be inducted into Halton Hills Sports Hall of Fame



Debbie Boycott

By: Harry Rudolfs

Long-time Acton resident and Special Olympics coach and organizer, Debbie Boycott, will be inducted into the Halton Hills Sports Hall of Fame on June 16. Boycott is being installed in the "Builders" category for her pioneering work introducing rhythmic gymnastics to the Special Olympics and her tireless dedication to the sport.

Boycott's epic contribution began back in 1999 when she was looking for another discipline for her daughter Emily, who had been involved in the swimming program of the Special Olympics. Under Boycott's tutelage, the Oakville Butterflies were born a few months later and have been going strong ever since. "Our whole family got involved," she says.

At the time there were only two other rhythmic gymnastic clubs in Ontario and the sport was not yet part of the provincial association's menu. Today there are 17 active clubs and the event has gone mainstream. "The first national games were in 2002 in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan and our team really did well." Her daughter

Emily went on to compete internationally and only retired from competition last year. She is now a coach of the Georgetown Sunflowers.

Rhythmic gymnastics involves a routine with apparatus such as a hoop, ribbon, club, rope or balls, and the sequence is set to music. "It's a beautiful sport to see," says Boycott. "These athletes naturally love to move and dance and you can see the pride in their faces."

The Special Olympic movement was created to involve people with intellectual disabilities in sports and physical fitness. According to Boycott, Dr. Frank Hayden of Burlington, Ont., is the actual originator of the special olympics movement, and should be credited with the vision. "He believed the focus should be on

their abilities. 'See the Ability' is a little slogan we use.

"I'm honoured and privileged to be nominated, but there are so many volunteers," says Boycott. In particular she wants to acknowledge Gail Whittemore, a knowledgeable judge in the sport, who became involved early in the process and has been instrumental to the success of the program.

Boycott is now 66 years old and formally retired from the sport. She has also had a long career as an elementary school teacher in Acton and at Brookville Public School, and along with her husband has raised five kids. She remains active as a consultant for rhythmic gymnastic clubs and has helped set up programs in Nova Scotia and the North West Territories. This summer she's going to PEI to help set up a program there.

Anne Andrews, who sat on the selection committee, thinks Boycott is a very worthy recipient of the award. "She's been very dedicated to her sport and a very busy mom," she says. "We had a nice variety of candidates this year and she's a great representative of her sport and the community."

Halton Hills inductees this year include minor hockey/baseball builder Bill Fisher (posthumously), wrestling coach and builder Jim Hall, Collen Shields (oldest person to swim Lake Ontario), and hockey notable Yuri Kudrasovs originally drafted by Minnesota.

The presentation and dinner is being held in the John Elliot Theatre in Georgetown, June 16 at 6 p.m.



CRAFTY CAFÉ: The Crafts Group at the Roxy Café got creative making bottles into moveable works of art, led by volunteer Mike Bughner of Summit Housing and Outreach. - Jane Dougan photo

MPP REPORT

By: Ted Arnott ~ MPP Wellington - Halton Hills



Michael Chong has announced that he's seeking the leadership of his Party. The news has electrified Conservatives throughout our Riding of Wellington-Halton Hills, and across the country.

I've worked with Mike for over a decade. He's young, smart and principled. He's well-informed, forward-looking, and thoughtful. He tells the truth, and he's earned the trust and respect of people across the political spectrum. Mike has successfully pushed for parliamentary reform, in an effort to empower all Members of Parliament and give them the tools to better represent their constituents. He has also consistently stood out as a defender of stronger protection for our natural environment.

Supported by his wife Carrie, their three sons, an excellent staff, as well as a large number of dedicated volunteers, Mike has always put Wellington-Halton Hills first. Now, he takes his experience and our Riding's values to the national stage.

In my view, there is no one better suited to be the next Leader of the Opposition in the House of Commons and eventually, Prime Minister of Canada.

Each year, we have literally hundreds of fantastic community events in Wellington-Halton Hills.

One that puts us on the map nationally is our annual Georgetown/Acton Walk for ALS.

This year's Walk was on Saturday, June 4 at Dominion Gardens Park in Georgetown.

Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), sometimes known as "Lou Gehrig's disease," is a progressive neuromuscular condition in which nerve cells die, leaving voluntary muscles paralyzed. There is presently no cure for ALS.

But there is hope. Walks such as ours provide support for affected families and raise money for research. Someday, these research efforts will lead to a breakthrough and more effective treatments will be discovered. Together, we will make ALS treatable, not terminal.

The Georgetown/Acton ALS Walk has consistently ranked as one of the biggest and most successful ALS Walks in Canada, thanks to great volunteer organizers and the participation of so many of our caring residents.

Show your heart. Get involved. Please join us this Saturday.

This month marks the mid-point of the Wynne Government's mandate. The next provincial election is expected to be held in June of 2018. As we inch closer to an election, politics looms larger in the public debate that takes place inside and outside the Ontario Legislature. At the same time, MPPs should never forget we are elected to serve the people, not just to engage in mindless and exaggerated political attacks that serve no public purpose.

At present, I serve in Opposition. From this vantage point I have an obligation to point out the flaws and drawbacks of the Government's policies and agenda. However, I also believe the Opposition has an obligation to propose constructive solutions to the challenges the Province faces today. This I seek to do.

Some of the best ideas come directly from our constituents. I want to thank everyone who has offered me their ideas, suggestions and advice.

Wellington-Halton Hills MPP Ted Arnott welcomes your comments. He can be reached at 1-800-265-2366. His website address is www.tedarnottmpp.com

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