

GRAPEVINE

MCHAPPY SUCCESS

The \$4,167 raised during the Acton McDonald's McHappy Day last Wednesday will help buy a fetal heart monitor at Georgetown Hospital, and support the Ronald McDonald House in Toronto.

In Halton Hills, with the help of many volunteers who flipped burgers and presented drinks, McDonald's raised approximately \$11,000. The Canada-wide total for children's charities last year was approximately \$9-million.

ARBORIST NEEDED

With proper care, this English Oak, which is designated under the Ontario Heritage Act for its cultural and historical value, could live for 500 years. But, after a tough winter, an arborist needs to give it some tender care.

Responsibility for care and maintenance is up the owner - it was sold by the Halton District School Board in 2009 to Sanjay Massey, who paid \$495,000 for the property assessed at \$2-million. At press time, attempts to reach Massey were unsuccessful.

The Oak, located by the gym of the former Speyside School on Highway 25, grew from an acorn sent from the Royal Park at Windsor, England, to all Commonwealth schools in 1937 to mark the coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth.

The acorn was first planted at the former Dublin School, and the tree was transplanted to beside the school gym at Speyside in 1960. The school closed in 1986 and acorns were planted. It closed in 1986 and the building was rented for years and its acorns were planted at the new schools of Speyside students.

Acorns from the Speyside Oak were also propagated at Sheridan Nurseries, and are now year-old-seedlings which will keep the heritage alive, hopefully to be planted on Town property, with their own heritage Designation, or as part of the original one.

The Speyside oak is also listed on the Canadian register of Historic Places.



ALL ABOARD!

From the Limehouse and Crewson's Corners bridges to the Georgetown Station and stone arch railway bridge, the number of railway-related structures in Halton Hills earned the Town a nomination to the North American Railway Hall of Fame in St. Thomas.

Rather than nominating each structure, the decision was made by local Architectural Conservancy Ontario branch to nominate the Town under the title "Halton Hill's Remarkable Railway Heritage."

On June 6, the Town will be inducted into the Hall of Fame, joining Toronto's Union Station and New York's Grand Central Station.

ACTON REMEMBERS

Old photographs and crowd questions will bring Acton's early days - people and places - alive on Sunday May 25 as heritage Acton presents Acton Remembers at the Acton Town Hall Centre.

Community stewards Stella Brunelle, Jesse Coles, Dr. George Elliott, Shirley McKeown, Bill Nelles and Ted Tyler will be led down memory lane by moderator/local historian Mark Rowe to help paint a picture of Acton's rich history, places and characters.

A number of donated unique Acton items will be offered in a silent auction. Tickets available at the door or call 519-853-5302 or e-mail info@actontownhall.com

BELIZE BOUND

Acton's Marcel Van Helden - a tenor - will perform tomorrow (Friday) with members of the Georgetown Bach Chorale in a concert to raise money for a humanitarian trip to Belize in June by members of the Georgetown Christian Reformed Church, including Van Helden.

Tickets for the concert at the church are available at the door, or at Acton's Smooth Solutions.

CANDIDATES QUESTIONED

Voters in the Wellington-Halton Hills riding can meet their provincial candidates at a debate on May 28, hosted by the Canadian Federation of University Women, in partnership with the Halton Hills Public Library.

The event at the Halton Hills Cultural Centre will include speeches from the candidates, questions from the audience, and runs 7:30 to 9:30 p.m.



BALLINAFAD BURGER BOYS: Ballinafad United Church hosted a garage, bake and plant sale on Saturday. Breakfast and a barbecue lunch were enjoyed by Bill Schoenhardt and cook Dave Shortt. - Ted Tyler photo

You might be allergic to global warming

By David Suzuki

Spring is a time of rebirth: blossoms and greenery emerge as cold and snow give way to warmer temperatures and longer days. It can also kick off a season of sneezing, headaches and itchy, watery eyes. Like a growing number of people, I'm allergic to tree pollen. Many say their symptoms have worsened over the years. They're probably right.

We've upset the Earth's carbon cycle by burning fossil fuels and destroying forests and wetlands. Plants help rebalance it by absorbing carbon dioxide and producing oxygen. Thanks, plants! A warming planet also means longer growing seasons and stimulated plant growth in many areas (although it's causing drought and reduced plant growth in some parts of the world). And rising atmospheric CO₂ actually increases pollen production. Add to that the extreme weather impacts of climate change that can exacerbate allergy symptoms and other respiratory problems (rain and higher temperatures create more moulds and fungi in some places; more dust contributes to allergies and asthma in drought-stricken areas), plus the all-around increases in ground-level ozone, smoke and pollution, and you've got a recipe for mass discomfort, illness, death and rising health care costs.

Tests conducted by U.S. Department of Agriculture weed ecologist Lewis Ziska showed pollen production doubled from five to 10 grams per plant when CO₂ in the atmosphere went up from 280 parts per million in 1900 to 370 in 2000, accord-

ing to a USA Today article. That could double to 20 grams by 2075 if greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise.

"There's clear evidence that pollen season is lengthening and total pollen is increasing," George Luber, associate director for climate change at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, told USA Today. "It's one of the ways climate change is already affecting your community."

U.S. research shows the pollen season there has lengthened by about 16 days since 1995 and the ragweed season by anywhere from a day to 16 days, with greater increases moving north. The Public Health Agency of Canada says ragweed season here is close to a month longer than in 1995 because of warming temperatures.

We still don't fully understand the multiple impacts of global warming on allergies, or what else may be contributing to the problem. Increased chemical exposure and the "hygiene factor" — which shows lack of exposure to germs and the outdoors early in life can make people more prone to allergies — may also be involved. More research is needed, but that will require more funding.

This doesn't mean people should stay indoors. Getting outside offers numerous physical and mental health benefits. Research even shows that kids who spend a lot of time outdoors develop fewer allergies. The David Suzuki Foundation's 30x30 Nature Challenge during May provides tips and information about the benefits of outdoor activity. You can also take steps to minimize allergic

reactions, such as going outside later in the day when pollen levels are lower and reducing allergens inside your home. If your allergies are severe, it's a good idea to get tested by an allergist or doctor to pinpoint causes. From there, you can often find effective treatments.

Doing all we can to prevent climate change from getting worse won't do much for allergies this season or next, but in the long run, it will make life easier for all of us, and our children and grandchildren. After all, this isn't about plants being bad for people. We can't live without them. It's more about the natural systems that keep us alive and healthy being put out of whack by our reckless behaviour.

This year's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Fifth Assessment Report concludes that climate change is real and that humans are largely responsible, mostly through burning fossil fuels and damaging or destroying carbon "sinks", including forests, wetlands and oceans. The report also shows we still have time and opportunities to avoid the worst impacts, but only if we act quickly to protect and restore forests and green spaces and reduce our consumption of fossil fuels through energy conservation and shifting to renewable sources.

There are many benefits to addressing climate change. One is that we'll all be able to breathe easier.

Learn more at www.davidsuzuki.org

With contributions from David Suzuki Foundation Senior Editor Ian Hanington.