

# GRAPEVINE

## BACKPACK FUNDRAISER

There will be singing, dancing, comedy and refreshments tomorrow (Friday) at the third annual *Class Acts for Backpacks* talent show fundraiser at the Georgetown Christian Reformed Church on Trafalgar Road.

MC of the Links2Care show, Acton's Alex Hilson, will perform an original song about the Backpack program, which last year provided back-to-school items for 203 Halton Hills kids in need.

## FOOLED YA?

Traffic officials believe the hatch mark lines painted on two sections of busy Trafalgar Road – north of 17 Side Road and south of 15 – are slowing speeding motorists by giving them the impression that the road is narrowing. The white evenly spaced roadway markings lead to rumble strips and provide a narrow perspective for drivers who are inclined to slow down.

## DOUBLE CELEBRATION

Expect good deals, balloons and lots of hoopla – including live entertainment and cake – on Saturday as Ditto's Boutique and Country Reflections celebrates with two garage sales.

Owner Lolita Rula Babalis is marking the one-year anniversary of Dittos consignment shop, and also her recent purchase of Country Reflections.

## CENTURY LOOP

This summer's MS Bike tour in Acton has a few twists. The fundraiser, which moved to Acton for the start/finish four years ago, is switching to a one-day format and offers two rides – a 75-kilometre ride and what is called a century loop – 160-kilometres, or 100 miles.

MS Ride Ontario supervisor Candice Hamel manned a booth at the Acton Farmers' Market last Thursday to generate publicity for the MS Ride. "The Ride will start and stop at Prospect Park on August 17, and we hope the one-day format will be

great for the town of Acton because will stay for the day while the riders raise money for MS," Hamel said.

The destination ride was moved from Brampton to Acton to take advantage of the community spirit and breathtaking scenery along the routes. Last year, there were 350 riders in the Acton event – one of 27 MS Bike events across Canada, which last year raised \$9-million in pledges. Register at [msbike.ca](http://msbike.ca) or call 1-800-268-7582.

## HECKLE HELP

Rural Acton's Michael Schultz spent part of Father's Day at the Indigo Book Store in Milton, signing copies of his new book *Heckle: Notes from the Peanut Gallery*.

Offered as a paperback, eBook and from on-line readers, Heckle – the act of speaking out in disagreement – is a humorous look at heckling from Schultz, who is a freelance educator and writer.

For details contact [mikeschultz@gmail.com](mailto:mikeschultz@gmail.com)

## AL FRESCO YOGA

The popular Yoga in the Park series resumes July 4, kicking off the fifth season of stretching in the calming atmosphere of Prospect Park, under the tutelage of Staying Alive Fitness's Leanne Monaghan.

Yoga in the Park is a free community event – participants are asked to donate food to Acton's FoodShare food bank or cash to the Links2care backpack program. If it rains, the Yoga will move into the Dufferin Centre.

Last year Yoga in the Park enthusiasts donated 463-pounds of food and a \$175 Sobeys gift certificate for FoodShare, and \$4000 to the back pack program.

## GOOD DEALS/ GREAT PRICES

Proceeds from Saturday's charity garage and bake sale will benefit the Dr. John Dougan Centre for Mental Health Promotion. The sale runs from 8 a.m. to 12 noon at the Acton Town Hall Center.



**SIDEWALK REPLACEMENT:** Town works crews hope to finish replacing the sidewalk on the north side of Mill Street between John and Willow Streets this week, after completing the south side last week. If there is any of the \$25,000 budget left, crews will continue heading easterly, removing the crumbing and uneven interlocking brick and replacing it with longer-lasting concrete. – Frances Learment photo

## Great public transit makes for a great city

By David Suzuki

What makes a city great? Among other things, great cities are tolerant communities that welcome and celebrate ethnic diversity. They support and foster local arts, have access to venture capital to spur entrepreneurship and innovation, and benefit from healthy local environments with clean air, clean water and access to nutritious, locally grown food.

New York City is world class, not just because it's a driver of global finance and a hotbed of cultural innovation; it's also known for its green spaces, like Central Park and the award-winning High Line.

San Francisco is celebrated for its narrow streets, compact lots and historic buildings. These contribute to the city's old-world charm, but they're also the building blocks of a more sustainable urban form. They facilitate densification and decrease the cost of energy and transportation for businesses while improving walk ability.

When it comes to urban sustainability, cities in the U.S. and Canada are employing innovative programs and policies to improve the health and well-being of residents and their local environments, like reducing waste and improving recycling (Los Angeles), containing urban sprawl (Portland), conserving water (Calgary), and passing policies to combat climate change (Toronto).

But most cities in Canada and the U.S. are lacking in infrastructure to move millions of people safely and affordably. With some notable exceptions, such as Vancouver and Calgary, no successful rapid transit infrastructure projects have been

built in Canadian cities for decades.

A recent survey of urban experts and other "city-builders" across Canada – planners, municipal politicians, academics, nongovernmental organizations, developers and architects – concluded the abysmal state of public transit is the Achilles' heel of urban sustainability and is holding many cities back from achieving greatness.

Toronto residents spend more time battling congestion to get to and from work than in any other city in North America. This shouldn't be a surprise, as successive governments have failed to sustain and expand transit systems, even though the region has grown by about a 100,000 new residents a year. Toronto now scores 15th of 21 on per capita investment in public transit among large global cities – well behind sixth-placed New York City, which spends twice as much.

This failure to address transit infrastructure is serious. The Toronto Board of Trade estimates congestion costs the economy \$6 billion a year in lost productivity.

Furthermore, air pollution from traffic congestion is a major threat to public health, especially for our most vulnerable citizens, like children and the elderly. According to the Toronto Board of Health, pollution-related ailments result in 440 premature deaths, 1,700 hospitalizations, 1,200 acute bronchitis episodes and about 68,000 asthma-symptom days a year.

Fortunately, politicians are starting to respond. Ontario's government plans to spend billions to expand its regional transit system in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area, under a plan called the Big Move. It's

also looking at new financing tools to ensure funding levels are adequate and continue into the future. But before we spend enormous amounts on improvements, we need to ensure projects contribute to a region-wide rapid transit network using the latest technology and adhering to the highest sustainability standards. They should also move the most people in the most cost-effective way.

That's why a proposal to use diesel trains for the Air-Rail-Link plan to connect downtown Toronto with its international airport in Mississauga is concerning. A rapid transit link with the airport is long overdue, but heavy diesel trains emit particulates and other contaminants, including known carcinogens. The proposed rail line would be close to dozens of schools and daycare centres, several long-term care facilities and a chronic respiratory care hospital.

Numerous experts, including Toronto's Medical Health Officer, have urged the Ontario government to abandon its diesel plan in favour of electric trains that could be better integrated into a region-wide rapid transit network.

Vancouver, San Francisco, Portland, Seattle and New York City have consistently ranked among the most liveable cities on the continent, in part because they take the environment into account for planning decisions. They all have world-class public transit systems that move residents in a safe, affordable and sustainable way. It's time for Toronto and its suburbs to do the same. Effective transit and transportation solutions can spur economic productivity, protect the environment and improve quality of life.



**MS RIDE READY:** MS bike tour officials Kim Kay (left) and Candice Hamel manned an information booth at the Acton Farmers' Market last Thursday with George Wang, the MS RIDE official photographer and Kim, Hannah and Ben Wang. – Ted Tyler photo