

GRAPEVINE



Hero winners

Acton High School students will be among the winners of the Region's Be a Hero. Be a Voice for Affordable Housing contest when the awards are presented on November 22 in Burlington. Students from Acton High have won first place twice and also garnered two third place awards in the contest, designed to raise awareness of the lack of affordable housing in Halton. No word which, or how many, of the five Acton teams that made submissions will come home as winners.

Leadership rallies

Fifty-two Grade eight students at Acton's St. Joseph Catholic School took part in a Catholic Faith Leadership Youth Rally on Tuesday in Oakville on one of three days when the board of education focused on developing young leaders through "interactive activities, lively speakers prayer and the cerebral," students will gain new insight into leadership and see it from the perspective of their Christian faith.

Trillium plaque

Local dignitaries – including Halton Hills Mayor Rick Bonnette and Wellington-Halton Hills MPP Ted Arnott – were among the guests today (Thursday) at a reception at the Williams Mill Visual Arts Education Centre to celebrate the importance of the Mill to visual arts in the area. The Ontario Trillium Foundation will present a plaque, acknowledging its partnership in financially supporting the Mill in developing and implementing its arts education programming and promotion of the visual arts.

Wine & Cheese

The Rotary Club of Acton's annual wine and cheese silent auction/social soiree takes place tomorrow (Friday) at The Acton Town Hall Centre from 6:30 to 10 p.m.

Santa photos

If past years have been any indication – come early and be prepared to line up to have a free photo taken with Santa Claus at Roxy Café, thanks to the Acton BIA. Santa will be smiling, and asking who's been naughty and nice, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Missing

There will be no questions asked – and no reward – for the return of a wooden figure stolen from the four corners parkette around Hallowe'en.

The figures, which Acton BIA (Business Improvement Area) manager Josey Bonnette

calls "my kids" are cut-outs of kids that Bonnette dresses up for special occasions – like the Leathertown Festival, Fall Fair and Hallowe'en. And while several have gone missing in the past, they've always turned up, usually after being discarded in the downtown area, and once at the Pioneer Cemetery.

The missing figure was last seen dressed in an elephant costume.

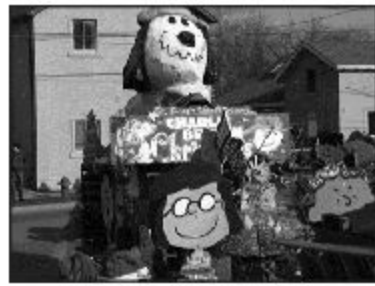
In an appeal for the figure's return, Bonnette said "I want it back."

? Which Acton business was quickly removed from the MLS listings last week when a neighbouring business expressed interest? The seller does not wish to comment until the deal is done, but knows that news tends to travel fast in this town.

Stay tuned.

Santa Claus Parade

Like last year, Saturday's Acton Santa Claus Parade promises to be exciting and entertaining



OPEN DOOR CEREMONY: Acton's Sydney Weaver, a student at McKenzie-Smith Bennett School, had the honour of cutting the ribbon to officially put the school's new elevator into service on Monday. After almost 60 years, the entire school is now accessible to all students. – Submitted photo

Science Matters

By David Suzuki



Have you noticed that we describe the market and economy as if they were living entities? The market is showing signs of stress. The economy is healthy. The economy is on life support.

Sometimes, we act as if the economy is larger than life. In the past, people trembled in fear of dragons, demons, gods, and monsters, sacrificing anything – virgins, money, newborn babies – to appease them. We know now that those fears were superstitious imaginings, but we have replaced them with a new behemoth: the economy.

Even stranger, economists believe this behemoth can grow forever. Indeed, the measure of how well a government or corporation is doing is its record of economic growth. But our home – the biosphere, or zone of air, water, and land where all life exists – is finite and fixed. It can't grow. And nothing within such a world can grow indefinitely. In focusing on constant growth, we fail to ask the important questions. What is an economy for? Am I happier with all this stuff? How much is enough?

A timely new book by York University environmental economist Peter Victor, *Managing Without Growth: Slower by Design, Not Disaster*, addresses the absurdity of an economic system based on endless growth. Dr. Victor also shows that the concept of growth as an indispensable feature of economics is a recent phenomenon.

The economy is not a force of nature, some kind of immutable, infallible entity.

We created it, and when cracks appear, it makes no sense to simply shovel on more money to keep it going. Because it's a human invention, an economy is something we should be able to fix – but if we can't, we should toss it out and replace it with something better.

This current economic crisis provides an opportunity to re-examine our priorities. For decades, scientists and environmentalists have been alarmed at global environmental degradation. Today, the oceans are depleted of fish while "dead zones", immense islands of plastic, and acidification from dissolving carbon dioxide are having untold effects. We have altered the chemistry of the atmosphere with our emissions, causing the planet to heat up, and have cleared land of forests, along with hundreds of thousands of species. Using air, water, and soil as dumps for our industrial wastes, we have poisoned ourselves.

For the first time in four billion years of life on Earth, one species has become so powerful and plentiful that it is altering the physical, chemical, and biological features of the planet on a geological scale. And so we have to ask, "What is the collective impact of everyone in the world?" We've never had to do that before, and it's difficult. Even when we do contemplate our global effects, we have no mechanism to respond as one species to the crises.

Driving much of this destructive activity is the economy itself. Years ago,

during a heated debate about clear-cutting, a forest-company CEO yelled at me, "Listen, Suzuki: Are tree huggers like you willing to pay to protect those trees? Because if you're not, they don't have any value until someone cuts them down!" I was dumbstruck with the realization that in our economic system, he was correct.

You see, as long as that forest is intact, the plants photosynthesize and remove carbon dioxide from the air while putting oxygen back – not a bad service for animals like us that depend on clean air. But economists dismiss this as an "externality". What they mean is that photosynthesis is not relevant to the economic system they've created!

Those tree roots cling to the soil, so when it rains the soil doesn't erode into the river and clog the salmon-spawning gravels, another externality to economists. The trees pump hundreds of thousands of litres of water out of the soil, transpiring it into the air and modulating weather and climate – an externality. The forest provides habitat to countless species of bacteria, fungi, insects, mammals, amphibians, and birds – externality. So all the things an intact ecosystem does to keep the planet vibrant and healthy for animals like us are simply ignored in our economy. No wonder futurist Hazel Henderson describes conventional economics as "a form of brain damage".

Nature's services keep the planet habitable for animals like us and must become an integral component of a new economic structure. We must get off this suicidal focus on endless, mindless growth.

Take David Suzuki's Nature Challenge and learn more at www.davidsuzuki.org.