

PROGRAM A GREAT BENEFIT, SAYS NEWCOMER

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— which has been overhauled in part to meet the needs of a changing demographic — is a "Welcome to Halton Hills" website with information, programs and links to services offered at the local, regional, provincial and national levels of government, and by agencies geared to new citizens.

"We've worked in partnership with the Town of Halton Hills to create curated resources for residents," said Halton Hills Public Library community librarian Brandi Gillett.

Welcome to Halton Hills flyers with QR codes for the new website are available throughout the community at the Gellert Community Centre, Mold-Masters SportsPlex, Acton Arena and Community Centre and Town Hall.

Those who pick up the

flyer can then take it into the Acton or Georgetown library branch to receive a library card and welcome package, which currently includes a recreation pass for swimming or skating (to be used when COVID-19 restrictions lift).

"Given all the resources that we (the libraries) have available for residents, it was a natural fit for us to support the program because we're really a one-stop shop for everything," said Gillett, noting the local library branches offer everything from garbage bag tags and Activan passes to community resource access for help with housing, legal services, etc.

Library marketing and communications specialist Dennis Roberts said that Gillett was instrumental in having community fridges stocked with free pre-



Graham Paine/Metroland

Halton Hills Public Library community librarian Brandi Gillett displays the newcomer resources program packages, available at the Acton and Georgetown branches.

bagged groceries, including fruits, vegetables and other perishables.

"That could also be important for people who are new to Halton Hills," he

added.

The revamped Newcomer Resources program came as welcome news to Acton resident Monica Chydzinski, who recently

moved to the community from Milton.

She said she's particularly interested in information regarding any town events that can be attended as a family.

"It would be nice to have an overview of what to look forward to here in Acton," she said.

The program was first developed a decade ago and was originally handled through the municipality's planning department due to the many requests for information coming from residents in new subdivisions.

According to a staff report that recently went before Halton Hills council, the program transitioned into supplying pertinent information about town services through Welcome Wagon, and eventually USB welcome keys were developed to link newcomers directly to the town website.

"But over the years, it became apparent that the

town needed to expand the program and revamp it as our population started to increase and become more diverse," said Gillett.

The 2016 Census says the town's population grew by 3.6 per cent since 2011, and a staff report notes this trend is expected to continue, with a projected growth of 59 per cent by 2031.

For further details on the newcomer resources program, visit <https://thestar-qr.com/3B67qYS>, call the library at 905-873-2681 or email askus@haltonhills.ca.

STORY BEHIND THE STORY: With substantial growth on the horizon for Halton Hills, we wanted to take a closer look at the resources available to residents moving to the community.



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