

# Food banks supply more than food

By Oksana Buhel

Although the federal government is insisting the recession is over, many people are still experiencing financially difficult times. Similarly, many of these same individuals are being forced to turn to food banks as a final, but necessary, resort.

Neither of the two food banks in Halton Hills - The Acton Foodshare in Acton and the Love in Christ Foodbank in Georgetown - is organizing any special drive for the Easter season. They are busy enough providing their customary standard of service and goods. Both have been in operation for two years.

Love in Christ Foodbank offers more than just food to their clients. Many forms of counseling is also available to help clients. Individuals can benefit from financial planning, family counseling or alcohol and drug abuse counseling. "The reason we provide counseling is so that people can learn to overcome their own problems, and not have to rely on the food bank," says volunteer Laura Ellison.

Joan Waldie, in charge of Acton Foodshare, explains that her volunteers do not provide any financial or family training. Instead, two

counselors come in every Tuesday to provide family counseling.

Both food banks work closely with other social service organizations, including the Salvation Army, Acton Social Services and Information Centre and alcohol and drug abuse programs. This enables them to make referrals if necessary.

## Food banks a necessary resort for some

The food banks also provide goods for their clients. Acton Foodshare gives out food, clothing, furniture and household goods on a regular basis. Love in

Christ Foodbank concentrates on food, but occasionally has "community clothing days," during which people can stop by and select available property.

The next "community clothing day" takes place March 27, between 12-3 p.m.

As if this wasn't enough work, the food banks take on special projects.

The Acton organization is setting up community vegetable gardens, with the help of the deacons of the Christian Reform Church and the Acton Horticulture Society. These gardens will be open to the public, and anyone will be able to apply a

plot.

Love in Christ organizes an undertaking called "Project Love," when volunteers board buses and go to Toronto to work with street people. The food bank also has a "Toy Day," when children of clients come in to receive their new, wrapped birthday presents

Although no formal Easter drive has been organized, Waldie mentions that many Acton organizations and residents have been very helpful. They have been donating either their goods or their time. "It's very heartening," she insists.

Ellison claims that Georgetown residents are similarly helpful. "But the Lord has still been one of our biggest providers," she adds. "He's been very good to us." Although the food bank operates from a Baptist church, Ellison insists everyone is welcome.

Both food banks are in desperate need of canned vegetables and fruits, stews, cereal and rice. Baby food and formula are also scarce.

Goods can be dropped off at Acton Foodshare, Acton IGA, Foodlands, the post office and at Acton Social Services and Information Centre. In Georgetown, goods can be dropped off at the Mountainview Baptist

## Food banks take on special projects



Baby food and formula are desperately needed at both Halton Hills food banks, Acton Foodshare and Georgetown's Love in Christ Foodbank. Laura Ellison, from Love in Christ Foodbank, shows how barren the shelves are.

Photo by Oksana Buhel

Church, the post office, most food stores, Pennywise and Home Hardware.

The Acton Foodshare operates between the hours of 9 a.m.-2 p.m. on Tuesday, and 1:30-4 p.m. on Thursday. It is located at 100 Elgin St. South.

Love in Christ is open on Wednesday, between the hours of 9 a.m.-2 p.m., and 6-7 p.m., and located at 100 Mountainview St. South.

For further information, call 853-0457 in Acton, and 873-6979 in Georgetown.

## Children's Aid

# International adoptions are challenging for families

Families who apply to adopt children from other countries do so out of love and a real concern for children. However, Marg McCallum of Halton Children's Aid Society says they are sometimes not prepared for the tough realities of parenting a child from another culture - especially an older child who may have endured neglect and abuse and who may never have experienced family life.

The number of international adoptions has soared in recent years, and many parents are discovering that caring for these children is more difficult than they had expected. In response, Halton CAS is now offering a support group for parents of adopted children from other countries.

"We've already been running support groups for people who have

adopted children through our agency," McCallum explains, "so we know they can be very effective. They can help prevent adoption breakdowns, and they give parents a chance to share their experiences, to find out about sources of help, to learn more about coping with the challenges they might be facing with their children."

The group will meet once a week for eight to twelve weeks and then continue to meet once a month as long as the members choose. Based on the families she has already spoken to, McCallum expects to have parents with children from many different countries, including Russia, Romania, Yugoslavia, Peru, India, Somalia, etc. Meetings will be held either at the Oakville CAS office or in Milton, depending on the group.

Why is raising a child from another country often challenging?

McCallum points out that many of these children have been raised in orphanages and have no experience of family life. She describes a "composite" example, based on a number of international adoptions.

K. was born in a developing country. His mother received no prenatal care and never had enough to eat, so his birthweight was less than five pounds. Despite the adverse conditions, she tried to care for him at first but finally abandoned him to the streets when he was two, where he lived with other street children and tried to survive as best he could. But Baby K. was one of the fortunate ones - he was rescued from the streets and placed in an orphanage. The orphanage, however, was less than ideal. The

overworked caretakers could only provide for his basic needs and had no time to provide nurturing, affection or stimulation. As a result, he suffered significant deprivation.

K. has never become attached to another person or to love an adult. He has now been adopted and brought to Canada to join a family - something he has never experienced before. The language is different, the food is different, and the expectations his new parents have are hard for him to understand.

Another common situation is for a child to be raised from birth in an orphanage. In some of these, life is very regimented and the children are physically abused. This can be the most emotionally damaging situation of all.

The stress on the adoptive family is enormous, too. Joe and Mary had been through a harrowing experience just to arrange for K.'s adoption - living for weeks in a foreign

country while they visited the orphanage and made all the arrangements. It's been expensive, but they thought it would all be worth it once they got their new son home. Instead, they found themselves in a state of crisis almost immediately.

Who could they turn to for help? None of their friends and relatives had any experience of caring for a child like K. Finally, Joe and Mary called the CAS and were put in touch with Marg McCallum. She helped them find a therapist who was sensitive to the adoption issues they were struggling with, and they intend to join the support group when it starts.

The support group for parents who have adopted internationally will begin at the end of March or early April. If you are interested or would like more information, please call Marg McCallum at 844-8211

## Separate schools upgrading

By Oksana Buhel

The Halton Roman Catholic School Board is hoping to raise \$38.7 million to update the facilities of older separate schools to the standards of the newer ones. These facilities would include junior kindergarten and the computer program.

In Halton Hills, the schools which may benefit from these intended changes are Holy Cross and St. Francis of Assisi elementary schools in Georgetown, and St. Joseph's elementary school in Acton.

Giacomo Corbacio, plant and building controller for the board, explained his department has prepared a preliminary report, which was sent to the school board on March 9.

He insists these recommendations are in the very earliest stages. "We're just getting the ball rolling," he admits.

The next stage will be to send copies of the concept drawings to the individual school principals

who, in turn, will consult with the staff, parents and any other concerned individuals. This group will review the drawings and add any recommendations. This stage is expected to be completed in late April.

When asked where the money would come from for these changes, Corbacio admits he is not sure. He explained that \$8.2 million would either come from the ministry, or is already in the board budget. He described this as a "good portion." Further funds would come from energy-saving devices which are to be installed in the modernized schools.

The purpose of the departmental report is to provide school trustees with an overall picture and develop a budget strategy. They will be able to prioritize what changes are needed and where the money will come from.

Corbacio admits the changes will take some time. "We are proceeding in a very step-by-step, logical manner."



Georgetown Branch 120 Royal Canadian Legion was the setting March 14 of the zone finals for Air Cadets effective speaking program. Flight Sgt. Kristin Murphy of the Georgetown Royal Canadian Air Cadets 756 Squadron, was the lone local competitor to advance to the provincial finals scheduled for April 17 in Toronto. Pictured above, left to right; Sgt. Gardiner, 167 Sqdn., Sgt. Gullen, 892 Sqdn., F. Sgt. Murphy, 756 Sqdn. and WO2 Homewood, 724 Sqdn. Photo submitted.