

Business slow at Acton work programme

BY FRANCES NIBLOCK

For most people, being laid off is a crushing blow. For 23 employees at the Acton's Halton Work Programme, unemployment compounds their existing mental health problems.

The program, funded by the Ministry of Health, finds contract and piece work for Acton residents who suffer from a mental illness. The program, operated out of the Beardmore complex, offers a sheltered workshop, job skills training and some financial independence for its workers who are

referred by their doctor or mental health worker.

Acton program manager, Anita Lloyd, said business has been slow for three months and she has been forced to layoff, temporarily, 23 workers.

"It's really not healthy to have to lay these workers off," Lloyd said in an interview last Wednesday. "It's frustrating for the workers and for the staff, but when the economy is slow, so are we."

The Acton workshop does sub-contract work including packaging, assembly, tagging and collat-

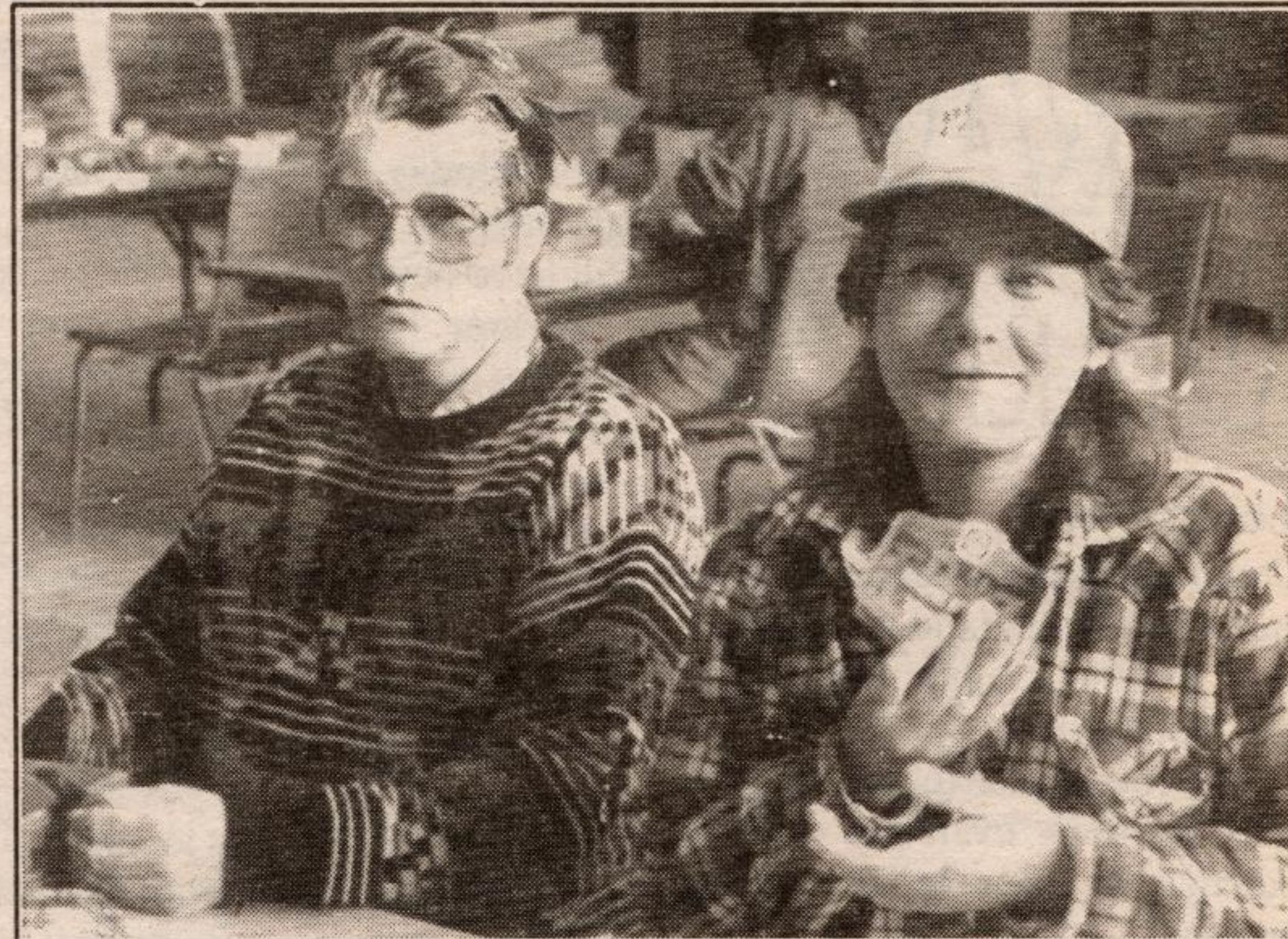
ing. Employees are paid on a piece rate basis and 90 per cent of profits go to the employees with the remaining 10 per cent being used to cover expenses.

"We pride ourselves on our high standard of quality control and low prices. I'm sure some Acton businesses don't even know we exist, let alone that we could save them money on jobs like packaging, labelling, collating and light assembly work," Lloyd said.

Lloyd said besides giving the workers income, the program gives them a sense of independence, a reason to get out of the house and a chance to learn new job skills.

"This program is a stepping stone for some workers who need to improve their job skills so they can re-enter the workforce."

The Acton office of the Halton Workshop Programme can be reached at 853-3770.



WORK WANTED: Acton's John Robb and Linda Osbourne are two employees of the Halton Work Programme which offers jobs to people with psychiatric illnesses. Unfortunately, business is slow at the Acton office and most of the workers have been laid off. (Frances Niblock photo)



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Robert Little School News

BY LAURA KOBSA &
BECKY BEHLING

This week at Robert Little we had our Winter Carnival. Everyone enjoyed participating in the events, such as the obstacle courses, bean bag toss and the toboggan pull. During the afternoon everyone sat down for a cup of hot chocolate and homemade pancakes with warm maple syrup. We really enjoyed that treat! Thank-you to the teachers for organizing this fun activity for us.

The Robert Little Junior Choir, under the direction of Mrs. Vickery, has been practising at

lunch Monday, Tuesday and Friday getting ready for March 7 when they will sing at Trinity United Church. The choir has also been selected to be part of the mass choirs at Hamilton Place during the month of April. All the students work very hard and Mrs. Vickery puts in a lot of her own time and effort to make the choir sound so wonderful.

Mlle Adomiet's Grade 5 class has been studying mixtures in science. They've been experimenting with different solids, gases and liquids to create different solutions. On Feb. 26 their class will be going to the Toronto Science Centre, to learn more information on this topic.

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