

## ACROSS THE FENCE

With Joanne Stevenson



# Take the D.A.R.E. challenge, parents

If you belong to a local service club and are looking for ways to spend your dollars, look no further.

Halton Police, along with the Halton Board of Ed., have taken the initiative in educating young people against the dangers of drug abuse with their DARE program.

DARE stands for Drug Abuse Resistance Education and it's different from the program you might remember from your old health classes. There is a lot of role playing in the course, and lots of open discussion, so children are better prepared to resist peer pressure when it comes to trying drugs.

Hoping to reach kids *before* they start using the "gateway" drugs – tobacco, alcohol and marijuana – the DARE program is offered to Grade 6 students only.

At the moment there are only three full-time officers in Halton qualified to teach the DARE program. Lack of funding means the program can only be offered every other year, and that means are students who miss out on an excellent course.

The program brings a specially-trained officer into the Grade 6 classroom for 17 one-hour sessions. Over the course of the program, the officer gets to know the students and develops a rapport with them.

The program was offered to at St. Joe's before Christmas and is currently being taught by officer Sue Hatanaka to the Grade 6s at McKenzie-Smith. In addition to teaching the kids, Officer Hatanaka took some time to educate parents.

Hatanaka has seen parenting from the other side of the law, and has some valuable insight to offer – advice that applies to children of all ages.

- Praise your children when they do well. Children with strong self-esteem are better able to resist the pressures that might lead to drugs.

- Let your children know you love them, no matter what they do.

- It's OK to offer constructive criticism sometimes, but watch your tone of voice. The message is not always *what* you say, but *how* you say it.

- Don't deny the possibility that your child may be using drugs. Says Hatanaka, "By Grade 6 your child has already been exposed to cigarettes, probably alcohol, and possibly marijuana. Once they give in to these 'gateway' drugs, it's even harder to resist the other, more dangerous drugs."

- If you have suspicions, look at your child's eyes, and smell them when they come home from a party. "Make sure the parties your child goes to have parents present – and phone and check," advises Hatanaka.

- Obey and respect the law yourself. If you curse the cop who gives you a traffic ticket, you are sending a message to your children.

- Be a good role model. If you smoke, try to quit. 'Do as I say and not as I do' doesn't hold water anymore with kids of this age.

- Follow through with natural consequences. Kids need to know, and *want* to know, what the parameters are. And they need consistent, fair punishment when they break the rules.

Hatanaka openly admits she doesn't have all the answers to parenting problems – how many of us swore (before we had children) that *our* child would never be like *that* child?

But D.A.R.E offers a constructive, concrete way for kids to resist drugs, and for parents to reinforce positive behaviour from our kids. And we could all use some support and encouragement from time to time.

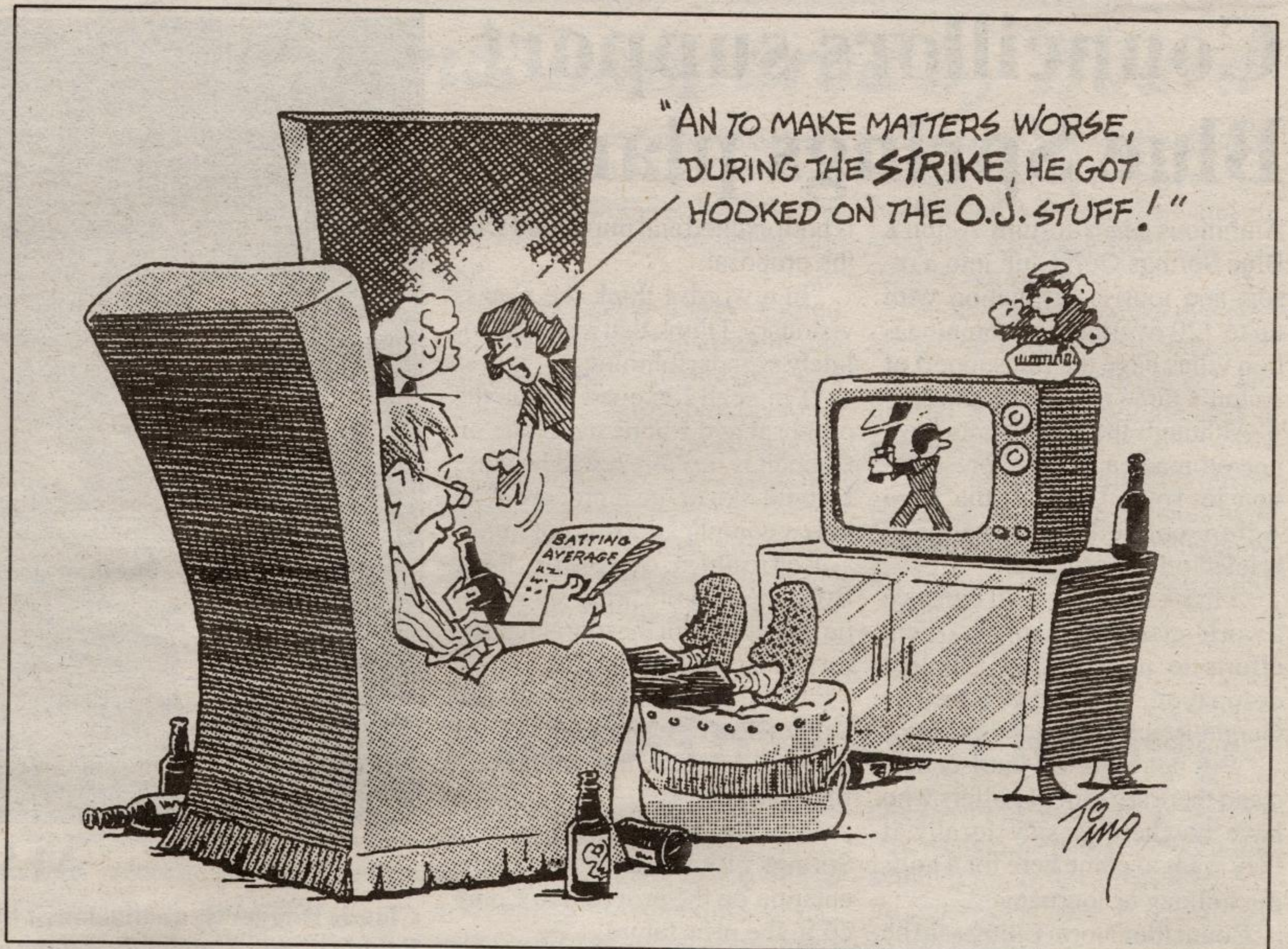
As Hatanaka says, "It's pretty easy to become a parent; it's much harder to be one."

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Sorry! We promised to report answers this week from MPP Noel Duignan regarding the costs, origin and objective of the recently-published eight-page *Halton North Gazette*.

While our MPP *did* fax us a response (it was promised by Friday; we got it Monday), he neglected to answer the questions we posed two weeks ago.

However, Duignan promised Monday afternoon that he would finally get us our answers. Soon. Very soon ...



## LETTERS

### Heaton 'out of step'

To the Editor,

I read incredulously about Ward 2 Councillor Rob Heaton's bid to get the taxpayers of Halton Hills to pre-pay his salary. At first, I thought a story like this must be an April Fool's joke.

Why would he expect us to pay 2½ year's salary *in advance*, along with two per cent interest and an 18 per cent penalty? Is he grand-

standing or laughing at us?

All Town of Halton Hills employees, staff and councillors agreed to "direct deposit pay" to save money. Everyone has co-operated, save for Mr. Heaton.

It has always been my thought that councillors were elected to serve their constituents. It is obvious to me that Mr. Heaton puts himself first.

Mr. Heaton, stop this "gimme" game and get to work. In these days of debit cards and a cashless society on the horizon, you are out of step. You are out of line and costing us, the hard-pressed taxpayers, money.

Dan Dolliver  
Mowbray Place

### Heaton in 'hot seat'

To the Editor,

I would like to comment on the issue of Ward 2 Councillor Rob Heaton and his refusal of the direct deposit pay system. Unfortunately, I do not sympathize with Mr. Heaton's position.

Mr. Heaton has been given the opportunity to make a motion requesting an exemption (to direct deposit). If Mr. Heaton wants to threaten the taxpayers with the balance of his Council term pay *plus* 20 per cent, then let him, but please, do it through the court sys-

tem like the rest of us have to.

Policy is policy, and Mr. Heaton has been given ample time to make his decision. The introduction of this type of computerized direct pay saves big dollars for the Town.

Times have changed because of technology – perhaps Mr. Heaton doesn't like change. If that is the case, maybe Mr. Heaton should look for another position that would better fulfill his needs.

Yes, Mr. Heaton has rights, but not at the expense of the taxpayer.

Lori Mandy  
Mowbray Place

### Thanks for support!

To the Editor,

On behalf of the Acton Branch of the Canadian Cancer Society, I would like to thank the following businesses for donating their services in our recent fashion show:

Acton Foodland, Acton IGA, The Acton Tanner, Blooms Away Flower Shop, Details and Designs, Elizabeth's Fashions, Erin House

Gallery, Freezer Frenzy, Jack Tanner's Table, MacMillan's Frozen Foods, McNabb Graphics, Miner-va's, the olde Hide House and Rene's Flower Shop.

We were especially pleased to see such a great turnout at this event and would like to thank the community for supporting the Cancer Society once again.

Catherine Gerrow  
Acton Branch President



Write a Letter to the Editor!

(Deadline is Monday at 9 am)

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