

# Conservation Area responds to funding cuts

BY FRANCES NIBLOCK  
The Rockwood Miller

A crack-down on trespassers, a fee increase and job sharing are some of the ways the Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA) is dealing with massive reductions in provincial and municipal funding at the Rockwood Conservation Area.

The GRCA lost 70 per cent of its provincial funding this year and will receive no provincial funding at all next year, forcing them to layoff 28 staff.

At the Rockwood Conservation Area the funding cuts resulted in a 25 cent increase in entrance fees and a \$1 increase in overnight camping fees. Entrance fees are now \$3.25 for adults, \$2.50 for seniors and students and \$1.75 for primary school children. Preschoolers enter free. Camping in an unserviced site is now \$9, with \$12 for a serviced site. Entrance fees are added on top of the camping rates.

Cuts to funding also mean a more concerted effort to prevent people from sneaking into the Conservation Area to avoid paying the entrance fee.

"To try to encourage people to support that park and pay their way in, I have been designated as a Provincial Offenses Officer and can lay trespassing charges against anyone we catch trying to get in without paying," explained Rockwood Conservation Area superintendent Kelly Stillman on Friday.

"Although there have always been no trespassing signs posted, especially along Valley Road, we now will lay charges that carry a \$55 fine with a \$5 victim surcharge.

"We had a grace period when we gave trespassers the option of buying a pass but now we are getting repeat offenders so everyone that we catch is charged."

The funding reductions also mean staff no longer patrols the beach, so if there

is an emergency in the water, staff will have to be called from the front gate or police will be called. It also means that the Area's visitor service co-ordinator, Deanne Rockola of Rockwood, will divide her time between Rockwood and Guelph Lake instead of devoting all of her time to Rockwood.

Activities for campers and day-users include hayrides, a casino night, campfires, hikes and nature crafts, and a calendar of events is available at the main gate.

The 197-acre Conservation Area, which opened in 1965, has 100 campsites which are booked for every weekend this summer. At its busiest, usually Sundays, at least 1,500 people make day trips to the Conservation Area.

"Our biggest draw is the swimming, hiking and fishing," Stillman said, noting that the dammed-up areas of the Eramosa River were stocked with rainbow trout in April.

"We also have a food concession that serves fast food and we rent canoes and paddle boats at the beach," Stillman said.

Another major draw is the 150-year-old woolen mill ruins which can be rented for \$45 a day and are a popular location for both wedding ceremonies and as a location to take wedding pictures.

The ruins have also been featured in at least three major motion pictures, including A View to Kill and The Song of Hiawatha, and the GRCA raises revenue by renting the site to movie and television producers.

Through the municipal levy in 1996 each watershed resident paid \$4.96 towards the conservation work of the GRCA, which includes operating the Rockwood Conservation Area.

The Rockwood Conservation Area is located off Alma Street in Rockwood and can be reached at 856-9543.



**CONFIDENT DRIVERS:** The East Wellington Advisory Group (EWAG) presented its 55-Alive driver refresher course students with their certificates, following the completion of the course. Students Enid Sim, Charles Lewis, Peggy Walker, Helen Hanna, Frances Annette, Bernice Pearce, Bessie Barbaree and Peg Dyer took the course, taught by Don Purvis and were given their certificates by Bill Lewis, a EWAG board member. (Karen Wetmore photo)

## Fundraiser features Peter Appleyard

Jazz legend Peter Appleyard will celebrate his fiftieth year in music with a special outdoor concert Saturday, July 13 at the ruins of the Harris Woolen Mill in the Rock-

wood Conservation Area. Appleyard, a Rockwood local, is considered one of the world's greatest living jazz vibraharpists. He has performed around the world

and with a legion of jazz heroes, from Oscar Peterson to Benny Goodman. Meanwhile, he has participated in the full spectrum of Canada's cultural life, ranging

from television with comedy greats Wayne and Shuster and musical stars such as Ann Murray. In 1993 his contribution to Canada was formally acknowledged when he was honoured with the Order of Canada. His talent was acknowledged internationally this past winter when he was invited not only to perform at the Kennedy Centre in honour of Lionel Hampton, but also at the legendary home of jazz, the Apollo Theatre in Harlem.

The July 13 performance is a celebration of his career and a fundraiser for the Spirit Valley Experience, a festival of the arts and nature slated for the Conservation Area on Saturday, Sept. 7.

Tickets for the Appleyard Big Band Vibes, featuring Appleyard and 18 of his musical colleagues, are \$50 and also include a gala dinner by Hubert Biemann of Rockwood's La Vieille Auberge, served at the mill ruins.

For more information about the concert or the Spirit Valley Experience call 856-9999 or drop into the Festival office at 161 Main St. S.

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