

## TEAC Committee plays vital role in environmental protection

by Naomi Powell

Ask Daphne Shropshall, chair of the Town Environmental Advisory Committee (TEAC), how she developed her passion for environmentalism and she'll tell you that it all started with her family's move from Mississauga to rural Ballinafad. "You're [living] in the middle of traffic, pollution, dirt and noise," says Shropshall, "then you move out here, see the wildlife and the seasons and you realize this needs protecting. It gives you a whole new outlook on life."

As more and more developments spring up across Halton Hills, TEAC's 12-person volunteer committee is playing a vital role in ensuring that town planning and policy does not adversely affect local waterways, wood lots or valleys. Formed by the town in 1993, the committee is composed of a diverse group of residents that includes botanists, geologists, students, teachers and people like Shropshall, who are simply interested in "being involved in the town on behalf of the environment."

Since the Planning Act "doesn't always take the environment into account," says Shropshall, one of TEAC's main responsibilities is to review and comment on development applications. When the planned construction of a school in South Georgetown threatened a local wood lot, for example, TEAC was instrumental in preserving a large portion of it by suggesting an alternate configuration for the building plans.

TEAC's advisory capacity also extends to town policies on issues such as tree planting. "We are trying to encourage the town to use native species [of trees] because some species are so invasive that they will take over an area." When the town began planting invasive Norway Maple trees instead of native species, TEAC pointed this out as a potential problem. Although the salt-resistant maples are still being used on collector roads, they are no longer planted within 100 meters of ravines, parks or waterways.

This achievement, says

Shropshall, required "a bit of give and take," but she is still encouraged by the changes she has seen in the town and public's attitude toward the environment. "Twenty years ago, even 10 years ago, planning didn't even take into account the damages done to waterways. Drains more or less emptied into creeks. Thinking, thank goodness, is changing."

To maintain this awareness, TEAC sponsors workshops through the winter months on topics such as naturalization, pesticides and how to be environmentally friendly in daily life.

TEAC's work has not gone unrecognized. The group was recently awarded the Halton Board of Education Blue Planet award for an environmental education package it developed for the Willow

Park Ecological Centre in Norval. The centre, which recently had its groundbreaking ceremony, is completely stocked with native trees and water plants and also features a newly developed wetland that, Shropshall says proudly, "already has a resident turtle." In addition, TEAC committee members were among 350 volunteers who were honoured by the Town of Halton Hills at a recent Volunteer Recognition Reception.

Still, between running a business with her husband, restoring their home and devoting ten hours per week to TEAC duties, Shropshall laughingly admits that she sometimes wonders why she gets herself involved in so much.

"But then something happens, the adrenaline starts pumping and it's always worth it in the end."

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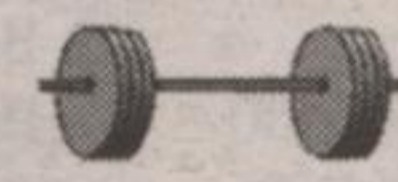
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