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Volume 5, Issue 1

"A Rural Paper to Call Our Own"

April, 2002

Fact or fiction, advocacy group's survey sparks interest in education

by Donna Danielli

In the past few years mentioning education in Ontario causes only one thing - controversy.

On February 26, Annie Kidder of the education advocacy group *People for Education*, spoke to a group of parent council representatives, principals and vice principals at the invitation of School Trustees, Ethel Gardiner and Erica Andrews.

People for Education has been an advocate of public education since 1995. The group comprises information gathered from surveys sent directly to every school in Ontario, and are released as Tracking Reports.

"Their survey results contain credible data. They state the facts and remove themselves from politics," explained Ms. Andrews. "It's a real grass roots operation and they are all volunteers. I think they have done a wonderful job."

The Tracking Reports released by *People for Education* for 2001 paint a dim view of education in

Ontario. Their data indicates that there is a textbook shortage in 66 per cent of elementary schools and 62 per cent of secondary schools.

Mrs. Kidder expressed concern that Ontario is setting up a two tier education system, the haves and have nots. *People for Education's* research showed that parents fundraised \$33 million last year, 27 per cent of which went to purchase textbooks, classroom supplies and computers.

The top 10 per cent of the schools in fundraising dollars were able to raise as much between them as the bottom 70 per cent of schools put together.

Neighbourhoods which are more affluent can fundraise more dollars to put into their schools than lower income neighbourhoods.

As well, *People for Education's* statistics show there are 37,000 children on waiting lists to be assessed for special education.

"Parents who can afford to pay

for the testing themselves can jump the line," stated Mrs. Kidder. "Lower income families have to wait longer."

Halton MPP Ted Chudleigh argues that the future of Ontario's education system isn't as bleak as the picture painted by *People for Education*.

"The *People for Education* claim that 37,000 students are on waiting lists for special education services - that's wrong," he stated. "It is important to note that the *People for Education* survey failed to ask the question 'How long was the length of wait?', or 'How are the students being addressed in the meantime?' Waiting periods of a week or two, and students who were waiting for assessment during the summer months, were all lumped into the same survey result.

"It is obvious that these oversights would cause inflated and distorted results," Mr. Chudleigh said.

(Continued on page 7)

What a score!



Photo by Donna Danielli

Former NHL referee, Halton Hills Councillor Bryan Lewis made a surprise visit to the Town of Milton Employee Recognition ceremony on March 20. Shown here with Councillor Lewis is Milton Mayor Gord Krantz and 35 year Tonelli Arena employee Jim Smith. Mr Smith, a long time Toronto Maple Leafs fan was presented with a special Leafs jacket and other hockey memorabilia in honour of his years of service.

Inside this Month's Compass

Shoobox Memories

Thomas D. Craine, great, great-grandson of Robert Craine, who came to Canada from the Isle of Man in 1825, married Elizabeth Louisa Hasler, lived in Guelph and had two sons, David and William, who carry on the family name in Ontario.

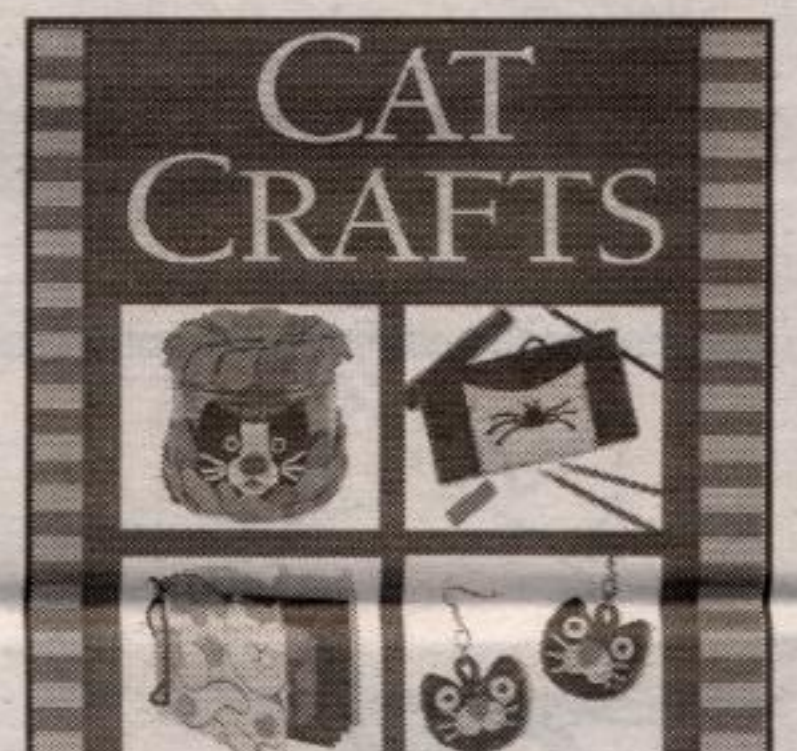
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Idle Pursuits

Cats rule and dogs... well, so do dogs, as far as kids are concerned. This month's Quail Reviews looks at local author/illustrator Linda Hendry's two new books out by Kids Can Press, *Cat Crafts* and *Dog Crafts*.

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Community Cornerstone

In Canada, injuries are the leading cause of death for children over one year old. Nassagaweya's Karin Roskam wants to help reduce those numbers by teaching children safety through a new program entitled "Risk Watch."

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Halton 4H

The new 2002 season has begun. There's plenty of clubs to join for eager 4-H participants. Of course, the 4-H organization is always happy to have new members join in on the fun too. Sign up today!

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