

# Protecting Halton's children

By KAREN BOOTHROYD

Many of us know people who live in the neighbourhood where Holly Jones was abducted and murdered. We may have felt the urge to scoop up these families and burrow them into one of our Region's cozy hamlets. But how safe is north Halton, and in what ways has this tragedy altered the lives of families in our community? Doris Burfind, the Georgetown mother of a ten-year-old daughter, feels that the effect has been significant. She says, "I am more vigilant than ever now." Ms. Burfind recently purchased a new bike for her daughter and explains, "We told her you can ride your bike to school, but after the tragedy, I won't let her now." She adds, "I used to be a lot more easygoing." Many parents feel the same way and wonder how much their children are at risk.

Holly's neighbourhood is home, according to Sergeant Jim Muscat of Toronto Police 11 Division, to "over 200 sex offenders in a three-kilometer radius." Sergeant Muscat is careful to point out that many of these offenders have been convicted on minor sexual assault charges and are not convicted pedophiles.

Detective Carol Crowe of the Halton Regional Police echoes Sergeant Muscat. When asked if we have any convicted pedophiles residing in north Halton, she explains: "We don't keep specific statistics relating to pedophiles. Pedophile is a very specific, clinical diagnosis that we in the police community do not usually use. What I can tell you is that we have 18 people on the Sex Offender registry in the north region of Halton includ-

ing Milton, Georgetown and Acton. However, this does not mean that these people have been convicted of sexual offenses against children. These could include assaults perpetrated on adults, family members, acquaintances et cetera."

During the one and a half years that Detective Crowe has been working in Halton Region, there have been no abductions or attempted abductions of children. The Leslie Mahaffey case, 12 years ago in Burlington, was the last tragedy of this kind that Halton Regional Police had to investigate. The risk of a known pedophile attacking our children is low, and Detective Crowe points out, "The reality is that most sexual assaults are perpetrated by someone known to the victim."

Detective Crowe offers recommendations and precautions for parents. "Parents need to discuss their children's safety with them. This should not be seen as a one-time deal but as an ongoing discussion, providing children with information that is age-appropriate. It is not enough to tell our children not to talk to strangers. We must also educate them as to what a stranger is. It is important for parents to teach their children that it is okay to say no even to adults when they are asking the child to do something that makes them uncomfort-

able. It is important that children know they can talk to their parents about anything." Some other common sense advice for our children: don't play alone, stay away from secluded areas, don't take shortcuts, don't accept anything such as candy or toys from strangers, and don't go anywhere without your parents knowing where you are and who you are with. Detective Crowe concludes with the observation, "It is up to everyone, the community, government and support agencies, to work together to reduce the risk to our children and families."

## Milton's high school graduates honoured

SPECIAL TO THE COMPASS

In 1963, the Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW), Milton and District Club, began recognizing outstanding female graduates from Milton's high schools. This forty-year-old tradition of presenting scholarships continues. Each spring, the local club of the CFUW holds a Used Book Sale where the money for these scholarships is raised.

This year two Bishop Reding students, Megan Ames and Rebecca Johnston, have been recognized by the CFUW as Award of Merit winners. Megan is enrolled in Science

Psychology at Wilfrid Laurier University, and Rebecca will be going to Queen's University to study Computational Biology and Medical Informatics.

Adrienne Robertson and Lindsay Turner are E.C. Drury's recipients of Milton's CFUW's scholarships. Adrienne will be attending the University of Guelph-Humber where she will earn her Diploma in Journalism and Bachelor of Applied Arts, while Lindsay has been accepted into the University of Toronto's

Communication, Culture and Information Technology Program.

Blair Davey, Laura Thistle and Samantha Thompson are the CFUW's Award of Merit recipients from Milton District High School. Both Laura and Samantha will be attending the University of Victoria: Laura will be studying Sociology, and Samantha will major in Asian Studies and Political Studies. Blair Davey will be attending the University of Waterloo where she will be studying her life-long love - mathematics.

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