

# 'We offer solutions to the clients'

## Halton's Business Advisory Group

By ANN KORNUA

A hot trend is sweeping over the Province with more people taking up small business ownership. Help is now available for those struggling to put together a business plan. The Business Advisory Group, or BAG for short, is a group of retired business volunteers who use their knowledge and experience to hold the hands of business owners who have problems or questions.

"We are an organization of mainly retired executives and entrepreneurs. We have been in business now for twenty years and have over fifteen members," Norman Johnston from BAG said. "We help small and medium sized businesses. We meet with them, try to figure out what their problems are and present solutions on how to assess those problems. We charge a nominal fee to cover our administration costs but we are a volunteer based group."

The BAG meets with a client in a three-hour session. BAG has three venues in the Halton area that they use for their consultations, Oakville, Burlington and Hamilton/Flamborough. With a diverse element of expertise ranging from engineering, HR specialist, banking, and accounting, BAG will figure out the problems that can slow down the productivity of a business.

"In the meeting, we determine what the client's problem is," Norman said. "We offer solutions to the client. The problems range from marketing where we would try to improve their strategy or if they have a pricing problem, we would look at their costs."

During a meeting, BAG usually asks the client to prepare a business plan that will act as a road map for them to follow during their workshop. At the end of the meeting, the volunteers of BAG will summarize their recommendations in a written report and ask the client to come back after they have tried it out. "We find that most problems are on-going and we always like to stay in touch with our clients to hear of their success or if they need further assistance," Norman said.

Financing is one of the top problems Norman said that holds back a small business. "We have had over 800 clients over the 20 years and we always try to keep helping them," Norman said.

The BAG has no ulterior motive and doesn't bill by the hour. They are geared towards the success of their sessions to help small entrepreneurs. To learn more about Halton's Business Advisory Group and how to book a session or volunteer expertise contact them toll free at 1-866-663-4234 or log into their website [www.smallbusinessadvisory.com](http://www.smallbusinessadvisory.com).

## Dirt to Metal

### How the Iron Age was born

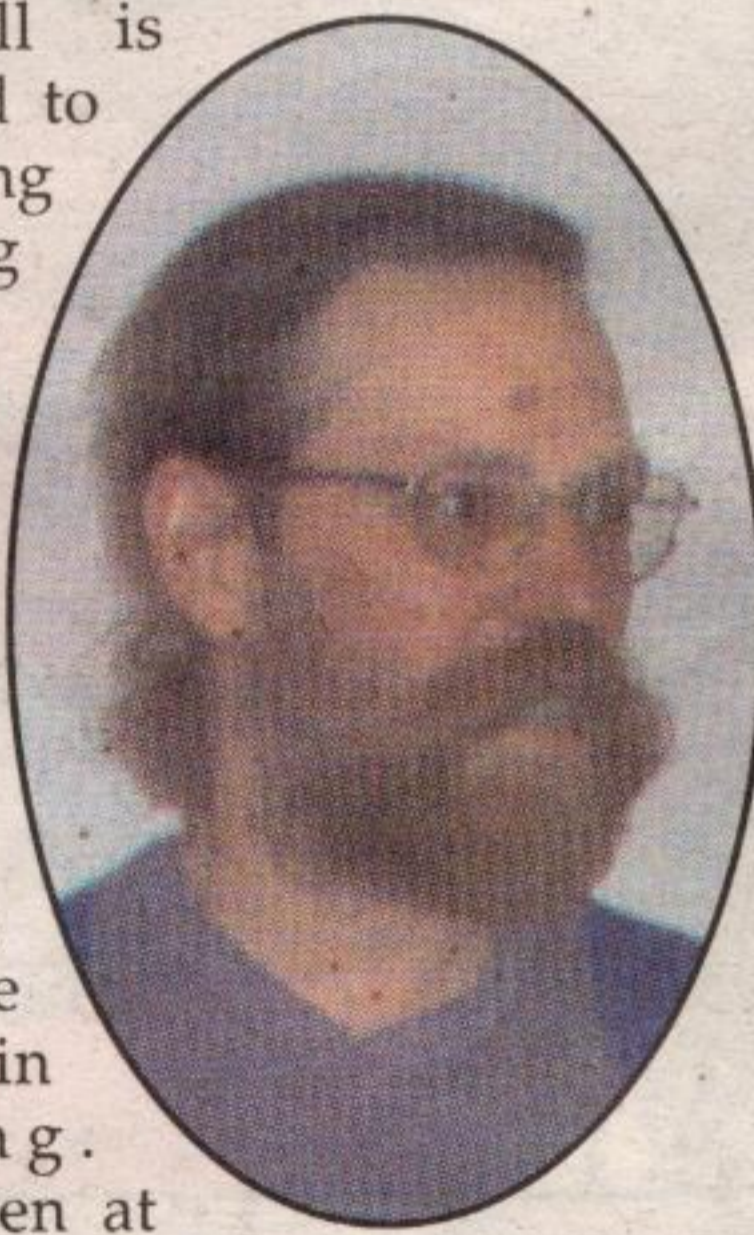
By STEPHEN BAKER

On Saturday March 19, the Milton Historical Society presented to a full house at Waldie's Blacksmith Shop a lecture on the origins of the manufacture of iron. The talk was given by Darrell Markewitz, a professional blacksmith and museum consultant.

The story of iron from ore dates back some 3,500 years when man first fashioned tools and weapons from meteoric iron. Next came the extraction of iron from alluvial iron deposits. To achieve this it was necessary to build forges that could reach 2500°F. This requires a strong infusion of oxygen into the fire. The first method employed was to build the forge in a place of strong winds. While

this was successful it was limited in application. The development of bellows made it possible to site forges everywhere. The amounts of iron produced were very small and in consequence valuable. It is this intrinsic value that led to weapons and tools being buried with their owners and allowed them to be rediscovered by future generations.

Darrell Markewitz's presentation was vibrant and full of practical tips for those wishing to try it for themselves. Darrell is uniquely qualified to give the talk, having to his credit a long list of accomplishments including consultant to the Smithsonian Museums *Vikings-North Atlantic Saga*. He has his own forge at Proton Station, Ontario where he gives classes in blacksmithing. Darrell can be seen at [www.wareham-forge.ca](http://www.wareham-forge.ca)



Darrel Markewitz

## Milk & honey

Each year milk producers across Ontario are recognized for maintaining above average premises and superior milk quality. At a recent meeting, eight Halton producers received awards. Grant Brownridge of Dairy Farmers of Ontario, presented certificates to Harold Patterson, John Nixon, Ken McNabb, Jeffrey Nurse, Dave Wilson and Jay Kitching. The coveted Gold Award was presented to Roland Egger and Robert Linham. The photo shows Nicki Wilson of CIBC, Milton presenting a silver tray to Robert Linham of Limehouse for achieving the highest standards in the Region of Halton. David Rose, Chief Agrolgist for CIBC, also attended and spoke to the meeting.





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