

# Savoline holds workshop on youth

By BERNADETTE WARD

Young people in Halton feel disenfranchised and portrayed poorly in the media and with that in mind, nearly 100 students took the time to attend a workshop designed to teach them how to communicate and advocate.

The workshop, presented by the Halton Regional Youth Advisory Committee (HRYAC), took place at the Halton Regional Centre on April 6 and was intended to help youth garner positive attention from the leadership in the community.

"The Region of Halton wants to be a youth friendly community - that's why we're here today," said Patrick Byrne of HRYAC.

HRYAC is a committee of representatives from each of the four Mayors' Youth Advisory Committees in Halton that was formed in 1998 that seeks to identify issues that affect youth.

"The first three letters are y-o-u. It's about you, what you can do to contribute to your community; it's about what we can do together," said Regional Chair Joyce Savoline.

The workshop, said Savoline, was intended to bring together students so that they could discuss issues and act together for the young people of Halton and in doing so the students would also learn about healthy democracy, leadership and communications skills.

Participants also heard from each individual Mayor's Youth Advisory Committee who spoke about each community and how youth friendly it was and students completed a survey to see how each community stacked up.

Findings from among the group indicated that most communities have at least a modicum of amenities that appeal to young people including bowling alleys, preferably and not surprisingly, the bowl-in-the-dark type, cinemas, drop in centres or youth centre, skateboard parks and youth theatre production opportunities.

What distressed students was the tendency of retailers to discriminate based on age - in

some cases students have been asked to check their backpacks before shopping and some stereotyping that included branding all Oakville students as "stoners". Students also decried the dearth of public transit.

Much of the day was spent in seminars directed by the Best Medicine Troupe of the De-ba-jeh-mu-jig Theatre Group who took the students through a series of exercises designed to help them build positive arguments and to deal with opposition in a healthy way.

"We go out and work with youth," said Chris Wemigwans. "We get students to look at the resources they already have inside them and help them to use them in their work."

Savoline challenged students to become involved in community building, pointing out that civic engagement can be a "powerful thing" and that activism is not necessarily a bad thing.

She also noted that young people have a role to play in the community and the more involved they become, the easier it will be to break down the walls of mistrust and negativity.

"We need an inclusive kind of community," said Savoline.

To find out more about HRYAC, try their website, [www.haltonyouth.com](http://www.haltonyouth.com).

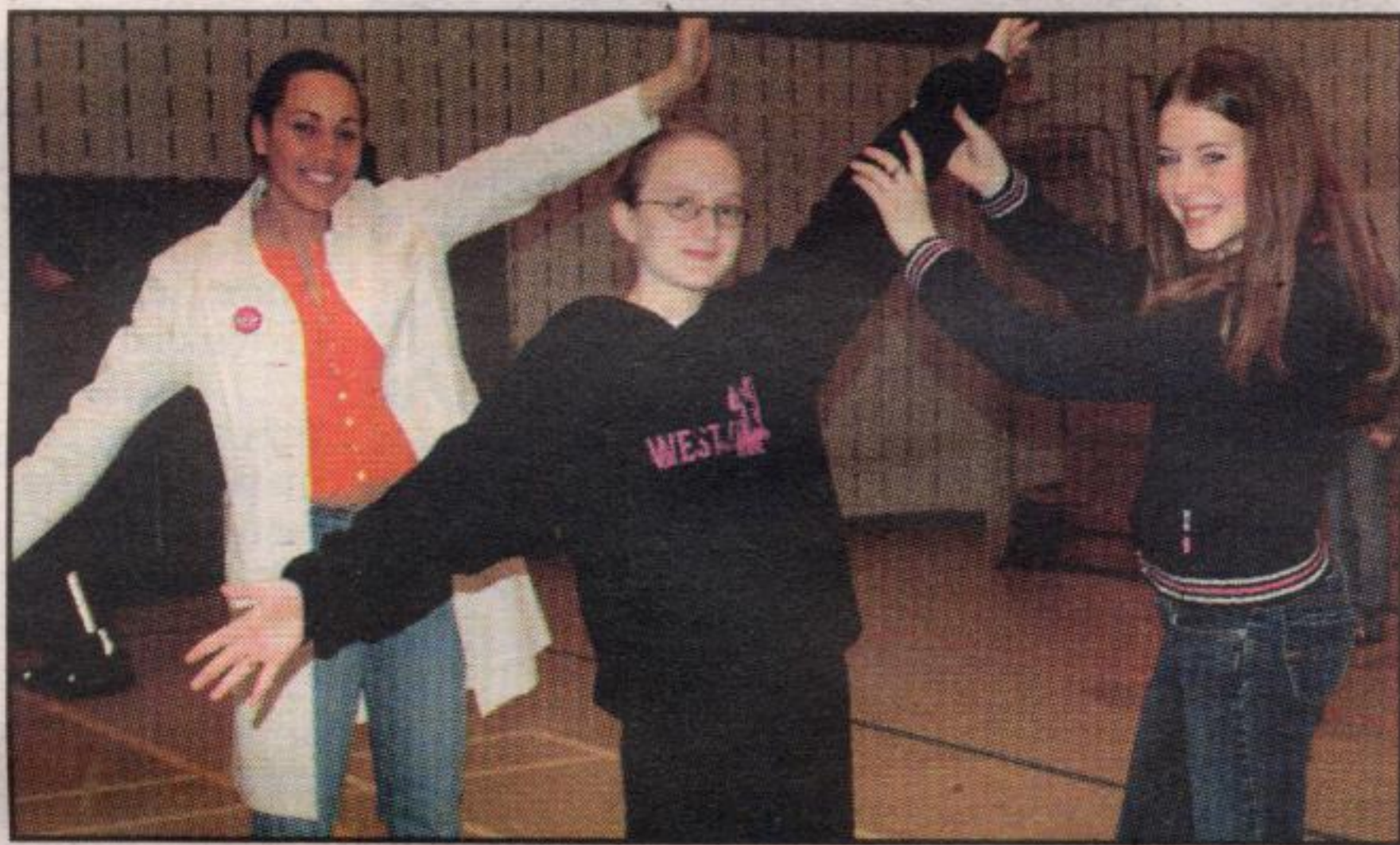


PHOTO BY BERNADETTE WARD  
Pictured here, from back to front, are Susan Crawford, Ashley Morgan and Genna Hendry, who were participating in a communication exercise directed by the Best Medicine Theatre Troupe.

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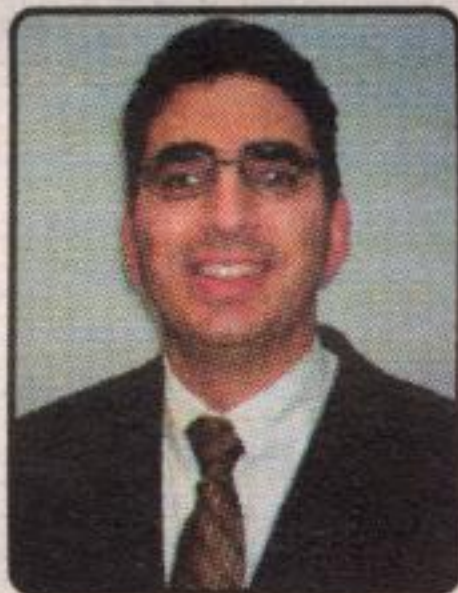
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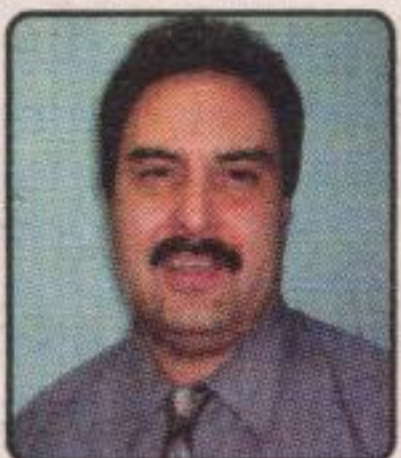
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