

Growing a healthy community

BY DONNA DANIELLI

Society is fighting a health crisis of almost epidemic proportions according to Dr. Sheela Basrur, Ontario's chief officer of medical health. In a recent address to the annual conference for the Ontario Institute of Agrigologists (OIA), Basrur pointed out almost one out of every two adults in Ontario was obese or overweight, according to 2003 statistics. Obesity carries with it an increased risk of type two diabetes, coronary heart disease, stroke, hypertension, gallbladder disease and various cancers.

Basrur pointed to diet and physical activity as two of the causes for this increase in obesity. Approximately 40% of adults in Ontario don't eat the recommended five to ten servings of fruits and vegetables each day, and this, combined with a general lack of exercise, is having a seriously detrimental effect, not only on our lifestyles, but also on our health care system.

Taking Basrur's message to heart, Ontario's agrigologists, who make their living offering professional advice to farmers, hosted a recent workshop: *Farm*

to Physician - Innovative Agricultural Solutions for Your Health. "Everything we do has some sort of integration with agriculture," said Jan Craig of the Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health Unit. Statistically, men in Halton have seen their obesity statistics rise from 30 - 34% in 1990 to 35-39% in 2003. The statistics for women in Halton over the same time grew from 14 - 19% to 20 -24%. "The trend is somewhat alarming," said Craig. "Significant health gains can be achieved with more active living. The more we all practise healthy lifestyles, the more infectious it will be."


An investment in agri-food research is already yielding results according to Dr. Larry Milligan, Advanced Foods and Materials Network. The addition of DHA/Omega -3 fatty acids to milk came about through research conducted at the University of Guelph. "DHA is profoundly important in nerve function, in health related to nerve function," explained Milligan. "It's very important in neural development." He pointed out that consumption of DHA has been limited, espe-

cially by children, as DHA is most commonly found in fish. "Cow's milk is lacking in DHA, yet milk is ranked as the major source of fat for young children," he argued. "Fish intake by children is virtually negligible. Dairy-Oh milk from Neilson's Dairy contains DHA as a result of changing the diet of the cows. This is an important development."

Greg Hannam, of Woodrill Farms expanded on the role that agriculture can play in a healthy diet, pointing out canola oil, omega 3 eggs, and soy beverages, as well as Dairy-Oh, as examples of developing crops that provide beneficial nutrients and fatty acids as part of foods that people already eat. "Our agricultural industry can play an important role in changing our emphasis from treating health problems to preventing them," said Hannam. "Taking the dietary input of animals and changing it to increase health is a pretty good innovation."

The last speaker was Terry Graham, Chair of the Department of Human Health, University of Guelph. He called on agriculture to find a way to provide not

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only safe and nutritious food, but to do so at an affordable cost. "We can provide enough food to feed Canada, but we need to be producing better foods and healthier foods at a cost that society can afford," he exhorted. "That is agriculture's challenge. You can't chose your genes, but you can chose your lifestyle."

Recruiting for a good cause

BY DONNA DANIELLI

Volunteers are the backbone of a community - those tireless people who work so hard behind the scenes to keep community organizations going. In today's world though, volunteerism is dwindling in the face of high paced lifestyles, lack of connection to community, and a need for volunteers that at times is so immense, it can be overwhelming to someone who just wants to help out.

The Milton Community Policing Committee is hoping to ease some of those constrictions as it holds its first Volunteer Recruitment Fair on Saturday, October 29th. "It's the first one of its kind that our committee has been involved in," explains Committee Event Chair Greg Nelson. "The Committee itself relies on volunteers and we know that there are other community groups that also rely on volunteers."

The Volunteer Recruitment Fair will take place at the Lion's Hall, located above Thompson arena from 10 am to 2 pm on the 29th. "People can come out and speak to representatives of the various community groups and see which specific group best suits them," says Nelson. He points out that the Fair offers an excellent opportunity for high school students and their parents to check out volunteer opportunities that would fulfill the student's mandatory forty hours of community service.

Thus far, exhibitors signed on to join the Fair include the Victorian Order of Nurses (VON), the Salvation Army, Birth Right, the United Way, the Red Cross, Crime Stoppers and more. "There's plenty of room for more," says Greg Nelson. To find out about participating in the Volunteer Recruitment Fair, please contact Greg Nelson at 905-875-3663.

Talking to the people

BY DONNA DANIELLI

There has been no federal election called yet, but Conservative candidate Garth Turner is wasting no time in beginning his campaign for the Halton riding. Turner, best known as the former Member of Parliament (MP) for Halton-Peel from 1988 to 1993 and for his time as the federal Minister of National Revenue, hosted a series of town hall meetings throughout Halton in recent weeks. "This is an exercise in democracy," he told a group of over thirty residents at the meeting held at the Nassagaweya Community Centre on October 5.

Turner pointed to his history of holding over 70 of these Town Hall meetings while serving as an MP, a history that one citizen had issues with. "Initially it was a good two way process," Bob Clark stood to confront Mr. Turner. "But it wasn't long before it became a one way street and you began selling us on what was happening in Ottawa." To his credit though, Turner made it clear he was receptive to both praise and criticism from the crowd. He reminded Mr. Clark that he is older and more experienced at the political game now than he was during his previous tenure. "I think I have a better perspective now," said Turner. "I thank you for reminding me that I can do better."

Issues raised throughout the evening included health care, immigration, the gas tax, and more, but for one resident, it was the timing of the meeting that was questionable. Alex Pulcini expressed his doubt that many Ontario or Quebec residents would support the Conservative party leader. "Stephen Harper is not going to win you an election," he stated bluntly. "We can talk all we want but it's a waste of time if you don't get elected. What are you going to do to win the next election?" Turner admitted that it can be a tough decision for a voter come election day: support the local candidate, support a philosophy or vision, or throw support behind the man to lead the country. "You can never get all three things with one vote," argued Turner. "You have to win one area at a time. I'm working hard here in Halton."

The results of Turner's Town Hall meetings will be collated into a report and posted on his website at www.garth.ca. As well, he plans to forward the report not only to the Conservative party for consideration in the creation of the party platform, but also a copy will be sent to the current MP Gary Carr (Liberal). "He should have been having these kinds of meetings, frankly," said Turner, reiterating his belief that an MP "has a duty and an obligation to talk to people about what a Member of Parliament should be taking from his community to Ottawa."

Environmental Education Event

STORY AND PHOTO BY ANN KORNUA

The Environmental Education Event was an evening of inspiration and information put together by the Halton District School Board, the Halton Catholic District School Board and the Region. Held on Wednesday October 5th at the Halton Regional Center Dining Room the event was one of the first times that all three groups had joined together to make a presentation promoting the need for strong environmental studies in the classroom.

Both the school boards and the region recognize the benefits of early environmental education and presented the Environmental Education Event as a means of encouraging students and teachers to bring these studies into the classroom. Curriculum Consultant Susan Paradiso for the Halton Catholic District School Board together with Curriculum Consultant Ron Ballentine for the Halton District School Board spoke about promoting environmental education in the classroom. "We just want to promote environmental initiatives and heighten awareness. Environmental studies cross over into science, social sciences and geography studies," Paradiso commented. "This is a celebration of the environment and the eco-school initiative."

"This is the first time we have really partnered with the region and both school boards for the environmental awareness programs," Ballentine explained. "It is the second year we have worked with the

H.C.D.S.B and we are pleased the region is working with us. It's a unique partnership now, and an event for people to become more environmentally aware."

A wide variety of environmentally focused storefront presentations were on display during the evening for students, teachers and parents. Displays ranged from the familiar practical ideas for use in the classroom to support for green initiatives. Renowned environmentalist and performer Chris McKhool was the events central presenter.

"It is important for the children to work towards a better future," Chris McKhool said in his opening remarks. "It is our responsibility to bring these messages to children." Chris is a Toronto resident and spoke on the values of clean air with Toronto announcing over sixty smog days to date. "I looked back to 1996 and back then, we only had three smog days in Toronto." The staggering difference in numbers caused a wowed reaction by the children in the audience, and soon they were leaning forward in their seats to listen to what could be done to bring down that huge number. Chris gave them the information in the form of an interactive song where he brought students up front to sing and play instruments.

"We want to inspire people to do more," Ron explained. "We hope the people who took part in this event will come away more informed and will save the world."



Pictured (from left) are student Jackie Neudoef, Consultant Susan Paradiso for the Halton Catholic District School Board, Charlotte Cuttle, Curriculum Consultant Ron Ballentine for the Halton District School Board, Grace Cuttle and in front performer Chris McKhool