

# GRAPEVINE



## Doctor drought

The search continues for a family doctor to replace Dr. Stephen Pun who retires at the end of July after 25 years with the Acton Medical Group. Dr. Pun and his wife Sandra have sold their Acton home and will relocate in Toronto where the doctor intends to work part-time.

If a replacement can't be found before August the other doctors at the Medical Group will take care of Dr. Pun's patients. A classified ad in the Canadian Medical Journal about the Acton opening has drawn few responses to this area that has a shortage of family physicians. There are no family doctors accepting new patients in Guelph and just one in Georgetown.

## New principal at St. Joe's

Come September there will be a new principal at St. Joseph's Catholic school as Robert Maggio ends his five years in Acton with a transfer to the Catholic Education Centre in Burlington. Maggio will be on special assignment at the Board's main office, and not principal at St. Francis of Assisi as widely rumoured.

Jim McGeragle will be the new principal at St. Joe's. His most recent posting was as vice-principal at a Halton separate school in

Oakville and he has also been an acting - principal at several schools in the south of Halton in the past few year.

## Festival fee waived

Organizers of the 7th annual Leathertown Festival don't have to pay the usual \$75 building permit fee to the Town for a temporary stage they set up for the event. Town councillors waived the fee, as they have done in the past, but also noted that as of September things like fee waiver requests will be dealt with through the new municipal assistance program.

This year's festival is slated for Sunday, Aug. 9 and organizers are busy planning new events, attractions and hopefully a community challenge of some kind.

## United Way honourees

Four Acton residents are among those who will be honoured for their dedication and hard work for the United Way of Halton Hills at the organization's annual general meeting and appreciation night next Wednesday in Georgetown.

Campaign west chairs Robin Elliott and Elly Tuitman, along with industrial campaign chair Harold Postma and residential chair Heather Ferguson will receive campaign achievers awards.

The United Way campaign in Halton Hill raised \$225,000 last year to help 18 member agencies.



ZACHARY LOEWEN and his mother, Tony, enjoy hot dogs prepared by members of the Trinity United Church which has a booth at the Trunk Sale on Mill Street each Saturday morning. The sale attracts hundreds of seller and buyers each Saturday. It goes from 8 a.m. - 1 p.m. - Ted Tyler photo

# Business In Acton

Do you know what the acronym BIA stands for? Unfortunately, most people don't. The BIA is the "Business Improvement Area." Acton's BIA stretches approximately from the railway tracks on the east to one block west of Main Street. In other words, all along the downtown commercial strip. It extends north of Mill Street one block and south around two blocks to include the olde Hide House.

BIAs were created by the provincial government to effect improvements aimed at enhancing business traffic, mostly in downtown areas of cities and towns across the province. The intent of the BIA legislation was to stop or slow the deterioration of downtown areas as malls took more and more business away. The legislation is pretty specific as to what the BIA can or cannot do. BIAs, for example, are not meant to compete with the Chamber of Commerce or local tourism initiatives. In other words, the activities of the BIA are fairly focused.

Our local BIA is run by a board of volunteer managers. Each manager has to own a business or commercial property within the BIA designated area. A manager can also be appointed by a business to represent them. After we closed our store downtown, I stayed on the BIA board as a representative of the old Acton Tanner. The managers are appointed by the town council for, normally, a three-year term. In addition to business people one town councillor sits on the board.

One important fact you should know is how the BIA is funded. Each business pays a special BIA levy. This is over and above normal property and business taxes set by the town. In reality, it's an extra tax on businesses in the BIA area to fund beautification projects. The net result to you is a more pleasant shopping environment downtown without any significant drain on town finances.

For instance: do you like the flower beds and hanging baskets that recently appeared downtown?

## The Way I See It

with Mike O'Leary



Bet you thought that Parks and Rec. put them in. Nope, they are courtesy of the BIA with the co-operation of the Acton Horticultural Society. Ditto the unique "Town of Acton" street signs and lamp post hangars downtown. The BIA hires a summer student to keep downtown clean and to water the flowers.

That nice little park at the corner of Main and Mill was paid and built by the downtown merchants. This was by far the biggest project the BIA has ever taken on. It took several years to come to fruition from negotiating the purchase of the property (again, paid for the BIA), through planning to completion. Former Councillor Gerald Rennie's dogged determination and vision kept the managers intent on succeeding with this project. The result, a beautiful little oasis downtown enjoyed by many and donated to the town by the merchants for future generations.

The BIA does much more. The two parking lots on Willow between Mill and Church Streets were purchased by the BIA and donated to the town. BIAs, by law, are not allowed to own property.

The Christmas lights make our town look cheery and festive. The BIA puts them up. The BIA pays a substantial amount of the snowplowing and sanding in BIA parking lots. They put out the new garbage cans this year. The list goes on and on.

Not everything unfolds according to plan. Last year, the summer student was sweeping the streets when a woman accused him of being a convict. She thought he was on a court-ordered work program. Poor Brad, he had put in a full day working for me in the warehouse, then went to his BIA job. No wonder he looked a

little rough. The woman, though, wouldn't believe he was anything but a criminal. Brad just smiled, and kept smiling until she went away.

Lately, there was a tempest caused by a proposal to take some Mill Street parking away. The objections were swift and negative from the merchants affected. Hopefully, by the time you read this, the idea will have died a merciful death.

I sat on the board for over 10 years including a stint as chairman. (Note: not chair, table or hassock. Chairman!) During that time we had an urban planner do a report that included replacing some parking with trees and benches. In a town like ours businesses need every advantage. Restaurants, hardware and variety stores would lose big time if convenient parking spaces were lost. Plus, if you think big trucks speed through town now, take away the cars from one side of the street and watch them really wind up. On the other hand, drag racing gravel trucks could be a tourist attraction - I guess. Nope, I thought it was a bad idea back then and still do. But, as I said, this idea should be buried by now. Another item, which appeared in this paper last week, is the proposal to save the old Beardmore water tower. My informal survey didn't find anyone willing to cough up a looney for this project. One wag did say, however, that he'd pitch in 20 bucks for "dynamite to blow the damn thing down."

Notwithstanding the occasional glitch, the BIA does wonderful things for our town. If you like the flowers, the lights, the park, then show your appreciation by shopping locally. Tell the merchant you like what the BIA is doing. A little thanks goes a long way.

And that young person serving you is a neighbour, a friend or maybe even your own kid, shop locally. They give our children part-time work. It's worth shopping in Acton.

## "Our Survey Says..."

Local merchants were asked this week if they think the Trunk Sale should change its location to downtown Acton, on Mill Street.



Yes, I think so. Customers can see the downtown stores. A lot of people are from out of town.

Vanessa Vidic, Godfathers Pizza



It would be good for downtown businesses. There is a good traffic flow at the Trunk Sale and it would be good to have the people downtown.

Debbie Feenstra, Acton Musicland



No, there isn't enough room at this end of town. There is better access at that end where it is.

Kristan Law, Power Entertainment



No, it's too crowded downtown with the traffic.

Sam Brewer, Kentucky Fried Chicken

This week's New Tanner survey by Angela Tyler

## Got a Beef?

Write a letter to the editor!



Deadline is Tuesday at noon