

The Rockwood MILLER



Grass fire at Crewson Corners ravages 60 acres of land

By MAGGIE PETRUSHEVSKY

No decision was available at press time on whether an Erin Township resident will be charged for the cost of controlling and extinguishing a grass fire near Crewson's Corner on Saturday.

Guelph OPP spokesman Const. Dale Gear said it appears a pile of garbage, including used tires, shingles and furniture, was set on fire in a fire pit at Lot 1, Con. 1 Erin Twp. and the blaze got away on the property owner.

The flames destroyed more than 60 acres of fields, bush and rail fences and a neighbouring farmer's livestock had to be evacuated as a precaution.

More than 50 volunteers from Erin-Hillsburgh, Eramosa and Halton Hills fire departments were on the scene from around 1:30 p.m. and spent seven hours battling the flames and mopping up hot spots.

Bruce MacPherson of RR #3, Acton, said the sound of fire trucks behind his shed first alerted him to the fire.

Since trucks could not reach the fire from his side of the property they went back out seeking a different access point.

MacPherson's father-in-law owns the property directly abutting the fire scene and MacPherson, his son and son-in-law quickly moved to the north-west corner of the farm to join the battle. The fire spread along about a half kilometre between the property lines at that point.

"Eighteen inch (across) trees were going up like fireballs," MacPherson said. "The flames would go bottom to top in seconds. The fire was following rail fences so we were pulling them apart to stop the spread. Then if there was a tree along the fence line it would go up too."

What surprised him was the condition of the bush.

"Leaves never mulched down this winter. They should already have been half rotten but they weren't. They were burning like they had just fallen off the trees," he says.

MacPherson says the fire departments major problem

was getting at the fire.

While the bush at the rear of the farm used to be kept fairly open between grazing cattle and his children riding snowmobiles and all-terrain vehicles through it, it has grown over in recent years.

MacPherson is thankful there was little wind most of the time and what there was, was to the west. Had the fire continued another 100 feet or so, it would have gotten into a bush of old cedar trees thick with undergrowth.

"Then we'd have been in real trouble," he says.

The incident has increased his awareness of the bush around his home. Now he plans to clear a firewall around it to make it easier to control any future problems.

It also raised his appreciation for local firefighters.

"They're all volunteers," he says. "They were out there for hours and you could tell they were deeply concerned about what was happening. Apparently they had a big one in Georgetown the day before. It makes you really respect them."

Rockwood woman's story in May Reader's Digest

By FRANCES NIBLOCK
The Rockwood Miller

The \$200 fee Reader's Digest paid a rural Rockwood mom for a cute story about a new car will help with relief efforts in war-torn Kosovo.

When Ruth Kuiperly asked her daughter Paula what to do with the payment involving her grandmother's new car, the 11-year-old immediately said it should go to Kosovo.

"I thought that was pretty neat for a girl her age to want to help someone else," Kuiperly said last week, adding she thought the story was cute enough for Reader's Digest, which bills itself as Canada's

most widely-read magazine.

"I wrote to Reader's Digest over a year ago and they called about three months later saying it was good, but had to go for final approval and I never heard anything else, so I just assumed it would never get printed," Kuiperly said on Friday.

"Last Friday I saw something in the mail and it looked like one of those Reader's Digest contest things and I almost threw it out, but I opened it and here was a \$200 cheque and we were really surprised."

Kuiperly said although she'd had letters published in newspapers in the past, her submission to Reader's Digest is the first writing she's

been paid for.

The story has gained Kuiperly some notoriety and phone calls from people who see her name when they get this month's issue.

"I've also had a few people stop me and say they thought Reader's Digest made those stories up," Kuiperly laughed.

Here's Kuiperly's story as printed in the As Kids See It feature in the current Reader's Digest issue:

My mother came by to show us her brand-new Grand Am. My eight-year-old daughter took one look at the car and indignantly proclaimed, "They spelled grandma wrong!"



WINDSTAR WINDFALL: Thanks to Ford, Acton High school shop students have a brand new Windstar van to work on. Ford Motor rep Dave Pulford (centre left) handed the keys to auto mechanics teacher Ross Savage on Thursday as technical students Joey Vilcius (top left), Mandy Hunt and Jesse Gibson looked on. Also on hand were head of Technical Studies Norbert Axtmann (left), Constable Bill Riddle, Constable Kate Pulford principal Greg MacPherson (far right).

Injury prevention program aimed at public schools

By FRANCES NIBLOCK
The New Tanner

Because best intentions aren't enough when it comes to keeping kids safe, the Halton Hills Injury Prevention Committee wants elementary school-aged children to learn how to make the right choice in risky situations with Risk Watch, a school-based injury prevention program.

Injuries are the leading health risk for children under 14 and the Risk Watch curriculum is designed to give kids the skills and knowledge to recognize and avoid risks.

"We're not designing this presentation to insult anybody, we're just stating a fact...that sometimes care givers just don't know," Halton Hills Fire Department fire and life safety educator Brian Ellsworth told Town councillors recently as he unveiled details of a Risk Watch pilot project beginning in September at a Catholic school in Georgetown.

Ellsworth said most people don't have a fire escape plan and the majority of new parents don't install their child's car seat correctly.

"Although we're giving these people (parents and primary care givers) the tools to implement safe practices, it is not happening. So, it's not to insult the people out in our community, it's just to state a fact that although we're well intentioned (when it comes to child safety) it may not turn

out the way we want it to be," Ellsworth said, adding that Risk Watch is a community and corporate sponsored program presented by the Halton Hills Injury Prevention Committee.

Committee members include representatives of the police, fire department, Halton health officials, Georgetown Hospital, the Halton Catholic District School Board and corporate sponsor, Ray Johnson & Associates (The Co-operators) in Georgetown.

The Risk Watch curriculum includes bike and pedestrian safety, fire and burn prevention, choking, strangulation, suffocation, poison and falls prevention and water

safety.

"We can offer these students the resources, information and introductory components to teach them to be life safety proponents," Ellsworth said, adding that the Injury Prevention Committee hopes that within three to five years all elementary students will be taught the Risk Watch curriculum.

Ellsworth also said the Halton Hills has been recognized as a Risk Watch Champion by the Ontario Fire Marshal's Public Safety Council. That award means the Town will receive free Risk Watch training for five coalition members, free curriculum binders worth \$3,000 for the pilot school and other resources.

Gift van from Ford to AHS

Acton High school mechanical shop students can't wait to get under the hood of a 1999 Windstar van donated by Ford Motor and delivered to the school last Thursday.

The \$150,000 prototype was never intended to be sold, but was made to test various options, paints and parts. Acton High school received the van - a second one was donated to Georgetown High school - through Halton Constable Kate Pulford who had been assigned to the Acton area.

Her husband, Dave Pulford, a Ford engineer in the new car launch division made the arrangements for the vans to come to Halton Hills.

"We have a program called BLI - that's Business Leadership Initiates - and we try to get involved with the community as a good corporate citizen," Pulford said last Thursday as he handed over the keys.

"The north part of Halton is kind of forgotten for almost everything you know, so when Katherine mentioned to me there was a need I said I'd try to get a couple of vehicles to help out the north end of Halton."

Acton High auto mechanic teacher Ross Savage said the

van would be used as a training platform.

"We'll see what developments are on the new vehicles and hopefully upgrade some of our own equipment because this is more sophisticated than the equipment we have in the shop," Savage said, adding the van won't end up in pieces, like a Saturn donated to the school several years ago.

"The learning value in taking something apart is to do it properly so that it goes back together properly. It's got some damage so we may tackle that and do a little body repair work."

The silver van, which doesn't have an identification number, can't be driven off school property and can't be sold.

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Better lighting for intersections

Improved lighting will be installed on Highway 7 at the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Line intersections. The Town included \$13,000 in its budget for the work to improve safety.

The Ministry of Transportation's quote to install street lights at the Third Line alone was \$25,000 - news Town Engineer Bob Austin called "very sad and bad", it turns out Halton Hills Hydro can install lights at all three intersections for a lot less.

"It's not lighting that the Ministry would do with break away poles," Austin said recently, adding the lights will be installed on existing poles, except at one intersection where new poles will be installed. The lights will also be further back from the highway than Ministry lighting.

Acton Councillor Rick Bonnette, who called for improved lighting for safety reasons at the Fourth Line intersection, said he'd gladly take the "hat trick" of having lights installed at all three rural locations.