

Hydro stresses safety to students

By FRANCES NIBLOCK
The New Tanner

It was hard to tell who squealed louder, the teachers or the students, when Bill Coakley ran 120-volts of electricity through a dill pickle at St. Joseph's Catholic School yesterday (Tuesday) morning.

With that very graphic demonstration of what a shock can do - he also caused shrieks when he stuck a fork in a toaster - Coakley and his puppet Wires, held staff and students spell-bound with his entertaining and informative electrical safety presentation.

The younger grades learned all about fuses and electricity and how to pull a plug and why to stay away from hydro lines and sub-stations. With older kids, Coakley runs 600-volts through a wiener - it flares and blows up - and talks about a 12-year-old Dresden boy who was electrocuted recently when he broke off the ground plug as he hooked up his computer.

"We want to save lives," Coakley said when asked about the school safety presentation.

"I was just in Whitby where they lost a 12-year-old boy getting into a sub-station on a challenge and got electrocuted. Last May, in North Bay, a 12-year-old boy and two friends threw

Loonies into a sub-station and dared someone to go in a get them. One boy went in and never came back out," Coakley grimly said, adding the two friends and the hydro linemen that went into the sub-station all required psychiatric help.

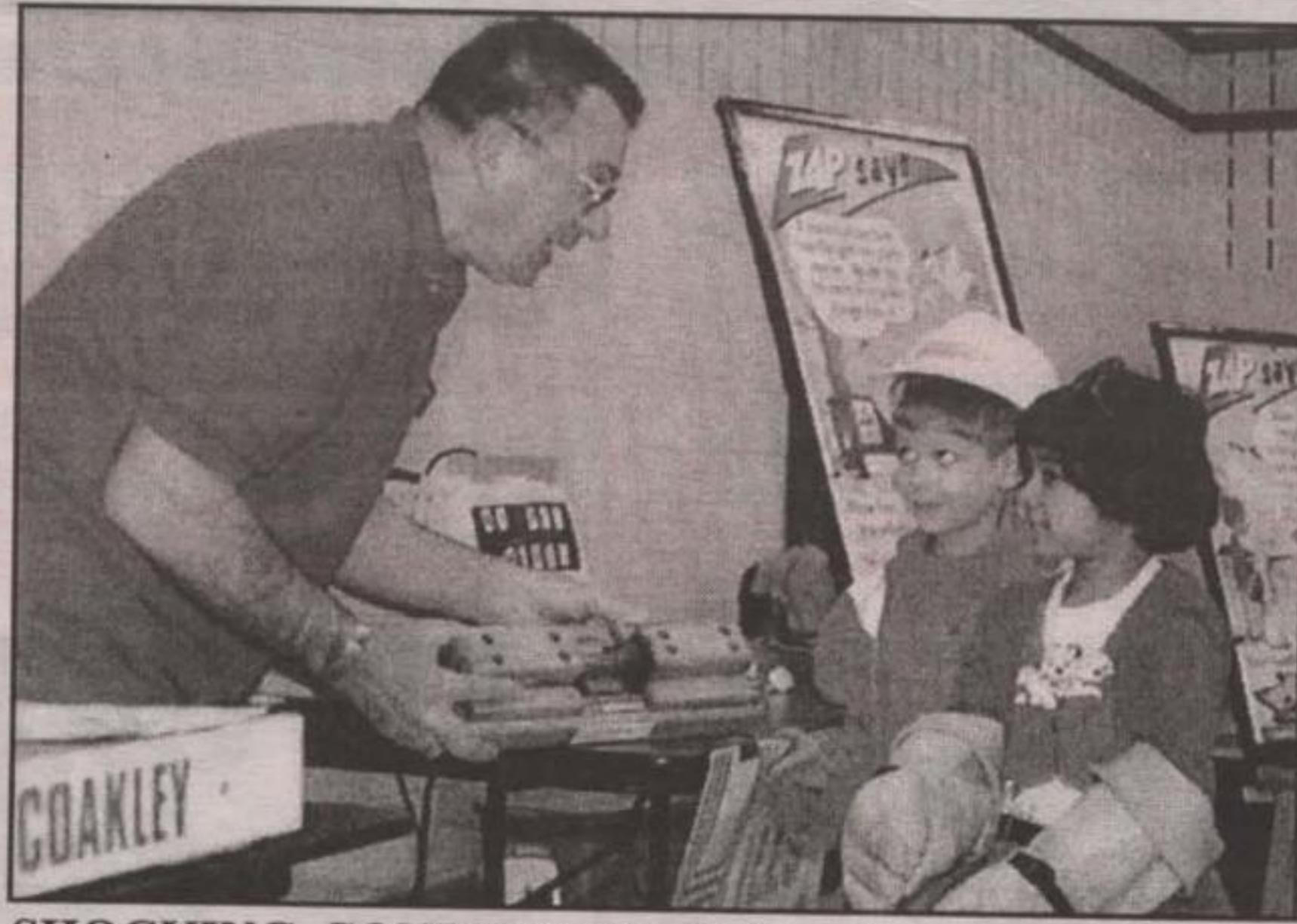
Coakley, a former Oakville Hydro employee, was hired by Halton Hills Hydro (HHH) to take the electricity safety message to the local schools and HHH general manager Kurt Durski, says Coakley's \$700-a-day fee is "well worth the money."

"It's not cheap...it may seem expensive, but it's money well spent if it saves one life," Durski said on Friday, adding they also spent \$2,000 on pencils to give the students after the presentation.

Durski had no statistics to prove the education campaign works, and couldn't recall any incidents of kids getting into hydro sub-stations in Halton Hills.

"We want to be very proactive and maintain a good (accident) history. The worst thing in the world is to go into a sub-station and see a kid slumped over a wire, dead, or something like that," Durski said, adding HHH repeats the HHH school safety program every four years.

Coakley visits McKenzie-Smith Bennett students on April 26. He was at Robert Little school late last month.



SHOCKING CONDIMENT: Dylan Agnew and Sherina Gunasinghe, Kindergarten students at St. Joseph's Catholic School watched with wide-eyed wonder on Tuesday as electrical safety instructor Bill Coakley prepared to run 120-volts through a dill pickle to show what happens when you get a shock. Halton Hills Hydro hired Coakley to take his highly entertaining and very information electrical safety presentation to all Halton Hills elementary schools.

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