

Office closing brings suggestion to drop out of Ont. Cancer Society

BY MAGGIE PETRUSHEVSKY

The New Tanner

At least one area Cancer Society volunteer is suggesting Halton Hills might be wise to drop out of the Ontario Division of the Canadian Cancer Society and operate independently.

Bob Stuart, a volunteer driver and fundraiser with the Georgetown Branch for more than 13 years, says there are

already 27 independently operating Cancer groups in the province, including one on Hamilton Mountain.

Given the division's plan to close the Georgetown office and serve Halton Hills as well as Milton out of Oakville, perhaps local volunteers would serve local needs better by going on their own.

Canadian Cancer Society statistics lump Milton with Halton Hills in a figure called North Halton, Stuart says. In 1999, with a donation total of about \$450,000 for the area,

the breakdown showed a per capita donation rate of \$6.11 - the highest figure in all of Canada. Half the money goes to research.

"Acton supports Cancer in a big, big way. By September 1999 Acton area residents gave just over \$53,000 to Cancer," Stuart says. "In 2000, to the end of July, Acton's giving total was \$97,300. That puts the per capita rate at approximately \$10 per person. So the community which gives the most in the whole country loses its local office. It just doesn't make any sense."

Stuart says last week's meeting in Georgetown with representatives of Ontario Division drew 240-250 "very concerned" volunteers and service users. He feels the decision has already been made to close the Georgetown office despite the high degree of support from the area.

Stuart points out that the Milton chapter lost all its volunteers but one when their office closed a few years ago. He fears a similar situation

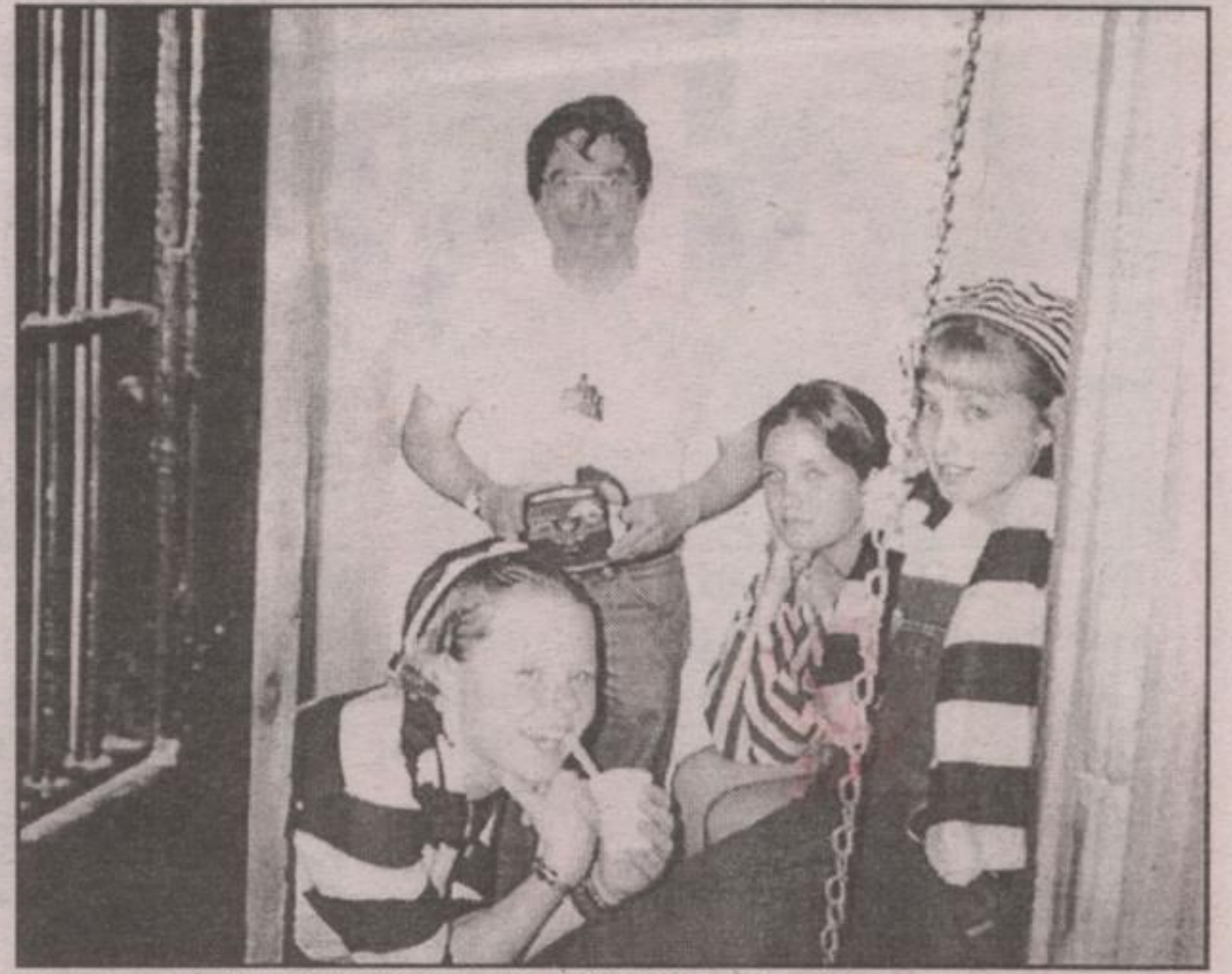
could occur here.

Branch members feel there's a close tie between the service people feel they're getting from the organization and the donations they give, Stuart says. Moving the office to Oakville it will make it much less accessible for both volunteers and service users and they predict donations will drop accordingly, he says.

"If we only collected half the money that was raised in Halton Hills this year we could still provide a lot more local service than we will get from Oakville," he says. Even if they became an independent unit their funding support for cancer research would continue because that's an important part of the Cancer Society's work.

Stuart feels the group's next move is to approach Cancer Ontario board with some suggestions.

"I have no question about their dedication but this whole thing has been very poorly handled and I feel the best route for us is to leave the status quo."



HARD TIME FOR SMILES: Heritage Acton photographer Bill Sanford lines up clients for their Leathertown Festival fundraising session. Ready to get their pictures taken in Acton's old jail are from the left Sabrina Fread, Meagan Brown and Sarah Kobsa. - Ted Tyler photo

Ont. Cancer Society says donation amount not factor

The decision to close the Georgetown office of the Canadian Cancer Society was based on a "business plan", not just on revenue or population, says the Regional Director for the Central West Office.

The board looked at all the provincial offices and infrastructure, says Sherry Mulkewich, as well as at "the way we do business and future trends."

Most of the provincial offices have less than two paid staff and the decision was made to close those offices where there was less than one paid staff member. While volunteers are wonderful and do their best, the Society has trouble with consistency in offices manned mainly by volunteers, she says. Most of their contacts these days come by telephone from doctors' offices or public health personnel looking for brochures. An 800 number would be made available to North Halton clients and volunteers using the Oakville office since no one would expect them to pay for the call.

The Society is closing 12 offices, six in the Central West division, she says, including those at Dundas, Simcoe and Cambridge.

Mulkewich agrees that Acton may be providing the highest per capita donations in Canada but comparing that \$450,000 from the Georgetown office with the million or more raised at some of the other offices, rather wipes out the magnitude of the donation.

"A lot of offices are raising more than North Halton," she says. The Society is also getting an increasing number of donations via the Internet.

Mulkewich said if anyone was "that attached to a physical office" in the area they could always go to Brampton or Guelph since those offices remain open.

When it was pointed out that Georgetown people would probably go to Brampton and Acton to Guelph thus splitting efforts to unite the Acton and Georgetown branches, she said the units seemed to operate separately anyway.

"It's too bad there are so many unhappy people but if people wanted to use different offices, services could certainly be provided for them through those offices. That would not be very difficult to do."

POLICE BEAT

Fire vandals

A chunk of asphalt was thrown through the front overhead bay door at the Churchill Road fire station sometime last weekend. Damage was \$120.

Cart taken

A \$5,000 Easy Go golf cart was reported missing earlier this week by Blue Spring Golf Club on Dublin Line. The cart was unaccounted for following an inventory check on August 1.

Police fire

A hydro pole fire on Highway 25 at 17 Side Road, was out when Acton firefighters and a Halton Hills Hydro crew arrived at the scene at 1:36 Friday afternoon. The fire had been reported by a passing police officer.

Bike accident

Acton firefighters were called to, but not required, at a single vehicle accident involving a Kawasaki motorcycle at 4:51 Saturday afternoon on Wellington County Road 50 between Highway 25 and Dublin Line. The victim was taken to Georgetown hospital by private vehicle.

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