

EDITORIAL

with Maggie Petrushevsky

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome a preventable problem

September 9 has been designated FAS Day.

Set up by the Fetal Alcohol Support Network, the day recognizes the plight of millions of people world wide who live with brain damage because their mothers consumed alcohol during her pregnancy.

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) is the largest cause of mental retardation in North America, striking 20 children in 10,000 with FAS and 100 in 10,000 with FAE. Down Syndrome, the next highest disability, hits only 10 children in 10,000 while HIV effects only four in 10,000.

FAS results from alcohol consumption early in a pregnancy - perhaps before the woman even realizes she is pregnant. Fetal Alcohol Effects (FAE) seems to be a milder form of the same problem resulting from alcohol consumption towards the end of the pregnancy.

While society acknowledges FAS, it doesn't truly understand or accept its cause. FAE is even less understood, says Network literature.

"People with FAS have a distinctive physical appearance and lower IQs, but also have lower crime and addiction rates" because they get earlier diagnosis and better social and parental protection.

People with FAE however, may seem physically and mentally normal while their damaged brains show "learning disabilities, impulsivity, lying, stealing, tantrums, violence and aggression, inability to predict consequences or learn from experience, lack of conscience and be highly addictive," the literature says.

FAS and FAE strike the offspring of all economic, social, religious and ethnic strata because women from all situations may take a drink.

It's easier to be self-righteous, turn a blind eye to the problem and condemn the mother as low class and/or stupid than to acknowledge our part in perpetuating the problem. Nor do we show compassion for the victims who fall outside the socially accepted norms because of their disability.

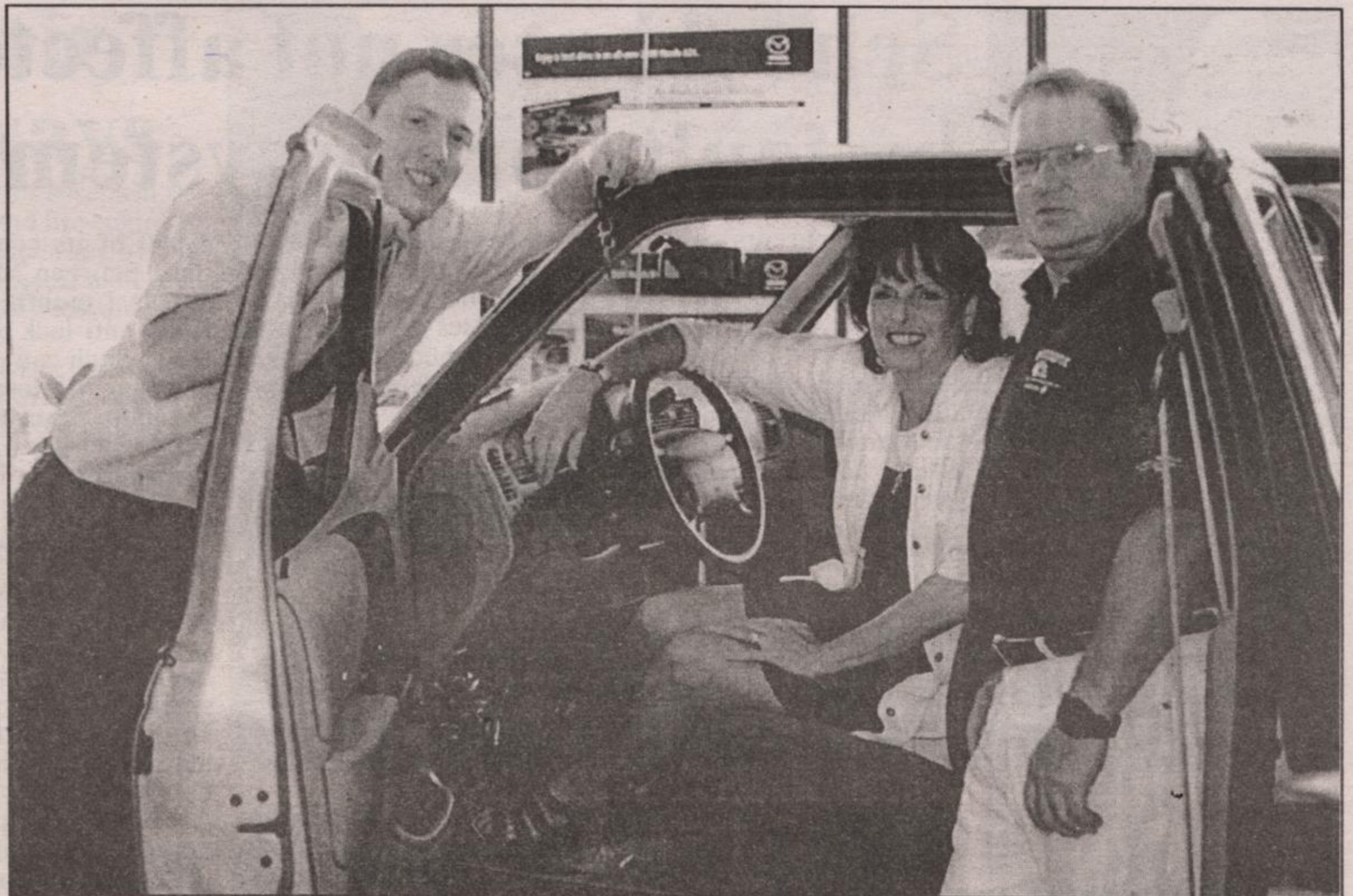
But setting aside the human misery involved and turning to a purely financial viewpoint, can taxpayers afford this complacency any more? It is "estimated that each individual with FAS/E costs taxpayers around \$2 million during his/her lifetime for health problems, special education, psychotherapy and counselling, welfare, crime and the criminal justice system," the literature goes on.

Frequently learning disabilities, leaving school early, juvenile delinquency, poverty, chronic unemployment, sexual acting-out (promiscuity, early pregnancy, prostitution and sexual assault), mental illness, homelessness, violence, crimes against property, alcoholism and addiction are rooted in FAS or FAE.

The medical profession has known for more than 25 years that alcohol consumption during pregnancy impedes development of the fetal brain, affecting intelligence, learning skills and behaviour. Yet how widely are these damning effects publicized?

Isn't it time that teens and young moms understood the correlation between the effects of even one drink and a disabled baby the way they understand the connection between drinking and driving.

Isn't it time to raise the social pressure the way we did with drunk driving to eliminate these totally preventable disabilities?



DRIVING PRIZE: A hole-in-one at the Acton Tanners Minor Hockey Association golf tournament on September 23 wins a brand new Mazda truck - courtesy of Achilles Mazda and Galvcast Manufacturing. Achilles Pelitis (left) dangles the keys in front of Tanners PR rep Kimberly Rogers and co-sponsor, Len Christopher of Galvcast. - Frances Niblock photo

Beardmore treasures are fascinating

BY ANGELA TYLER
The New Tanner

I think it's been 14 years since Beardmore & Co. closed its doors in town. If you are from Acton it is probably a part of your heritage, as well as the town's.

While I was growing up and still today, Beardmore has been a part of many conversations. I can remember my Aunt Phyl telling me a few years ago that my grandfather had flat fingernails because of the machine he operated at Beardmore. I can remember when I was maybe 10 years old going with my dad to the Beardmore offices while on summer vacation. There was Charlie the man at the front gate/scale house and the little pond with the fish in it. I usually waited in the car, but on the few occasions I was allowed to go in with him, I might as well have been entering Buckingham Palace. It was a place of importance and I was told to be on my best behaviour.

It's been a long time and with a lot of new people in town, the name Beardmore doesn't mean a lot anymore. This past summer there has been a small project on the way that only a few people know about. After the company closed in Acton, the

town was given an opportunity to have quite a lot of old company documents and photos. They declined and Heritage Acton became the recipient of the numerous items. This past summer the cataloguing process began and the treasures that were uncovered were unbelievable. For me, I learned more about my family history and learned about the great days of this town.

I've always had an interest in the grand day of the Beardmore & Co., established 1844, as the sign said above the front door. In my mind it was the early to mid 1900's. I love looking at the old pictures and hearing the stories that match. There was so much that the company did to enrich the town. They had housing for the workers. They brought great sportsmen to town and provided a job for them. They provided hundreds of jobs and thousands over the years to generations of Acton residents. There were spin off businesses from them. I can associate with that personally as my grandfather decided to start a trucking company to work for them. They produced high quality leather and the trade involved in the raw goods and the finished product encompassed the globe.

As I said I've heard lots of stories about Beardmore, mostly about the

workers. My dad always told me about how hard they worked. He told me about the harsh chemicals they used back then like the Kebacho bark leaves used in the tanning process. In these old files are many old photos of the workers, their pay schedules, bonuses, mortgages, letters from Mr. Beardmore himself concerned about the quality of certain leather products that were being produced, even the wills for Walter Dowker Beardmore and Robert Little.

However, my favourite stories are those about the Beardmore homes. The homes for the Beardmore family and the many guests and customers they had visit. I remember my dad telling me when he was young boy how he used to go over to the York House and play with his friend Ken (whose mom Lena Mann was a housekeeper at York House). A few years ago when York House was for sale, my dad recalled the grandeur of the home.

One day a few weeks ago amongst the boxes of documents was a box of rust coloured hard paper, long document boxes. I was taking a peak through a few when I saw box #9, stock in Hill Hall and Beverly House. I had to look. In the box were typed lists from April 19, 1918, June 6, 1920, October 1921 and May 18, 1922.

Cont. on Pg. 7



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59 Willow Street North
Acton, Ontario
L7J 1Z8

(519) 853-0051 Fax: 853-0052

Publisher

Ted Tyler

Editorial

Hartley Coles

Frances Niblock Mike O'Leary Ellen Piehl

Maggie Petrushevsky Angela Tyler

Advertising and Circulation

Marie Shadbolt

Composing

Karen Coleman Penny Zurbrigg

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