

Local teens go high tech

By **FRANCES NIBLOCK**
The New Tanner

A shy, uncommunicative Acton teen with few computer skills opened up socially and became computer literate, thanks to a Federally funded Technology for Teens program.

The youth is one of approximately 20 who will 'graduate' - with their parent or mentor - from the program, offered by Halton Hills Community Support and Information (HHCSI) at a computer lab set up at the Off The Wall youth centre.

HHCSI received a \$38,752 National Crime Prevention Strategy grant to run the year-long program in partnership with police, Human Resources Development Canada.

The project is designed to mobilize the community to "educate, mentor and challenge its youth as a... deterrent to crime," according to HHCI executive director Rosslyn Dowell.

"If the community supports its youth, then the youth will be engaged in positive activities in their community."

At the end of the 10-week basic computer training, the youths will receive a free computer if they don't already have one. The current group of participants will receive refurbished IBM laptops.

Program co-ordinator Natalie Tuitman said the change in some of the teens is terrific to see.

"This one youth came in very quiet and shy. He didn't say anything but had some



TEEN TECH: Acton teens Brittany Walker, Tony Plowman, Ray Peterson can take home these refurbished laptops, thanks to the Technology for Teens program run by Natalie Tuitman (standing) at the Off The Wall youth Centre. - Frances Niblock photo

computer knowledge, but not a lot.

This youth will be leaving speaking their mind, knowing how to run the computer and openly talking and joking with their parents, and that's the goal of the project."

Four of five teens enrolled in the first 10-week session completed the program, which includes guest speak-

ers with health department, police and job search information.

Tuitman said they will advertise again for participants for the third session and are looking for more than just at-risk youths.

"We're looking for people who can be educated and that will help them meet the standards of their peers," Tuitman

said, adding she and her volunteer act as an instructor and role model at the weekly class.

Both Tuitman and Dowell can't say enough about the local companies and individuals that have donated computer hardware and software and their programming and teaching skills.

"We've had computers donated by ABT Building Products, Halton police, the Oakville Optimist club and several private donations," Tuitman said, adding Aztec Computers in Georgetown has supplied free technical support. Several local residents have helped refurbish and program the donated computers and Microsoft donated all of the software. Tuitman is currently looking for volunteers to help refurbish some computers.

Election heats up

Veteran Acton politician Rick Bonnette will seek a seventh term in office and is counting on his 18 years of municipal experience to hold onto the Regional seat on Town Council for Wards 1 and 2. So far, he remains unchallenged.

"Experience will be vital in this campaign," Bonnette said on Monday, adding he's been on Town and Regional councils for 18 years.

"It's essential with long term councillor Kathy Gastle going for mayor and long time councillor Norm Elliott stepping down, to have a councillor who has the background information and expertise I have," Bonnette said.

In Ward Two, two candidates are vying for Gastle's local seat. Glen Williams community booster Joan Robson, widow of the late Regional councillor Bill Robson, is being challenged by Norval activist Ted Thompson.

Incumbent Ward 2 local councillors Moya Johnson and Jane Fogal have filed their nomination papers and are being challenged by Ward 3 Halton Hills Hydro commissioner, Mike Davis.

Halton Hills public school board trustee Ethel Gardiner, who is also board chair, intends to seek re-election. Incumbent separate school board trustee Irene McCauley is being challenged by Paul McDougall.

TOWN DIGEST

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provements. Regional staff is calculating what the impact will be on the smaller properties, but stress the plan must pay for itself with every landowner paying an equal per acre share.

Today, an acre of agricultural land in the corridor is valued at approximately \$40,000. When it's rezoned industrial and built, it will be valued at \$615,000.

Splash pad?

A request for a splash pad in Acton - like the one opened this summer in Georgetown south - has been added to the 'wish list' for debate at up-coming Town budget committee debate.

The referral request came from Acton Councillor Clark Somerville who had been approached by a handful of Acton residents, asking for a similar facility.

The 2,300-square-metre outdoor water play centre in Georgetown has a rubberized surface and no standing water so no lifeguard is needed and cost \$160,000 to build. Town staff couldn't predict what an Acton facility might cost, especially since no location has been discussed.

Somerville has two suggested locations, Prospect Park and a proposed community park near the Acton arena.

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