

EDITORIAL

with Hartley Coles

Increased fees

Acton Soccer Club's decision to move adult indoor soccer play to a Campbellville area school rather than pay the increased fees for use of the Acton High School is a symptom of the dilemmas many organizations face with leasing public facilities.

Increased fees to lease schools are putting the damper on many worthwhile organizations as well as sports organizations which depend on school facilities for meetings. Those fortunate enough to obtain other venues to keep costs down are few and far between. Most have to put or shut up and in some cases it means the organization just folds up.

School boards face fiscal problems as well but jacking up fees hurts the very people who built and support the schools with their taxes.

The problem is not exclusive with school boards. Most minor sports face the same escalating player fees to combat facility rentals. Parents with two or three children find they can no longer afford to register their kids in sports programs because of the costs, although in the case of hockey the Town does subsidize part of the fees.

Those who can afford to equip their kids with hockey and baseball gear, which reaches into several hundreds of dollars, and then pay the registration fees still have to contend with the cost of playing games at out of town tournaments. Often enough they are overnight affairs where motels and meals are added to the cost.

It takes dedication and love of the game as well as the funds to keep up with the drain on the pocketbook as well as the time required to play schedules, which almost approach professional status.

Where will it all end? Few kids are going to reach the elevated levels of the NHL, the NBA or signing with the Blue Jays. Nothing wrong with developing talent, and sport is a great way to encourage a team effort. However, we can't help but wonder if all that time and expense is not lopsided and eliminates other worthwhile pursuits.

Risks with joints

That's the message Halton Region Health Dept is emphasizing during Drug Awareness Week, which runs from November 17-23. Parents should know there are risks associated with marijuana use.

They may say, "it's just marijuana" as if there are no risks associated with the drug. They're wrong. There are risks such as reduced motor control, potential lung damage and reduced short-term learning with use of marijuana.

In the past 20 years marijuana growing has undergone a level of sophistication that can make your head spin, particularly if you smoked hydroponically grown marijuana. Newer known risks are related to the increased THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) levels and chemical residue which growers today are able to concentrate. They also use pesticides and growth hormones.

Well, who's smoking the stuff?

Marijuana is the second most commonly used drug, after alcohol, among Ontario students in grade 7-OAC. In 2001, nearly 30% of students reported using marijuana at least once in the previous 12 months. Of the users approximately 21% reported using it 40 or more times in the past 12 months. Nine percent of users reported using it daily in the past four weeks (Ontario Student Drug Use Survey, 2001).

The Regional Health Department is concerned that youth often make decisions based on misinformation about marijuana. Parents can play a pivotal role in not only setting an example but also talking to their kids about drugs and outlining the risks involved with its use.

Cutting use of the drug "at the pass" may indeed save parents and kids much future grief.



RECOGNITION: Halton Region Chairman Joyce Savoline and Mayor Kathy Gastle congratulate Linda Luker and Dr. John Dougan who received awards of recognition for their contributions to the North Halton Mental Health Clinic (NHMC) and residents in Acton. Linda Luker is a nurse therapist with the NHMC and Dr. Dougan is the first psychiatrist to provide services in Acton through the Clinic. - Region photo.

Mental Health Clinic celebrates 25th anniversary in North Halton

Stories and anecdotes were shared as staff of the North Halton Mental Health Clinic, past and present, reminisced with clients and community partners about the contributions the clinic has made to residents in Acton, Milton, and Georgetown since 1977, at the 25th anniversary open house, November 15.

The clinic was established 25 years ago after Dorothy Craig, Nursing Director at the Halton Region Health Department at the time, sent a proposal to the Ontario Ministry of Health citing the need to provide accessible psychiatric care for residents in North Halton (Acton, Milton, and Georgetown). Ms Craig was part of a working group of local partners that came together to address the mental health needs in the under serviced communities of Milton and Halton Hills.

"There were limited services but great demand back in the late 1970's," said Dr. Tony Marriott. "The common experience for North Halton residents needing mental health services at that time was they were either hospitalized or sent to clinics offered in other municipalities." Dr. Marriott was a member of the working group that developed the framework for the clinic and one of the founding psychiatrists who provided services at the clinic.

Dr. Marriott, Dr. John Dougan (the first psychiatrist to provide service in Acton), Dorothy Craig, Mae Vavoids

and Linda Luker (one of the first nurse therapists working at the clinic) were the recipients of plaques of recognition presented by Halton Region Chairman Savoline during the open house.

"In addition to providing critical support to clients and their families in North Halton, staff at the clinic also provide valuable expertise to other Regional staff who come into contact with people who are touched by mental illness," said Regional Chairman Joyce Savoline.

In addition to providing outreach services, the NHMH Clinic operates

sub-offices in Acton and Georgetown. The Clinic is open to anyone who is 16 years of age or older, lives in the North Halton area, is living with a serious mental health issue such as depression, bi-polar disorder, schizophrenia or panic/anxiety disorder or has problems with learning or addictions and who would benefit from ongoing counselling.

The NHMH Clinic also provides referrals and works closely with Halton Healthcare Services and other mental health community agencies such as ADAPT and the Canadian Mental Health Association.

Letters

Why no MD approval of funds for nurse/practitioner

Dear Editor:

RE: Town to ask for nurse practitioner funds, November 14, 2002

When I started the above-noted article, I was excited that such an innovative idea was coming to our area. It seemed like a win-win-win situation.

Acton and Georgetown would gain, as their citizens would have a much-needed health practitioner to supplement strained services.

The nurse practitioner in question would benefit from this career advancement.

The local doctors, much over-worked,

we regularly hear, would get assistance from a professional whose credentials would, hopefully, make for a good fit.

So why is no M.D. willing to assist with this application? Is it fear of a challenge to the general practitioners' monopoly to dispense Medicare-supported healthcare?

If I am missing something, perhaps this letter will generate some debate on the subject.

Yours truly,

JOHN LISS

15 Ash Street

Eder 1 Mills, ON



THE NEW Tanner
PUBLISHING LTD.

59 Willow Street North
Acton, Ontario L7J 1Z8

email: thenewtanner@on.aibn.com
(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 Bruce Cargill

Composing

Ken Baker Danielle McIsaac

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