

# GRAPEVINE

## ROTARY INVITE

Are you an adventurous teen who would like to see another part of the world while going to school?

Check out the Rotary Club of Acton's International Exchange program that places local teens in homes of Rotary members in far-off places for a one-year stay.

While at the host home, the Rotary exchange students continue they're schooling, take part in Rotary events and learn about their host country.

Currently, local Rotarians are hosting Luane Tavares, a teen from Brazil, and Acton teen Katie Boychuck is on an exchange to Japan.

The international exchange program, now 25 years old, is aimed at fostering goodwill and understanding by enabling teens to study in another country for a year.

The program is designed for teen's aged 15 to 17 and applicants should be above average academically and have demonstrated leadership in the community.

Information about the exchange program will be posted at Acton High School in the New Year, and is also available from Rotarian Rob Charette at 853-4577.

## 4-H AWARDS

Congrats to local potential farmers, Scott Martin, Heather Aitken and Adam Parker, each who earned awards at the recent 44th annual West Central 4-H Beef Show and Sale in Waterloo.

Martin of Nassagaweya, placed second in the senior showmanship class. Parker of Eden Mills, earned second prize in the intermediate showman class, and Aitken, of rural Acton, earned second in the junior showmanship class.

## FIRE AWARDS

Congrats to three local busi-

nesses that were honoured with Safe Community Wards from the fire department and Town.

On Monday, in recognition of the ongoing support they have provided the fire department, awards were presented to Georgetown Topper's Pizza, Brook's Farm Service and McDonalds Restaurants in Halton Hills.

McDonalds were honoured for their efforts to enhance fire and life safety awareness in the community; Toppers was honoured for its support of the Halton Hills Risk Watch coalition and Brook's received its award for helping with fire training initiatives.

## ALZHEIMER HELPERS HELP

Acton residents who are caregivers to Alzheimer patients are welcome to attend a VON Alzheimer Services support group that meets in Milton on the third Thursday of each month in the community room, upstairs, at the Milton Loblaws.

If you are a caregiver for a relative with Alzheimer's disease, or a related disorder, and are interested in sharing ideas and coping skills with other caregivers, call the VON Alzheimer Services at 10800-387-7127.

## LIBRARY PROGRAMS

Anyone with pre-schoolers should check out the early literacy programs that will be offered again at the Acton library branch, beginning in early January.

The programs are aimed at six month to five-year-old kids and include Baby Tales on Wednesday mornings, Tales for Twos on Friday mornings and Library Lion Tales on Wednesday and Thursdays.

The programs are free, and registration is by lottery until December 30. Programs begin the week of January 9.

## Ballinafad's unique pageant

Ballinafad United Church is again presenting their traditional "A Christmas Carol Comes to Bethlehem" pageant on Christmas Eve this year starting at 6:30 p.m. The unique presentation's venue is at the "Good News Farms", 4917 Eighth Line, Ballinafad, above the Town Line in a natural setting.

The 40 minute pageant features

Dickens' characters, Bob Cratchit and Tiny Tim as they experience the Nativity in Bethlehem. There are live animals, Christmas carols and a message for everyone in the stables.

People attending are urged to come early to visit the stables and animals, dress warmly and bring a folding chair because seating is limited.

## Finding perfect tree...

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when he helps me pick out my perfect tree. "Mmmmm, nope. Too short," I say as he hauls out another tree. "Ummmm, it's okay, but the other one was better."

After about ten trees I discovered the first one he picked out was the best. "Your mom and dad took the first tree they saw," he grumbled. Before I knew it, my favourite elf had delivered my tree to my front step and left the freshly cut stump. For the last three years, he has maintained this tradition. Faithfully, I keep each stump because I promised when I have collected ten I will

make the wreath from them for my front door, as he had asked.

Before long, my perfect tree will be in my living room standing proudly, probably slightly crooked, with hundreds of clear lights, gold coloured ornaments and a few special ones from my Great Aunt Lil's collection. I'll sit in my big comfy chair, entranced by the tree that makes the darkened room brilliant with light, smiling to myself as I think about the torture I put the Dude through finding that perfect tree, only to discover the first one he picked had been the best one after all.



**AWARD WINNER:** Acton artist Anne Sutton has won the Wittnauer Award at Open Water 2004, the Canadian Society of Painters in Watercolour 79th annual juried exhibition, with her painting *Horses-play #1- Chase*. Open Water exhibitions draw entries from across Canada. This years show runs from December 4, 2004 to January 27, 2005 at the Etobicoke Civic Centre Art Gallery, 399 The West Mall Etobicoke. Sutton specializes in equine art but also paints landscapes and floral. In April 2005, she will participate in Halton Hills Artsweek as one of the artists on the studio tour. For more information about her work visit [www.annsutton.com](http://www.annsutton.com) -Submitted photo.

## Where's the small town spirit?

I'm often asked where the ideas for this column come from. I read newspapers and magazines for current event topics which I then review from my perspective. When our girls were younger I wrote about family happenings because the situations we faced were similar to most other parents. Besides, I was looking for some sympathy as the only male in a household surrounded by five females. That didn't work too well and, as a result, I've spent these past years knowing just how Custer felt. These days I find myself looking at life's experiences for inspiration. And that brings us to the leading topic of this week's installment.

Regular readers will know that I'm a long standing member of the Acton Knights of Columbus. One of the Knight's Fundraising ventures involves an annual Christmas Draw. Even though I've been in sales for 35 of my 42 (metric) years, I really hate selling tickets. But the cause is worthy and the recipient agency needy so last weekend I set out for my post at a local retailer.

Selling tickets, or any other type of fundraising in public, is an interesting experience. Traffic was a bit slow so I had a good opportunity to people watch. Reactions are varied, to say the least.

The vast majority of people almost fall over themselves trying to avoid eye-contact. I'm not being critical here, I've done the same thing myself. We're all busy and stressed these days and besieged by charities at work, at home, everywhere we go. I get so many calls at work I often think: "you guys take all our corporate income, give me enough back to pay my bills and for goodness sake leave me alone". So I know where you're coming from. Read the book, own the video, got the t-shirt.

What amazes me is the length so many people will go to when trying to avoid eye-contact. They look so high they almost trip over the cracks in the sidewalk. Here's a hint, while avoiding a volunteer it pays to keep one eye on the automatic door so you don't bang into it. All these gyrations are com-

## The Way I See It

with Mike O'Leary



pletely unnecessary.

In 99 out of 100 situations the person standing/sitting there is not armed. There is very little danger of being mugged. Ladies, I know that, from the time you were a little girl, you've been taught not to talk to strangers. But honest ladies, the volunteer is not a lookout for a gang of thieves planning to ransack or steal your car. Gentlemen, there's no need to hit the afterburners and go by at mach 1. Several fellas I saw would break the marathon record if they could keep that pace up.

Obviously volunteers can't take any of this personally. There was, unfortunately, one couple who did get under my skin. As he walked past he remarked to his companion: "you can't go anywhere anymore without someone begging". His ladyfriend agreed. I felt like saying "hey doofus, back the bus up"! I'm not out there begging anyone for anything. In most cases we have identification showing our organization or cause, and in many cases our names. Most of us are not aggressive and I personally avoid those who are. If someone does stop I explain who we are, what we're selling and how much it costs. I always ask how many tickets/items they want because I don't want to embarrass anyone by assuming they want to spend that whole \$20.00 they have out. Yes, we make change and are grateful for every sale/donation no matter the size.

What I do think would be nice is if we all at least said hello to volunteers as we passed. A smile would be a bonus. This is not an agreement to purchase. Most of us want to keep the small town atmosphere in Acton. Isn't one of the hallmarks of a small town that neighbours talk to neighbours?

Few of us can afford to support all the needy causes, especially at this time of year. Being in malls

a lot during work I find it hard to pas a Salvation Army kettle. The Sally Anns do so much good work in so many ways. I've solved my personal dilemma by holding on to a few loonies. That way, I can drop one in a kettle or buy a ticket and not break the budget. And I don't/can't stop at every table but I've been trying to at least say hello and smile. It's the least I can do for someone donating their time for a cause they believe in.

While I came away from my day feeling we're all way too stressed and busy, there also were many highlights. Here are just a few.

To the young mother with the little boy and girl who sang a Christmas Carol for me: thank you and god bless. To all the good people who stopped, whether you were able to buy or not, thank you for your good wishes. To the staff at the store who were so accommodating and kind: thank you very much. Especially for allowing me to use the staff washroom, us old guys shouldn't drink so much tea. My day left me with many good feelings and memories.

And you know the best part? As often as possible I wished everyone I spoke to a Merry Christmas. In return, I received many hearty Merry Christmases and good wishes. And I never once heard the "F" word.

Well, there were those three teens cutting through the parking lot, but that's Angela's turf and a story for another day.

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Friends, I'd like to ask you for a favour. Some pukers broke into my daughter's car in our driveway last week. Editor Coles won't let me use the words I'd like to about those lousy thieves. Amongst other things they stole a black Dakin backpack with Canadian flags sewn on it. Sometimes thieves throw stuff away after rifling through it. If you see a backpack like that, please call the paper or the police. There are secret identifying marks on the backpack. Also stolen was a pair of lady's Nike runners and a Sony Discman.

It irks me to think these low-life, pond scum, bottom feeders might get away with this. Thanks for your help.