

# OP ED

"Op Ed" — old time newspaper term meaning the page opposite the editorial page. This page has traditionally been held open for opinion pieces, letters, and comment from various sources.

## Family violence

Toronto Star article: July 29, 1992

By Jacie B. Palmer

A letter to the editor a couple of weeks ago attests to the fact that women in Halton Hills are being hurt by violence in our society.

The recent Eight Line murder confirms that we are no longer segregated from the atrocities that regularly occur in neighboring communities.

Frequently we listen to the news and have a tendency to state: "That's Burlington. That kind of thing won't happen in Halton Hills".

Our local politicians demonstrated their concern for the safety of residents when they spent much time discussing the proposed Silvercreek Valley Walkway. But as Council considered the possibility of rapes and murders, they should have been reminded that strangers are not to be as greatly feared as those persons who we know and with whom we have regular contact.

Home is a dangerous place for women and children. An article in The Star dated July 29, 1992 carries the headline "Women braced for danger after violent Montreal week". The key statement Michelle Daines made was: "Until a woman gets hit or shot, nobody is going to help her".

Sad, but true. Too often authorities are not sensitive to a woman's realistic fear regarding the danger to her life — but discount it as being the delusions of a crazy woman and a woman who is mentally ill.

In investigating an alleged sexual assault, a Hamilton police officer — because he held the belief the woman was mentally ill — asked questions about her stability and did not gather relevant evidence.

The alleged perpetrator was Jonathan Yeo, the serial killer who has been linked to the Nina Devillier murder in 1990. That shouldn't have happened but it did.

Last week there were four murders in Montreal. All were committed by ex-partners. One was strangled, one was beaten and two were stabbed. One perpetrator committed suicide.

I can remember believing my ex-abusive partner would kill me or maim me. I was threatened, afraid and scared half to death.

Even when men are with a physically abusive female partner, facts show they are not fearful for their lives. Women are — and with good reason. Women are victims of 25% of all homicides and of these, 57% die as a result of domestic violence.



Sure, these men who killed their wives were charged with their murders but why can't society listen to the pleas of these victims before they are killed? Why can't society listen to the pleas of these victims before they are killed?

Why can't proper authorities — police, health care professionals and social service agencies learn to recognize the signs that are there?

Things are changing — but not quickly enough. Nancy Chamberland has gone to the media to try to solicit support for her case.

After serving 20 months in prison for threatening and assaulting her, her husband is about to be released and she's been warned that he "could still act violently toward her".

She doesn't want to die. She doesn't deserve to die. Yet, that could be what happens because no one is listening to her pleas. Or... the authorities are unable to act to protect her until something violent occurs.

Our laws need to be changed! Perpetrators need to be held accountable!

Rehabilitation of abusers should be paramount. Male abusers are difficult to treat because they genuinely believe they love their part-

ners and are violent actions to be appropriate.

Often they believe, by their actions, they are trying to make their victim into a better person. They are desperate for their partner's love and companionship and when they fear she will leave or abandon them, resort to any tactic to maintain that power and control over her.

There is only one male batterer's program in Halton and that is run out of COHR Family Services in Burlington. However, there is much skepticism regarding male programs because of the apparent lack of success in treating these men.

We are all capable of forms of abuse. We all need to learn to understand what is happening in our relationship and when we have more bad feelings than good it is time to look at why we feel the way we do.

Women are becoming more critical of men because of the violence. Clearly women are afraid to trust. This makes men defensive.

Dealing with the inner fears we all have is difficult but if we don't learn how to listen to what others tell us through their body language, written and verbal communications, this violence in our society will continue to escalate.

Our children don't need it! Let's work together to make this world a safer place for all of us to live.

**N.B. Statistics from Ontario Women's Directorate.**

Feel free to contact Jacie in confidence by directing letters to her attention at Halton Hills This Week. All correspondence will remain confidential. Jacie can be reached in person through the Distress Centre at 877-1211. Leave a message and Jacie will get back to you. If you are in crisis, call the Distress Centre or 911.

## Activity Line Choosing your activity

By Laurie Burns

I can't emphasize enough, the importance of exercise. But what kind of exercise is best for you?

The one you like the best, not the one you think you should do. If you took part in a sport when you were in high school or college, try it again. If you were good at it then chances are you will be good at it now. But if you haven't a clue what to do, consider the following.

**Your schedule:** If your schedule is erratic, walking may be the most practical activity because you can do it nearly anywhere at virtually anytime. Keep your walking shoes in the car, and whenever you know you have idle time between meetings or sales appointments, put on those shoes and walk.

**Your environment:** If you like to be outdoors, try running, walking or cycling. Or if you would rather be indoors, joining a club that offers classes, weight training and computerized aerobic equipment may be the answer for you.

**Your interest in competition:** If you like to compete, try a team sport or try a triathlon or duathlon which are individual competitive sports.

**Your stress level:** Whether you choose to walk or to workout in a club setting or compete on a team, the stress you currently have in your life will be reduced just by being more active.



**Your desire to be alone or with others:** There are a variety of activities to choose and some are done individually while others are done in the company of others. Just like choosing your activity, choosing to be alone or with others is your personal choice. When you have a workout buddy, you are more likely to be consistent with your schedule, as one of you can motivate the other if you don't feel like exercising on that day.

**Tip on choosing your activity:**  
1. Make sure you enjoy it.  
2. Try a variety of activities as each activity has its own merits.  
3. Make sure the daily activities you choose can become a part of your daily routine.

For more information about exercise, feel free to contact Laurie Burns at 877-0771.

Laurie Burns is an Exercise Physiologist and operates Work That Body Fitness Programs Inc. in Georgetown.

**Halton Hill This Week**  
wants to hear from you.  
Got a beef, concern, grudge or just got something on your mind. Write us:  
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