

Unique gifts

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Ted Brown's special Christmas Page 7



Blue Fins in the swim Page 21

The Independent

Weekend Edition & Free Press

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Sunday, December 22, 1996

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NEWS AT A GLANCE

Grinches strike

■ Police are looking for the culprits who took a decorated Christmas tree, complete with lights, from the lobby of a Church St. Acton apartment building sometime between 9:10 and 9:30 p.m. Monday. The missing tree and decorations are valued at about \$150.

Also, about \$100 worth of outdoor Christmas light bulbs were taken from a home on Lewis St. in Georgetown overnight Wednesday and Thursday. Police say the bulbs were taken from four strings of lights that remained affixed to the house.

Holiday hours

■ The Georgetown Independent & Free Press offices will close at 2 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 24 and will re-open Friday, Dec. 27 at 9 a.m. so that staff can enjoy the Christmas holiday.

Watch for our bargain-filled Boxing Day issue which will be delivered Tuesday.

The staff at The Independent & Free Press wish everyone a safe and happy holiday.

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The Christmas spirit

Teresa Cooper got into the Christmas spirit, making 28 teddy bears for the Family Life Resource Centre, a women's shelter in Brampton. The bears will be distributed to children when they arrive at the shelter. The 17-year-old student is already making bigger plans for next Christmas. She hopes to get businesses involved in a pledge campaign to make more than 100 bears. Cooper has also worked with the developmentally handicapped making Christmas puppets. See story page 11.

Photo by Herb Garbutt

Flu season reaches fever pitch in Halton

By LISA TALLYN
Staff Writer

This is the season for coughs, aches and fever. Flu season has hit the Halton Hills area with a vengeance and several area schools are reporting a substantial increase in the number of students off sick with the bug.

The attendance secretary at Georgetown District High School, Linda Braisby, said she has never seen the absentee rate at the school as high as it is.

"It (the absentee rate) has greatly increased this week over last week," said Sandi Bowman, head secretary at George Kennedy School.

Angie Kukkonen, a secretary at Acton High School, said the absentee rate there "is more

long term and significantly higher than last year."

McKenzie-Smith Bennett is also reporting a high number of kids off sick.

Mary Anne Carson, manager of communicable disease control for the Halton Region Health Department, said some schools in the region are reporting a 25 per cent absentee rate.

Carson said the health department has received lab confirmation of an Influenza A virus in Burlington. The Influenza B family of viruses is slightly different but often the symptoms are similar.

"The flu can affect anyone. It is usually characterized by the rapid onset of a high fever, headache, sore throat and sore eyes," said Carson. A cough and cold are other common symptoms of the flu.

She added people with the flu should stay home from work for the first three days or so to minimize the chance of infecting others.

She said once a person is ill the best advice is to get plenty of rest, drink lots of fluids and take Tylenol to keep the fever down.

The best bet for avoiding the illness which strikes most often from November through April is to have a flu shot according to Carson. Particularly those with chronic medical problems, such as cardiovascular or respiratory problems, diabetes, and those over 65 should have a shot. She added it's not too late to have a shot now.

Carson said the flu spreads when people inhale the droplets coughed up by a sick person. Sick people may also cough into their hands then touch someone else's hands and the bug spreads.

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