

The deadly waiting game

In a perfect world it would be summer 12 months of the year, there wouldn't be a need for food banks and children would not get sick.

Unfortunately, we don't live in a perfect world and youngsters do indeed get ill, deathly ill.

April Evans is one such child.

Up until six months ago, April was an apparently normal, happy child, albeit somewhat grumpy. The sandy blonde-haired tot with big soulful eyes listened to music and played with the usual toddler toys.

Today, however, a nasal gastric tube, which provides April with her nourishment, offers a stark reminder that she is not a normal little girl.

She is slowly dying.

April was diagnosed with restricted cardiomyopathy earlier this year—a rare condition where the heart muscle is abnormally stiff and cannot relax to fill with blood. Medication is helping keep April alive until a heart donor can be found, but for now April and her Inglewood family must play a frustrating waiting game.

"She's getting weaker," says her mom, Denise. "She's not bearing weight on her legs and she's just getting over a virus."

Doctors have told her that a donor heart must come from a child with the same body size and same blood type.

"Because April's so small, a donor heart could come from a baby," says Denise, who admits the wait is getting more difficult each day.

The Evans family, along with a representative from the Multiple Organ Retrieval and Exchange Program of Ontario (MORE), will be holding an awareness evening Nov. 17 at Robert F. Hall Secondary School in Caledon East at 7:30 p.m. Denise says she hopes Halton Hills residents will read of her daughter's plight and attend the meeting, if only to learn more about organ donation. For more information on the

THIS
'N
THAT



John McGhie

Nov. 17 meeting, call (905) 857-0090 or MORE at 1-800-263-2833.

Denise says her involvement with MORE has "been a real eye-opener" in how the world of organ donation works.

"It (organ donation) is a supply issue," said a MORE spokesperson. "Last year there were 4,000 head injury deaths in Ontario and yet there were only 162 organ donors. There's something wrong there."

According to the spokesperson, signing a donor card is one step towards donating an organ, talking about organ donation with family members is perhaps the most important step.

Because organ donors are usually people who have suffered fatal head trauma, the suddenness of their death makes it difficult for family members to think of organ donation.

"It is vital for people to talk about organ donation with family members so that their wishes are known," said the spokesperson.

In the case of April, it means another set of parents who have suffered the loss of their child must make a gut-wrenching decision.

"There will be nothing in it (donating a heart for April) for them except that they may allow some other person to live."

In the meantime April, spends what little energy she has reading, watching television with her brother Billy, 4, and sister Alex, 6... and waiting.

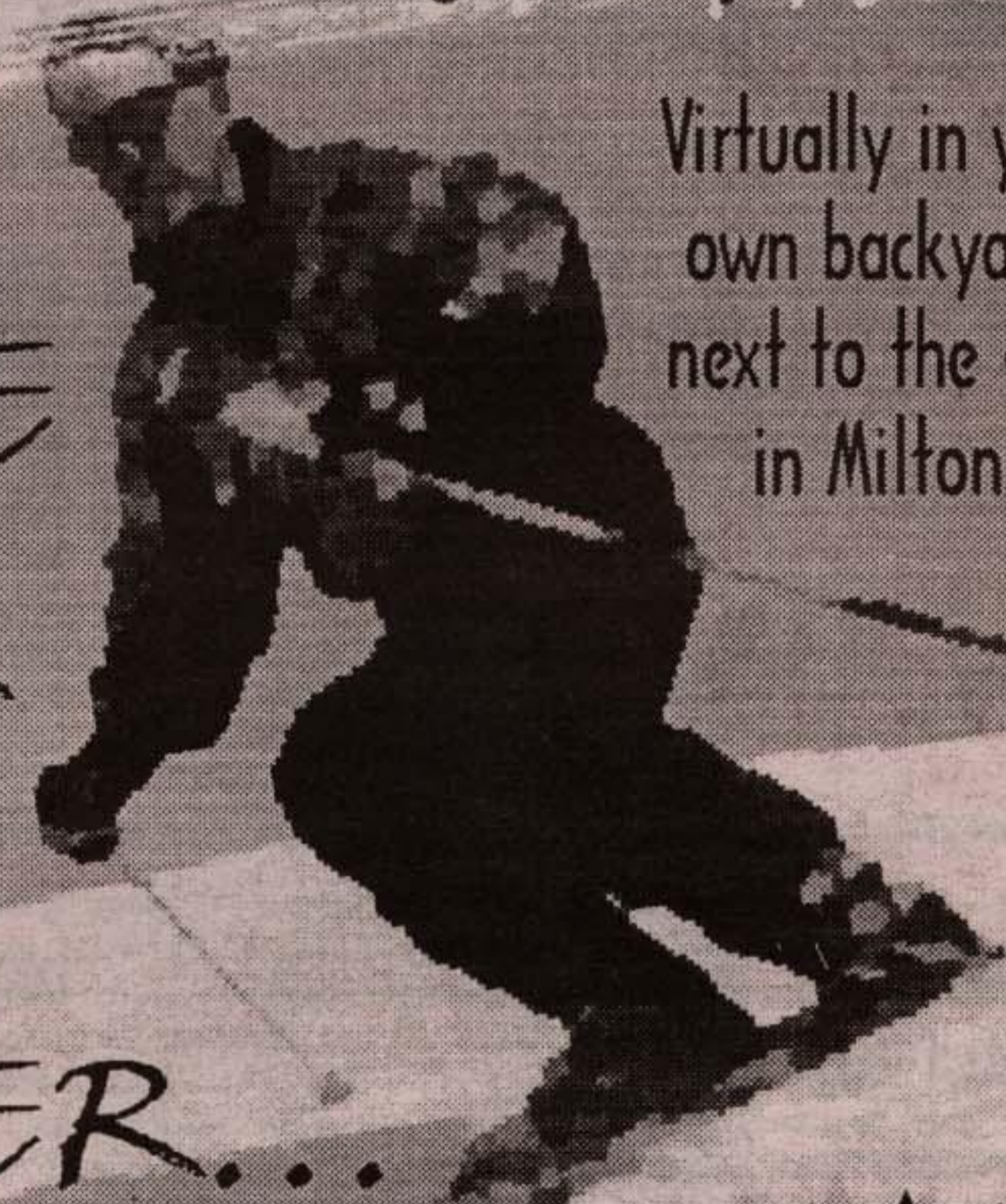


April Evans and dad, Larry.

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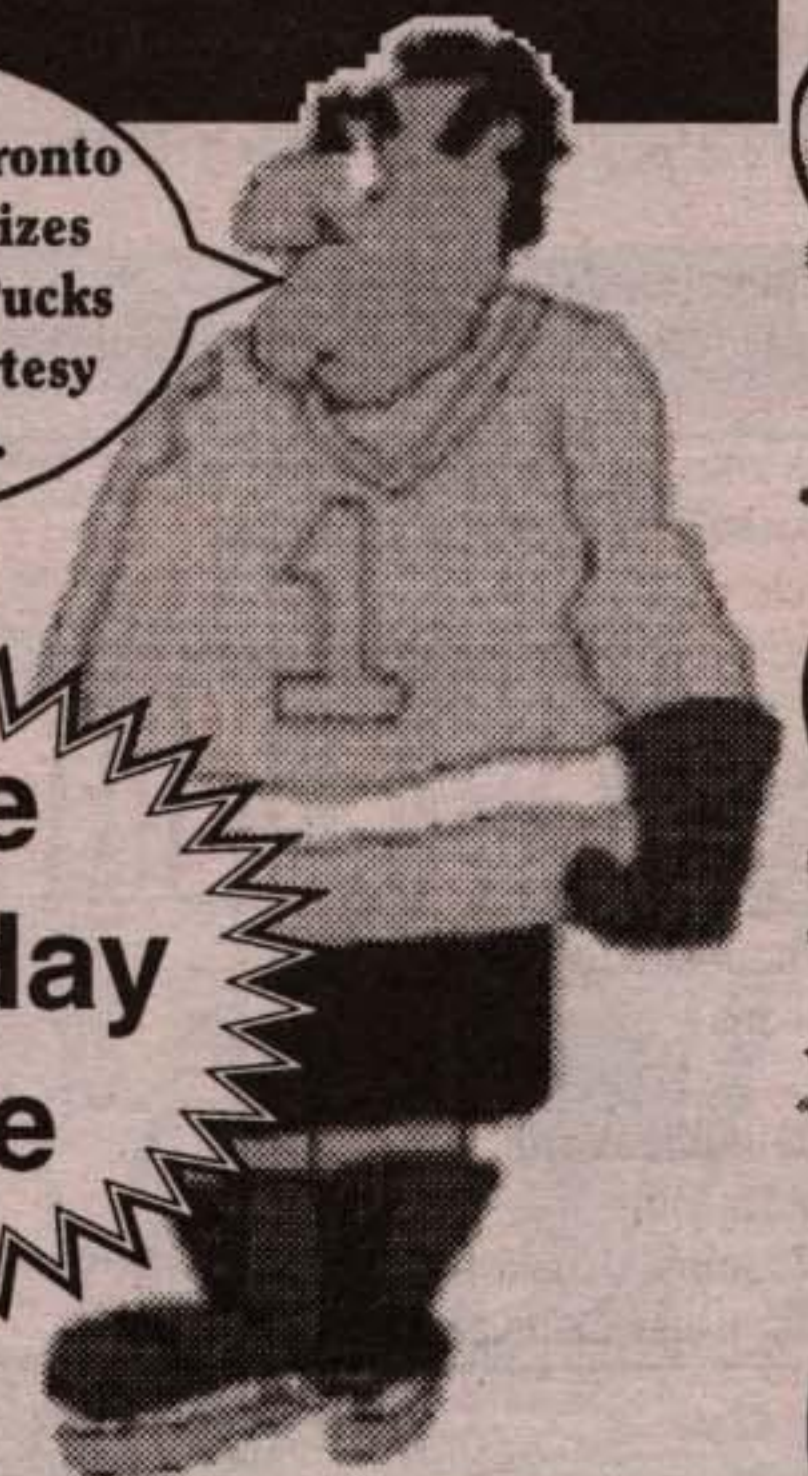
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