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Rumours of school violence prompt students to stay home

BY LISA TALLYN Staff Writer

umours of a threat of violence at Bishop Reding Secondary School in Milton Friday— the anniversary of the Columbine High School tragedy in the United States—kept half the students at home.

Diane Rabenda, Halton Roman Catholic District School Board Superintendent of Education, said a letter was sent home with students Thursday on rumours circulating in the school about the potential for a serious incident to occur in the school Friday.

Rabenda would not reveal more about the

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-Det. Sgt.

Jackie Gordon

to take place."

rumours however, students say they heard a male student had made a hit list, and a lock had been cut off of a student's locker.

Rabenda said she had no knowledge of a lock being cut off.

In the letter sent home school principal

Leta Yarema said after investigation by the school and board administration they believe the rumours are unsubstantiated and Halton Police are investigating.

"This seems to be a rumour and that's all it is," said Rabenda. She added administration has not been able to find the source of

the rumour. The school, which is attended by Georgetown and Acton Catholic high school students, was open Friday with all classes running as usual but a school dance Friday night was rescheduled.

Rabenda said staff intended to speak to students Monday about rumours and their

Halton Regional Police Detective Sgt. Jackie Gordon said during police investigation of the incident, several students were interviewed and police concluded "no offence or crime has been committed."

"There is no evidence this activity was ever going to take place," said Gordon, who also wouldn't comment on the content of the rumours.

She said every year as the Columbine tragedy anniversary nears police receive reports of these types of rumours at various schools.

"It's everywhere, it's not something that's unique to this school (Bishop Reding)." She

said on Friday morn-Georgetown High School received a suggestive call that made reference to the Columbine tragedy and police were called to investigate.

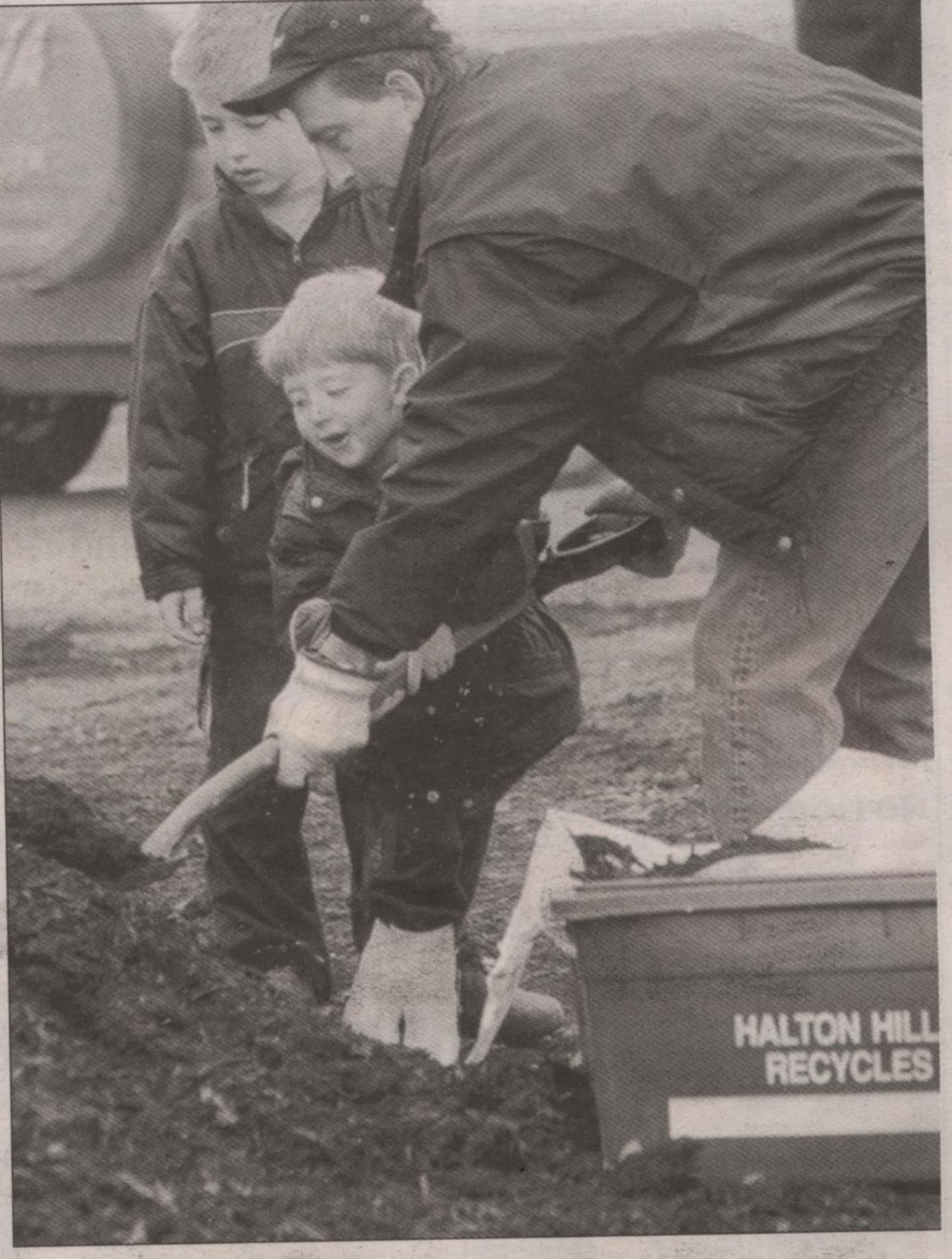
Principal at the high school Keith Rupka said despite the call it was a nor-

mal day Friday.

Gordon said police are investigating the incident but have no reason to believe there was any credence to it. She said there was an increased police presence at the school Friday.

She said police were also at Bishop Reding Friday but that "it's the public fear we're responding to now, not the incident itself."

"The police are cautioning students to be wary of what rumours are spreading in schools," said Gordon. She urges students to report rumours to school officials, and be prepared to say where the information came from, so they can be fully investigated.



Digging for black gold

The Oles family took advantage of the free compost, often known as black gold, available at the town's Earth Day celebration held at the public works yard on Trafalgar Rd. Saturday. Three-year-old Robert Oles, helps dad, Michael and big brother, Matthew, 7. More than half the trees available for sale were gone by noon. Other people took advantage of the free compost and wood chips as well as a Photo by Christine Smyth colouring contest.

danger. Acton father still waits for daughter— American mother appeals U.S. order

cton father Bruce Davitt remains optimistic his daugh-Later Betsy will be home soon despite the fact his ex-wife has appealed a United States District Court decision that ordered the girl returned to her father.

Davitt, 50, said he received word on the appeal last week from his Detroit lawyer Margaret Costello.

"I wasn't surprised," said Davitt, who added his lawyer filed their response to the appeal Monday. No date has been set yet to hear the appeal.

Even though his ex-wife has filed the appeal he remains confident his daughter, who did not return from a visit with her mother in Michigan last summer, will be home in a couple of weeks. If the



BRUCE DAVITT 'Fingers are crossed'

appeal hadn't been filed she would have been home sooner. "I'm just keep-

ing my fingers crossed," said Davitt. "Since ruling in our favour, I see light at the end of the tunnel. I feel a whole lot more optimistic. I do

believe she'll be home."

Davitt has been fighting to get his daughter back since he received a letter from a lawyer and an order last summer

that said his ex-wife Bonnie Murray had been granted temporary custody of 11year-old Betsy by a U.S. judge.

In December Davitt petitioned the U.S. district court in Michigan under Hague Convention protocols on international child abduction and earlier this month a judge recognized the 1997 Ontario court I've got the judge order that gave Davitt custody of Betsy for most of the year.

Since then he has spoken with Betsy on the phone, although he said his conversations are being recorded, and spent Sunday with her in Michigan.

He and his other daughter Katie, 19, are looking forward to Betsy's return and he said she will finish Grade 5 at Robert Little School.

-By Lisa Tallyn, staff writer

Fire Department bans burning

The Halton Hills Fire Department has put a ban on open burning as a result of the dry, windy conditions.

The issuance of burn permits is on hold until the ban is lifted.

Brush fire gets out of control

Halton Hills firefighters were called to an Eighth Line home Sunday afternoon after a brush fire got away from the homeowner and spread across approximately one acre. Firefighters extinguished the fire.



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