

Georgetown mom determined to fight for publicly-funded education system

New Ontario Premier Ernie Eves has promised to review Ontario's education funding formula. Nancy Deligiannis intends to hold him to his word.

The Georgetown mother of four has joined with Oakville parent Cathy Bickley to form a group to advocate for publicly-funded education.

Halton District School Board chair and Halton Hills Trustee Ethel Gardiner fully supports the group.

"Any time you get parents actively and tenaciously fighting for quality public education, it's certainly a bonus for our students in Halton," she said.

Deligiannis says the funding formula, created in 1997, has not kept up with rising costs. While the funding allotments have remained the same, the costs associated with heating, transportation and teacher salaries have increased substantially. Bickley, who has her MBA, reviewed the board's budget and said there are only minimal savings to be had—nothing that would point to a mismanagement of funds.

"The bottom line is there is no cash there and something has to be done," Deligiannis said.

Gardiner said the board's staff "has worked extremely hard in the face of dwindling resources" to limit the impact on children, but the board has "used its reserves and have hit the wall with nowhere else to go (for money)."

Deligiannis sat on two school councils but said they were ineffective in making changes outside their own school. She hopes by getting parents from all schools to band together, they can present a united front.

"If we can get more parents to support us, we'll have our voices heard," she said.

Deligiannis said there are three major areas of concerns:

- a lack of textbooks that often forces students to share books
- special needs students are



NANCY DELIGIANNIS

waiting more than a year to be assessed and can't have programs put in place for them until they are assessed

- schools in Georgetown and across Halton are deteriorating because of maintenance cutbacks

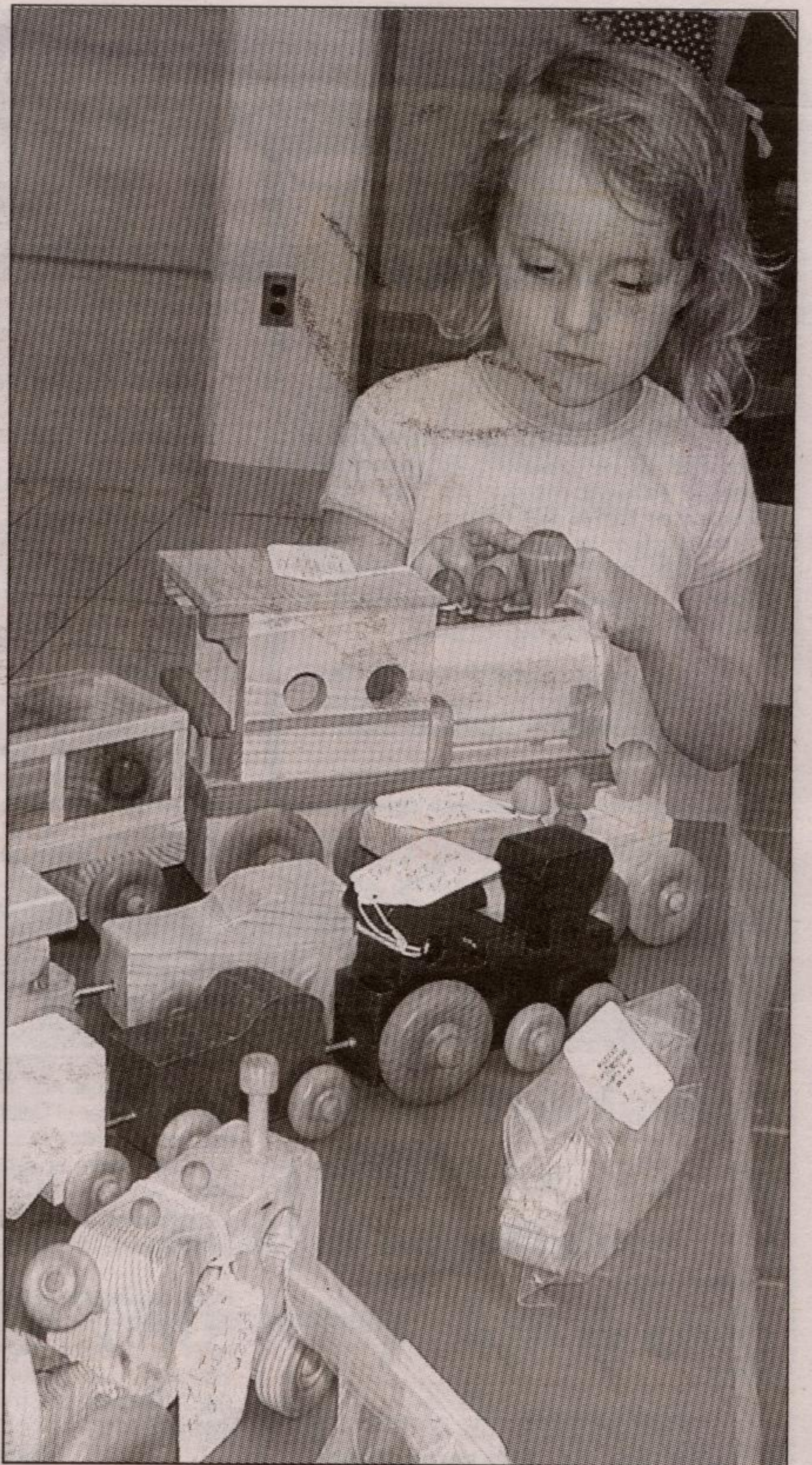
Deligiannis said she hopes to circulate the petition to school councils to help get more parents to sign the petition. So far she has collected 50 names.

Deligiannis said a meeting is being scheduled to give parents more information about the funding formula, although the date has not been set yet. A similar meeting organized by the board drew just 60 people. Deligiannis, like board officials, was disappointed by the turnout.

"We need to inform parents about the funding formula if we're going to change anything," she said.

Gardiner said she's encouraged by Eves' promise to review the funding formula and said that the government may be more willing to listen to parents than school boards when it comes to the impact funding is having on children.

—By Herb Garbutt, staff writer



Toy time

Katie Weber, 4, checked out some of the wooden toys on sale at a the Woodknot Woodworking booth created by Ron Prendergast of Brampton last week. The annual Spring Craft Show sale, held at the Georgetown Market Place, offered an eclectic array of toys, crafts and collectibles created by artists from across Ontario.

Photo by Ted Brown

Wins World Irish dance title

Irvine has a reason to kick up her heels

Georgetown woman is feeling on top of the world after recently dancing her way to the title of World Irish Dancing Champion in Glasgow, Scotland.

Kathy Irvine, 21, competed in the over 21 age group which featured the best 100 dancers from all over the world including Ireland, England, Scotland, United States, Australia and Canada.

Irvine performed a slip jig, treble jig and a set dance before she took the crown.

"It's been a long and tiring road," said Irvine, who has been dancing since she was four. "I could not believe I won. There were so many good dancers, and the standard was very high."

The last time the title went to a Canadian was in the 1960s. Since last year the young Georgetown resident, who is a third-year French student at University of Western, has won the North American Championship, British Nationals, Great Britain Championship, the Canadian Championship and the All-Ireland Championship.

She is not the only medal holder in her family. Sinead, her 19-year-old sister, also competed in the World Championships and out of 104 dancers in her age group she placed 13th overall. They were the only two Canadian girls to medal at the championships out of 100 other Canadians who competed.

Sinead has also won the Canadian championship and just a few months ago she placed ninth overall at the All-Ireland Championships.

The sisters are both students at the Butler Fearon School of Dancing in Brampton.



Kathy Irvine, 21, (centre) of Georgetown recently won the World Irish Dancing Championship in Scotland. Pictured with her are her dance teachers June Butler (left) and Rose Fearon.

Submitted photo

A reception was held in Kathy's honour last week and next month she is to perform with Riverdance for two weeks when they visit Toronto.

Fire calls

Quick-thinking neighbour removes pot from stove

The sound of a smoke detector alerted a neighbour to a potential house fire on Hyland Crescent Sunday afternoon.

After calling Halton Hills Fire Department, the neighbour managed to enter the home and found a pot had been left on the stove. The neighbour removed the pot, preventing a serious fire.

Responding firefighters removed the smoke from the house and used a deodorizing spray to remove the smoke smell.

Firefighters remind everyone that cooking-related fires are the most common cause of fires at home and that extra care must always be taken to prevent tragedies.

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Firefighters rescued three people trapped in an elevator between the first and second-floor at Mold-Masters Sports Plex Sunday afternoon.

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