

## Letters to the editor

# EAs are 'worth their weight in gold'

(This letter was originally sent to Halton District School Board education director Dusty Papke. A copy was made available for publication.)

Dear Mr. Papke,

I am sending this e-mail to you with regards to the current situation involving the Education Assistants. I am a parent of two children who attend Glen Williams Public School. Neither of my children have any notable disabilities.

So, you are probably asking yourself why someone such as myself would be writing to you with regards to this issue? I volunteer my time to monitor lunchtime once a week to give the teachers a small break. I also help out with nutritional snacks and volunteer when help is needed in the classrooms or for reading programs.

With all of the time I spend in the classrooms I get to see first hand what an Education Assistant (EA) is faced with on a daily basis. My daughter has a wonderful little girl in her class who has Down's syndrome. Without the relentless time and energy her EA spends on her, she would not be so well integrated into her class as she currently is. Or do I now have to say, was?

Today when I was at the school to do lunch duty I was floored by the utter chaos in the hallways and classrooms. At this point I had no idea the EAs had walked off the job. I watched while these poor children were shuffled from one classroom to the next in search of who would be sitting with them next. Is that what you feel an EA does? Sits with these children? I certainly hope not!

Without an EA, this delightful little girl would not have the opportunity to learn in an environment with all of the other children. She would not have the assurance that she is safe at all times. She would not have the chance to

be a "normal" little girl.

My seven-year-old daughter, who is one of her best friends, does not understand why her friend may not be able to remain in her class at this time. My daughter has learned more from this child about disabilities and a barrier-free society than I think you could ever imagine. She is also very aware of the fact that this child and her EA are a pair. To her one cannot exist without the other.

Is that the picture you are hoping to paint to the children of today? That the Halton District Board of Education can be capable of tearing a child from both their EA and their classroom? The EAs deserve to be paid what they are worth in the eyes of all parents and children— not just those disabled and their families. And Mr. Papke, they are worth their weight in gold!

Patricia Kirby, Georgetown

## Good Samaritan thanked

Dear editor,

Recently my wallet fell off the roof of my car while driving away from the Petro Canada at the corner of Guelph St. and Mountainview Rd. I realized within minutes that it was gone so I sped back to that area to look for it.

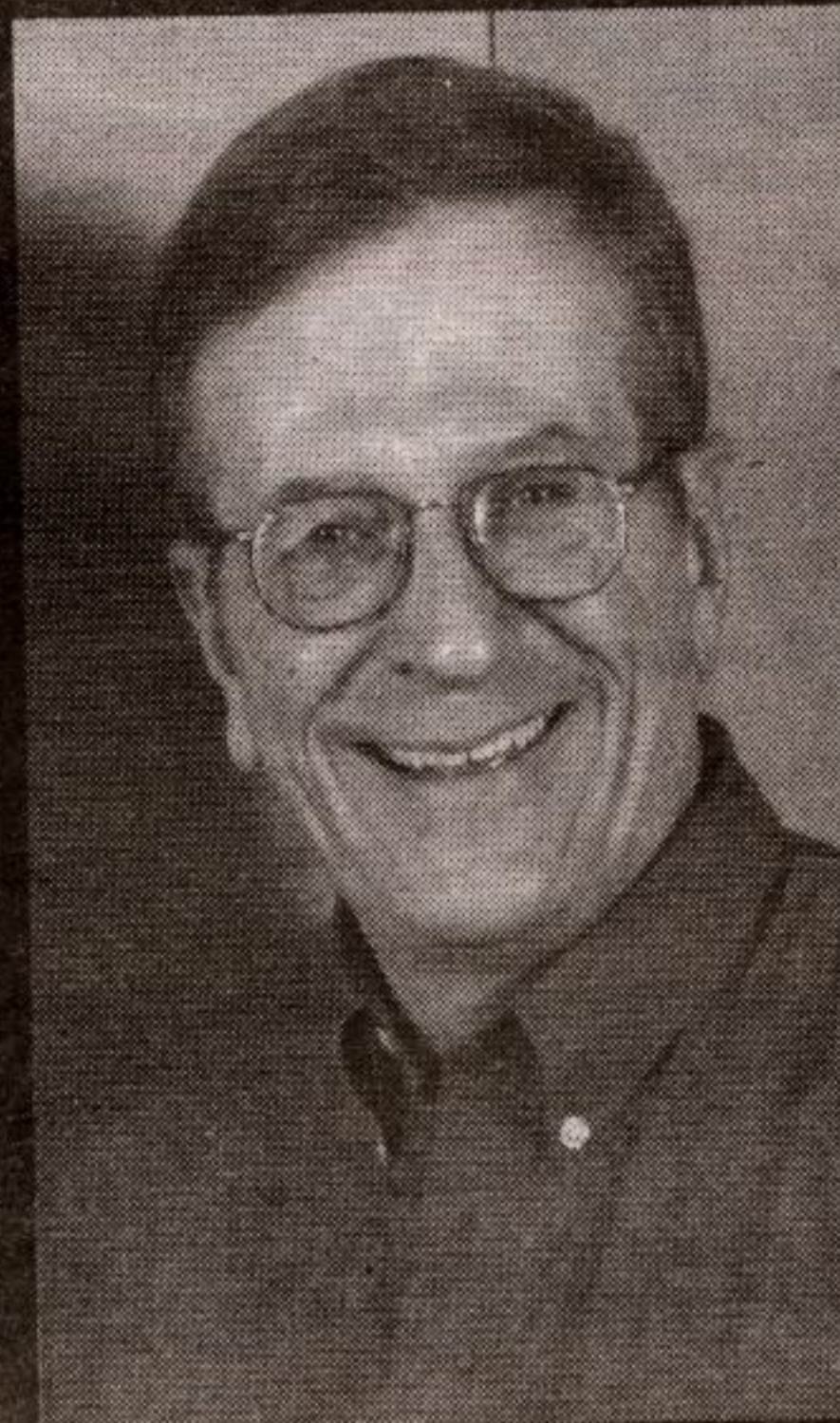
A group of teens told me the driver of a silver SUV picked up what looked like a black glove off the side of the road minutes before I arrived. I was devastated— wallet gone— I was also leaving the country the next day.

When I got home I found a message on my answering machine. Mike Maraganis, the owner of Toppers Pizza, had picked it up while on his way to deliver a pizza. Everything was returned safe and sound.

That's why I live in Georgetown, thanks Mike.

Deena Zahavich, Georgetown

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**John Day**

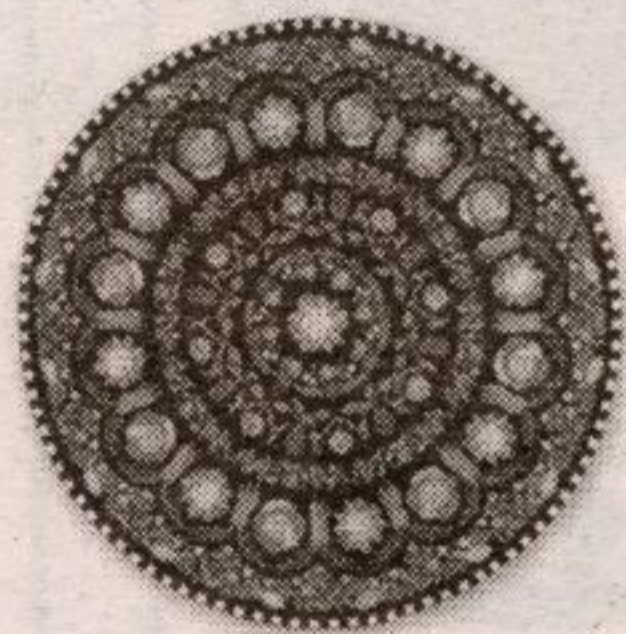
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