

Change needed in mental health system

I had the pleasure recently, of meeting with the Honourable Mary Anne Chambers, Minister of Children and Youth Services (MCYS).

Accompanying me was Oakville Mayor Ann Mulvale, Halton CAO Brent Marshall and Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Bob Nosal. Our topic of discussion was the issue of youth mental health—both the way the services are administered and the challenges inherent in the system, in accessing these services.

Halton's North Halton Mental Health Clinic with offices in Milton, Acton and Georgetown, sees close to 700 clients each year providing psychiatric outpatient assessment and treatment for adults. Funding for the facility is provided by the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care (MoHLTC).

By definition, the 'adult' demographic served by this facility is persons 16 years of age— this leaves younger teenagers and adolescents having to look elsewhere for appropriate resources that fall under the portfolio led by Minister Chambers.

Treatment in the two ministries is based on two different types of models. The MoHLTC typically provides medical based treatment by physicians, psychiatrists, social workers and specially trained nurses. By contrast, the MCYS primarily takes a behavioural focussed approach. Waiting lists for help/diagnosis/treatment are exceptionally long—particularly for child and adolescent psychiatrists— a specialty that is in short

THE REGION REPORT



Joyce Savoline

supply in Canada.

We believe that one, co-ordinated system for all children's health issues—including mental health, would do much to increase and expedite access to services, early intervention and increase communication and co-ordination.

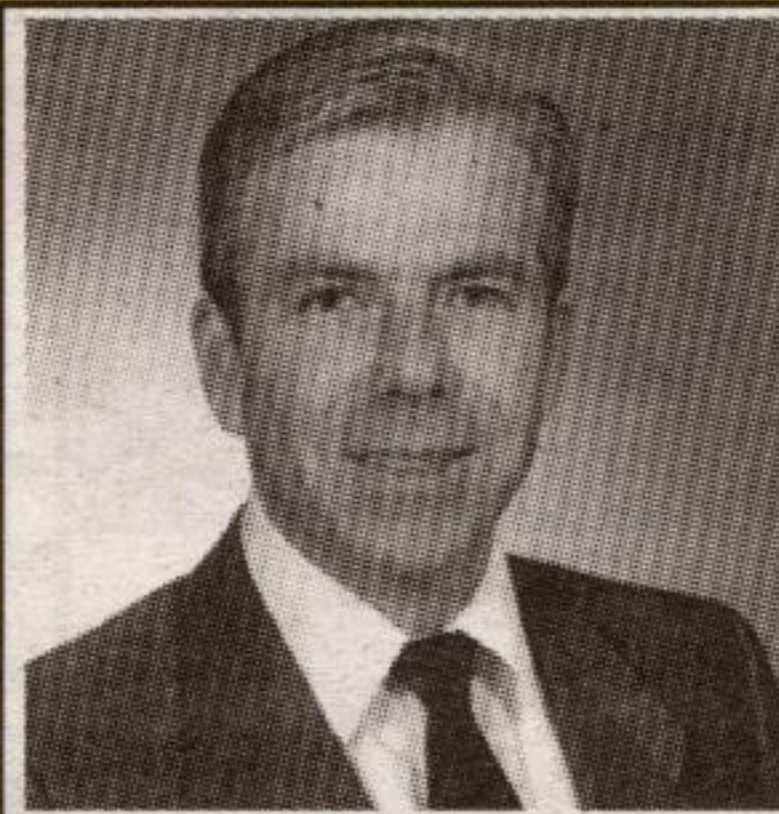
Statistics tell us that at any given time, 14 per cent of children, aged 4-17 years, will experience some sort of mental health disorder. And, we know that left untreated, childhood issues often carry through to adulthood, causing problems in later life and significant costs to society.

In Halton, we have begun the process of advocating for change to the current system and we are hopeful that the dialogue we have initiated will result in a more co-ordinated and improved service to assist the children in our community.

—Joyce Savoline is the chairperson for Halton Region

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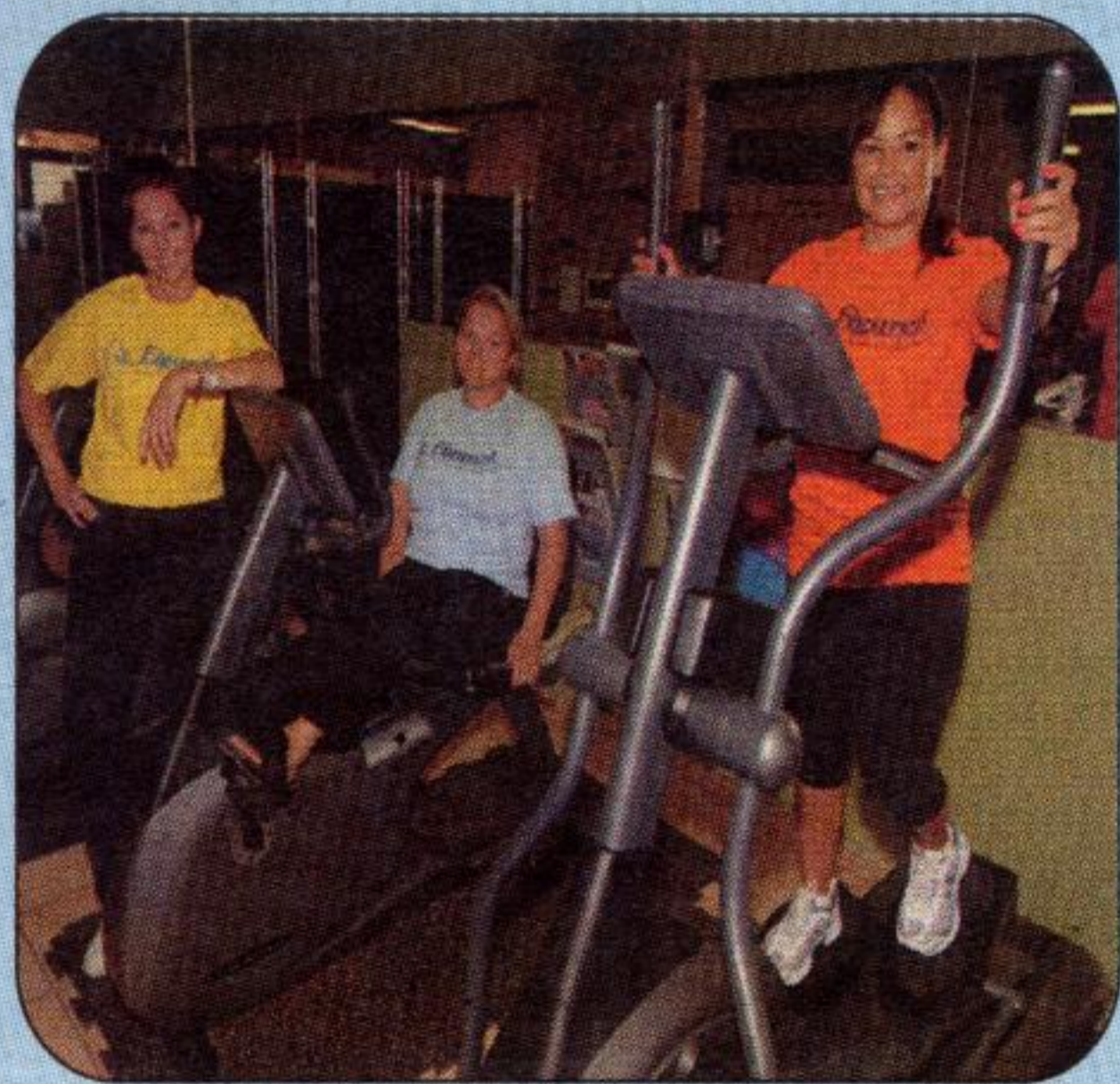
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