

More teens using cocaine

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Along with the information presented by Region staff, the committee also heard about drug use amongst the Peer Outreach Support Services and Education (POSSE) Project's clients.

Representatives from POSSE—which describes itself as a harm reduction and human rights project run by youth for youth in north Halton—said that of the 254 client contacts the group made between April 2005 and January 2006, 215 of those individuals used drugs.

Of those, 76 per cent used alcohol, 70 per cent, tobacco, 65 per cent, marijuana, 31.5 per cent, mushrooms, 29.5 per cent, cocaine, 20.9 per cent, crack, 18.5 per cent, ecstasy and 11.8 per cent heroine/opiates.

Halton Hills Councillor Clark Somerville questioned where youths are getting the money to buy drugs.

"It's not a cheap habit," he noted.

Public health nurse Mary Tabak told him that youths have a variety of money sources, such as

employment. She pointed out that Halton is also an affluent community.

Oakville Councillor Jeff Knoll asked Nosal about the health effects of marijuana.

Nosal said that with heavy use, a person would develop a dependence on it and also see impacts on the brain, such as with thought and memory.

"There is more tar and cancer-causing chemicals in marijuana than in tobacco," he noted.

The committee supported having staff explore options to ensure the availability of data that reflects the health and social status of school-aged children and youth in Halton.

The Region's public health staff is currently involved in implementing a variety of initiatives to enhance the healthy development of youth across Halton.

This includes working with and supporting youth directly, supporting youths' parents or caregivers and addressing issues within the school environments and community at large.

—By Melanie Hennessey, special



Business of the year

MacMillan's Gourmet Frozen Foods owner Lynda Martin (front right) and her son Cameron accepted the Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce Business of the Year award Friday at North Halton Golf and Country Club. Other dignitaries on hand also paid tribute to the firm which was joined by Vision 2000 Travel Group and Halton Hills Speech Centre as finalists for the award. Among those honouring MacMillan's were (from left) MPP Ted Chudleigh, Halton Regional Councillor Jane Fogal, Chamber president Wendy Hue, former Chamber president Norm Paget (representing MP Michael Chong) and Halton Hills Mayor Rick Bonnette. For more on the Chamber's award winners see Page 12.

Photo by Ted Brown

New smoke alarm law comes into effect today

Working smoke alarms are required on every level of a home under an amendment to the Ontario Fire Code that comes into effect today (Wednesday).

Halton Hills Fire Protection and Prevention Services will soon be enforcing the amendment that applies to all single family, semi-detached, and town homes whether owner-occupied or rented.

The new smoke alarm requirement is in addition to the existing requirement of having smoke alarms outside all sleeping areas.

"There is no question that working smoke alarms save lives," said Bob Meads, Director of Fire Services for Halton Hills. "This amendment was introduced to help make Ontario residents as safe as possible from fire. Homeowners, landlords and tenants all have a responsibility in ensuring compliance with the regulation."

To increase awareness of the amendment and the importance of working smoke alarms, Halton Hills fire department will be



BOB MEADS

launching Working Smoke Alarms: It's the Law, a provincial awareness campaign developed by the Ontario Fire Marshal.

In addition to its focus on smoke alarm requirements and responsibilities, the campaign will educate the public about smoke alarm technology, installation and maintenance.

"This campaign is a welcome addition to our regular smoke alarm program," said Chief of Prevention and Public Education Harry Olivieri. "Our goal is to ensure every home in Halton Hills has a working smoke alarm on every level and that residents know how to maintain them. No one needs to die in a fire."

Statistics from the Ontario Fire Marshal indicate that in about 50 per cent of fatal home fires that occurred in Ontario, the victims had no smoke alarm warning.

For homeowners, tenants, and individual landlords, non-compliance with the Fire Code smoke alarm requirements can result in a ticket of \$235, or a fine of up to \$25,000.

Local teenager to help refugees

Mike Holloway was so shocked by the deplorable conditions Haitian refugees were living in last summer during a visit to the Dominican Republic, he literally gave one boy the shirt off his back.

In fact, that day the Georgetown youth gave away all the clothes he was wearing, except for his bathing suit, to the refugees who were living in a dumpsite.

"I felt so bad for them," said Holloway, 16, a Grade 11 Georgetown District High School student, who was in the country participating in Hero Holiday—a humanitarian relief project that last July saw several high school students from across Canada building homes for Haitian refugees.

"I decided right then and there I wanted to go back down there to try to help these people out."

So he plans to participate in the program again this July, heading back to Sousa, Dominican Republic for nine days to continue with the building project.

He said the trip last year was a real eye-opener.

"It was a heart-warming experience and it



MIKE HOLLOWAY

really changed my outlook on life," said Holloway. "It taught me to appreciate what I have."

While there, Holloway spent time behind a shovel digging a pipeline trench, mixing cement, or installing rebar wire on the homes.

He said it was hard work, but well worth it.

"I want to do the best I can to help these people. They have so little, but they're so happy to be alive and have

each other."

It will cost Holloway \$1,700 to attend the project, sponsored by Absolute, a Canadian charitable organization since 2000.

To raise money for the trip a spaghetti dinner will be held at 77 Market St. Restaurant in Georgetown this Saturday (March 4) at 6 p.m. Tickets are \$25 each, \$15 of which will go toward his trip.

Diamond and the Ruff will perform classic rock at the fund-raiser and there will also be dancing, door prizes and a silent auction.

Anyone interested in attending is asked to call Holloway at 905-873-7033 or e-mail him at mikeholloway@sympatico.ca.

—By Lisa Tallyn, staff writer



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