



**Rick Bonnette
Halton Hills Mayor**

Rick Bonnette spent much of his day in the Civic Centre, working in his office and visiting other parts of the building.

He also booked the Activan to take him to and from a meeting at the Gellert Centre in Georgetown South, and tried various facilities in the Civic Centre.

"The front doors into the building are wonderful," said Bonnette, "Opening automatically, there is no real problem entering the building."

'The one thing that strikes me is that at the end of the day, I can see the finish line— many can't.'

But the mayor soon found some of the washrooms a bit cramped for space, and found none of the fountains were accessible for him in the wheelchair— he hit his chest on the housing before he could reach the stream of water.

"Some of the washrooms take some skill, negotiating in and out," said Bonnette, "I found I had to back all the way out of the stall to get out of the washroom."

Bonnette also discovered one of the halls leading to the washrooms was a bit narrow— he had to back all the way out of the hall, since the wheelchair couldn't be turned around in it.

"The clerk's counter is low enough to work over but the rest are high for someone in a wheelchair," said Bonnette, "It's a different perspective, looking up at everyone."

**Ted Brown, photographer,
The Independent & Free Press**

My first obstacle was the washroom in our office. In spite of the fact it was built to accommodate a wheelchair, the doors were too narrow to get through. I had to use the washrooms in the mall.

The office otherwise wasn't too bad, except my workstation was too high. I also had to temporarily rearrange my desk— the telephone was too far away from me, and I couldn't see the display until it was right on the edge of the desk.

I attended a photo assignment at St.

Life in a wheelchair not easy— even for a day

**Brett Reynolds,
Georgetown
District High
School student**

Brett Reynolds received his wheelchair at 2:30 p.m. on a Tuesday and had mixed emotions about the whole process.

"At first, I thought that it would be me who would have to adapt my lifestyle to suit the needs of a disability," said Reynolds, "However it was quite the opposite— I found to make my time in the wheelchair a success it was everyone else in my school, family and around town who had to adapt to me. I found that most of the more simple tasks that we perform throughout our day-to-day lives were some of the hard-



'This opened my eyes and made me realize just how much I take for granted.'

est while in a wheelchair." Reynolds found things like stairs, doorways, washrooms and cars to be the most difficult to maneuver about.

"One of the more interesting aspects of living in a wheelchair for 24 hours was how I had to call the Activan to arrange pick-ups and drop-offs," said Reynolds.

"This raised some questions to me about emergencies and just how hard it is to get around town.

"I would suggest everyone try and perform some daily tasks in a wheelchair," said Reynolds, "To see just how hard it is for these people to live normal lives."

**Stories and photos
by Ted Brown**

**Joanna Meltzer,
Georgetown District
High School student**

"I spent 24 hours bound to a wheelchair and I found it rather fascinating seeing the world from a different view," said Meltzer,

"GDHS is far from being a wheelchair accessible school," said Meltzer, "It is quite a task trying to squeeze through doors without catching my fingers on the doorframe."

Meltzer also attempted to get on a computer in the library but was unable to enter the lab because of a bookcase obstructing her path.

"Luckily this semester all of my classes were on the first floor," added Meltzer. "So I didn't have to take the rickety old elevator which does the job but is a little sketchy and extremely slow."

'I never imagined how difficult it would be.'



Outside of school, Meltzer went grocery shopping and had difficulty getting certain items. She went alone, and found it difficult to carry more than eight items on her lap.

"Of the eight items six were out of my reach," said Meltzer, "We are so lucky that Georgetown is a friendly town, because people were more than willing to lend a hand."

"It was an experience I am glad I took part in— it really makes me appreciate the freedom to walk independently!"

Catherine of Alexandria School, and found the assist door on the front didn't work. I was told it's in the process of being refitted, but staff also apologized.

Getting to the assignment was another obstacle that I hadn't planned for. As part of this group, I was to have booked the Activan to take me to and from an assignment, but I only remembered the night before— it was too late. I had to make my own arrangements.

While shooting at the school, I found my photographic angles were limited to one

'I learned that to a wheelchair, a 3-inch curb was as good as a 5-foot fence.'

level— sitting level.

I went shopping for a few items, used a bank machine (and found that the keypad is so high that keeping one's PIN number hidden is basically impossible) and I also found that going to a restaurant with the parking lot under construction is another challenge.

I learned about aching shoulder muscles after a long uphill haul, and the phenomena of having a 'numb bum' at the end of the day. And I realized the necessity of mapping out getting to any destinations ahead of time, to note where the accessibility ramps



**Sandra Schulthies,
Branch Manager,
Scotiabank Georgetown**

It was early in the day when Sandra Schulthies realized her first obstacle— the front door to the bank.

"We have an assisted door here yet when I tried to open it and come in, it didn't open as far as it should, and closed on me before I got through," said Schulthies.

"It was an eye-opener," said Schulthies, "I found many of the sloped access points in the sidewalks around town actually slope toward the road, and if you don't watch it, that wheelchair can pick up speed, running right into traffic."

At noon, Schulthies and a colleague attended a business luncheon.

"When we arrived, I suddenly realized the event was in the downstairs dining room— no elevator or ramp. I had to be carried down the stairs to attend the luncheon."

"When I went for a coffee," continued Schulthies, "I filled up the cup, (which was on top of a tall counter) and then realized I had no way of taking it back to the table with me. I couldn't place it in my lap, and I needed both hands to propel the chair."

Around the office Schulthies said she found it was 'workable' and with the exception of the occasional filing cabinet in the way, for the most part, the bank wasn't too bad to maneuver around in.

'Early in the day I discovered many doors and washrooms that are labeled 'handicapped accessible' are not.'

were located.

I also found there are many considerate people in town, quick to open a door, happy to step aside to make room, and generally be considerate of a person in a wheelchair.

The day I was in the wheelchair, organizers Maria Smorong and Bill Leslie dropped to see how I was getting along.

"When we contacted all the people who took part, we gave them a chance to pick which day they'd spend in the wheelchair," said Leslie. "Many would check their schedules, and see which day was best for them to take their turn. People like Maria and I don't have that choice— we have to cope everyday."

Backyard Touch
318 Guelph Street
Georgetown
905.873.8835
HOURS: Mon. - Fri. 10 am - 6 pm; Sat. 10 am - 5 pm,
Sun. 11 am - 3 pm (FORMERLY BEACHCOMBER)

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