

OPINION

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Phone: 905-873-0301
Fax: 905-873-0398

Teen tragedies

May has proven to be a tragic month for young drivers in Ontario which doesn't bode well for the immediate future as summer vacation—a time that sees even more teens on the road—is still a month away.

This past Sunday proved especially tragic with two separate accidents in Milton—one at 3 a.m. and the other at 5 a.m.—that claimed the lives of three teenagers and left two other teens injured.

In both cases alcohol and speed are being investigated as factors. These tragedies occurred a week after a holiday weekend that saw:

- A teenage driver killed and three passengers injured when a minivan lost control in Markham;
- A teenage driver from Barrie charged after police clocked a vehicle at 239 km/h in an 80 km/h zone.

Police and emergency personnel agree that parents must “look at themselves when they hand over the keys.” “They (parents) are part of the equation,” says OPP Sgt. Cam Woolley, who has seen more than his share of carnage on the roads.

Too many young teens want to be cool by driving too fast, he said.

“Parents should know that as registered owners (of the vehicles) they are responsible civilly,” he said, adding they are open to lawsuits.

Joanne Banfield, who runs the trauma injury prevention program at Sunnybrook Hospital, agrees that parents need to step up.

“We've got to give our heads a shake,” Banfield said. “Parents need to step up and have conversations with their kids.”

Obviously it is impossible to know where and what your kids are doing at all times, but questions must be raised when teens are driving in the middle of the night, are not wearing their seat-belts, are driving at more than 150 km-h over the posted limit or are drinking and driving.

Banfield says since some youths make bad choices, it is up to the parents to play the “heavy”.

“So many parents we see say ‘what if?’ and ‘if only’ but there are no re-dos in life,” Banfield said.

Some teens believe they are invincible when they get behind the wheel. It is up to their parents to ensure those kids know that is a potentially deadly myth.

What do you think?

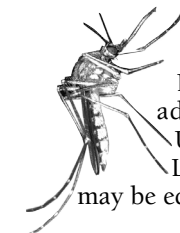
Below are the results of our most recent online poll. For the current poll go to www.independentfreepress.com

Halton Region's new trash collection program has been in operation for one month. How happy are you with the new system?

- Very pleased (60%)
- Reasonably pleased, but it could be better (40%)
- I don't like it all and prefer the old system (0%)

Something bugging you?

Send us a letter!



Letters to the editor must include an address and daytime telephone number. Unsigned letters will not be published. Letters should not exceed 200 words and may be edited for content and/or length.

E-mail:

jmcghie@independentfreepress.com

Mail or drop off:

Independent & Free Press, 280 Guelph St., Unit 29, Georgetown, ON., L7G 4B1

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Steve Nease



STAFF DIRECTORY

Publisher
Ken Nugent

Advertising director
Steve Foreman
(sforeman@independentfreepress.com)

Retail advertising manager
Cindi Campbell
(ccampbell@independentfreepress.com)

Managing editor
John McGhie
(jmcghie@independentfreepress.com)

Distribution manager
Nancy Geissler
(distribution@independentfreepress.com)

ADVERTISING

Advertising co-ordinator
Jennifer Christie (jchristie@independentfreepress.com)

Retail Sales:
Jennifer Spencer (jspencer@independentfreepress.com)
Brendan Louth (blouth@independentfreepress.com)
Amy Sykes (features@independentfreepress.com)
Andrea Lefebvre (alefebvre@independentfreepress.com)

Real estate:
Sue Spizziri (realestate@independentfreepress.com)

Classifieds:
Kristie Pells (classified@independentfreepress.com)

ACCOUNTING

Rose Marie Gauthier, Michelle McEachern

EDITORIAL

Cynthia Gamble: News editor
(cgamble@independentfreepress.com)

Ted Brown: Photography
(tbrown@independentfreepress.com)

Lisa Tallyn: Staff writer
(ltallyn@independentfreepress.com)

Eamonn Maher: Staff writer/sports
(emaher@independentfreepress.com)

PRODUCTION:

Mary Lou Foreman, Kevin Powell, Shelli Harrison, Dolores Black, Debbie MacDougall

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Urbanites urged not to litter rural areas

Dear editor,
Several weeks ago, our 10/4 Neighbourhood Watch group (Fourth Line and 10 Sideroad) gathered together to conduct our annual roadside cleanup.

This pastime, you understand, involves picking up other people's discarded coffee cups, drink containers, burger wrappers, etc. which accumulate in the roadside ditches over the course of the year.

Well, recently I went for a walk along our road...and what do I find? The ditches are filling up yet again with...coffee cups, drink containers, burger wrappers, etc. Do you see a pattern evolving here?

This problem has become worse in the last four years, as our road has become a main north/south route for commuters between Acton and Hwy. 401. Urban dwellers—you would not appreciate garbage dumped on your front lawns—don't you realize that these roadside ditches are part of our front lawns?

Please be respectful of our rural landscape.

Keep your food and drink containers in your car and dispose of them when you get to work.

Take your household garbage to the landfill or the recycling depot.

Your efforts will not only help

the environment, but could one day mean your rural neighbours would not have to conduct roadside cleanups.

Fiona Thibideau,
Acton

Kindness of strangers and friends was greatly appreciated

Dear editor,
To the Good Samaritans who helped me out on May 9 around 2 p.m. when I had a nasty fall on the sidewalk.

To Helen (I asked her name) who stopped and asked if I needed help and to the young lad Brendan who also stopped and phoned 911 and waited with his girlfriend until the ambulance came.

To the ambulance drivers Rory and Dale who took me to Georgetown Hospital.

And later when released (I had no way home) I phoned a friend Dorothy (who is 90) who came and picked me up with no questions asked and took me back to Acton...but first made a side trip to the library to drop off my books.

Thank you all very much for your help, I ended up with a fractured ankle.

Rosemarie Luoma,
Acton

Reader is crying over spilled milk—bags

Dear editor,
Like many of your readers, I have warmly welcomed the new GreenCart and garbage collection schedule in Halton Hills.

With all the Green Cart refuse now separated from the regular garbage, it seems the only thing left in my trash can is plastic milk bags. Every time I open one of these bags I keep thinking that it makes no sense to continue to have billions of these plastic bags in our landfill.

When our family lived in British Columbia our milk was available in four-litre RECYCLABLE plastic bottles—no milk bags and no plastic waste. The only thing left to throw in the trash can was used chewing gum

(and a few other things I really don't want to mention). I think it's time the milk industry in Ontario got a strong message that milk in plastic bags is no longer acceptable.

I have been happily drinking milk for 42 years of my life. I am a big fan of the white, but I am sick and tired of these plastic bags. I can't count the number of times one of these bags has shifted in my container and spilled milk all over the place. I figure I spill at least a gallon or two of milk a year. These bags spill our milk, fill up our landfills and kill our planet. Milk lovers rise up and demand a change! It's time for a moooooove to greener packaging!

Brian Girvan, Georgetown