

GRAPEVINE



QUERY CANDIDATES

With the holidays behind them, it's full stream ahead on the campaign trail for six candidates who hope to woo voters in Wellington-Halton Hills in the January 23 federal election.

For many voters, the first chance to hear, see and question the potential politicians is when the Halton Federation of Agriculture hosts an all-candidates meeting on Monday, January 9. It begins at 7 p.m., at Hume's Auction Farm on the Fourth Line, north of 10 Side Road.

While the focus will be on issues affecting the rural community – environmental stewardship, agriculture, food, trade – any other issues important to local voters can also be raised with questions from the floor and submitted in advance to the moderator at kurtis@farmstart.ca

CPR OFFERED

Want to learn how to save a life?

There's still space in the Canadian Red Cross CPR course offered on January 22 at Acton's new fitness centre – Staying Alive on Main Street North.

Classes at Staying Alive begin on Monday (January 9), and there's an open house slated for January 20, with the official grand opening on January 21.

LIBRARY PROGRAMS

There are spaces in several of the free programs at the Acton library that begin next week.

The programs – for parents with six-month-olds, toddlers, to five-year-old avid readers – run weekly during the day.

Registration for most programs is by lottery, but some programs offer drop-in attendance.

For more information call the River Street branch at 853-0301.

HOMESCHOOLER BOOK BATTLE

For the third year in a row, homeschooled Acton area chil-

dren are invited to participate in the library's annual Battle of the Books.

Like the Battle staged for public and Catholic school children in Acton – students from Robert Little and St. Joseph took part in the past two years – the Battle for homeschooled children has students bone up on literature and then teams answer trivia questions based on plots and authors on game day, May 25, at the library.

Last year, 17 homeschooled children – four junior teams and three senior teams – entered the Battle of the Books program.

LITERACY HELP

If you have trouble reading this, then Literacy North Halton may be able to help.

LNH offers adults free help with reading, spelling, writing, math and basic computer skills in either one-on-one sessions or in small classes.

Call 905-873-2200 for more information.

ECUMENICAL SERVICE

Members of all of Acton's churches will join their voices in united prayer and song at the annual Acton Ministerial Ecumenical Service on Sunday, January 15. The special speaker will be the Anglican Bishop of Niagara, the Right Reverend David Ralph Spence.

All are invited to the service that begins at 10:30 a.m. at the Acton Legion.

OH, BABY

If you have a new baby, or if there is a baby in your near future, Halton Region's Health Department has several free programs that may be of interest including Calling New Parents and Healthiest Babies Possible.

Using the slogan an "early start is prenatally smart" Halton public health nurses offer pre-pregnancy health care advice as well as parent and infant care.

For information on both programs call 1-866-442-5866.

Sunshine State...

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across the road, replaced by a "no vacancy" sign and yet another "for sale" sign.

My home away from home was changing dramatically. I hardly recognized it. The little beachside motels are vanishing. Mom and pop establishments are gone. Ontario licence plates could barely be found. The trailer parks are being gobbled up by developers including those family friends, Ab and Norma, used to stay at when they visited the area.

We have many fond memories of visiting them at their campsite, somehow always on St. Patrick's Day when Norma would put green food colouring in the American beer they purchased for the celebration. I always hated that American beer, but in my memory I can still see how giggly-happy Norma was making her green beer.

The trailer park is gone and like

the park, our friends also passed away last year. Now a huge condo development has been built on the site. I told my parents how the Dude and I tooted our rental car horn as we drove by the former Holiday Trailer Park just as my dad would do each time we drove by the area where Ab and Norma's trailer was parked. Even if Ab and Norma weren't vacationing there, my dad would always honk the horn twice...it was sort of his code to let them know he was thinking of them. With that my mom was looking a little sad and said, "That's okay, your dad did too."

Properties may be sold. Mom and pop operations may be going away replaced by big companies, the Orange Blossom may be gone, but some things may never change. We can still honk our horn twice as we drive down Park Street, past where the Holiday Trailer Park used to be.



"CHEER UP: The sun has not gone out of business" despite the drab, grey, drizzly weather we've experienced in the last few weeks. Although the weather probs are not optimistic this photo taken on the Dublin Line, recently shows there is a sun up there. It just needs to break through banks of clouds which have given us a gloomy Christmas holiday break.

Greeting the New Year

I find the New Year's column the most difficult to write. Columnists are expected to wax poetic about the year that was and identify the events that seemed most important. Of course no one, or few at least, agree with my choices. The tough part is my predictions for 2006. I'll let you in on a secret. If I could foresee the future I'd pick winning 649 numbers and spend next year on a beach. Be that as it may, a New Year's column is expected so here goes.

When the election was called firearms legislation was barely on the radar. After the boxing day murder in Toronto handguns have become a hot button issue. Last week editor Coles and publisher Tyler issued an invitation for you to have your say. Community newspapers give readers a chance to make your opinions known. Copies of your letters will be given to local candidates and I hope the party leaders. Solutions to the gun problem can only be found in federal legislation so don't miss your chance to influence future laws.

2006 rang in to the sound of gunfire. It took only five hours for Toronto to record its first murder. Last year the first murder wasn't recorded until Jan. 14. The mindless violence shows no sign of slowing down.

Here's a sobering thought. The scum who murdered 15-year-old Jane Creba on Boxing Day will be adjudged by the soft laws that exist now. Premier McGuinty suggested a 4-year sentence for possessing an illegal handgun. Under our generous parole provisions the criminal would probably serve a year or less. Does that satisfy you?

2005 seemed to be the year when Mother Nature showed her teeth. The tsunami (a word which sent many to a dictionary) swept almost a quarter million to their deaths and left more than a million homeless. Then came the hurricanes, 26 in total, that slammed the American states. The city of New Orleans was arguably the hardest hit and will take years to rebuild. Just when

The Way I See It

with
Mike O'Leary



you think things can't get worse massive earthquakes struck Pakistan and Indian mountain regions. The death toll there may never be known. I would venture to say that 2005 will be known as the worst year for loss of life due to natural disasters.

One miracle of 2005 that stands out in my mind was the crash of the Air France plane at Toronto Airport. When I saw the first coverage my first thought was that no one could survive that inferno. The miracle was that 308 souls escaped. The official reason for the crash was a sudden tailwind and the pilots' decision to land long. Whatever the official report states my guess is that there are few who wouldn't credit a higher power.

We must acknowledge the incredible bravery and commitment of our troops serving at home and abroad. Our biggest contingent is serving in Afghanistan and wasn't it wonderful to see the government is finally supplying them with first class equipment. Recently, the terrorists planted a roadside mine which detonated when our guys went by. Had they been in their old jeeps they would surely have been killed. Their new equipment is armored so both soldiers escaped with leg injuries. Even the Americans in theatre are envious of our equipment. That's got to be a first.

We can't forget the other servicemen who put their lives on the line so others can enjoy some degree of safety. Places like Haiti where a retired RCMP officer was recently murdered in an aborted kidnapping attempt. Canadian soldiers are presently serving in all corners of the globe. For a small country we ask a lot of our servicemen and women. They never fail to make us proud. We owe it to them at least not to forget them.

While on the topic, let's not forget the police, fire and emergency

service workers. You never truly appreciate these folks until you need them. There was an old saying from the 60's that's as true today as it was then. "Got real problems? Call a hippie."

Lastly, what review of the year just past would be complete without some mention of my beloved Leafs. This year we can sum up their performance in one word: theysuck? I am beginning to despair that the Stanley Cup will not be paraded down Bay Street in my children's lifetimes. Don't laugh, I've got some pretty old kids. How long, oh lord, how long do we have to wander in the wilderness?

The opportunist of the year award has to go to Sheila Copps ending up writing a column for The Toronto Sun. I know people who would exorcize the paper every day her column appeared. Her writing for The Sun should be a lesson for every man that "a woman scorned etc..." I've been reading some of her stuff lately, after donning my garlic necklace, of course, and she is obviously a lady on a mission. To wit: destroy any chances P.M. the PM has to get re-elected.

Last Sunday she wrote that the finance department started to spring leaks way back in 1993. Care to guess what year Paul Martin took over as Minister of Finance? Odd, isn't it, that although Ralph Goodale is the current Finance Minister her wrath is reserved for P.M. the PM. She goes out of her way to give Goodale a break. Over the years she's had many titles from deputy PM to captain Canada when she tried to paper the country with flags. I'll bet, though, that she enjoys the one that current Liberals have given her. Whaddabitch!

Now for my 2006 predictions. Winter will be cold and summer hot. My beloved Leafs will win the cup because I was just foolin' around before. Counting today there are 360 days before 2007 rolls in. I hope you live every day well and enjoy your family and friends. That's my one and only resolution.

Happy New Year to all.