

GRAPEVINE



TREAT TIME

Summer can't be far off when people eating ice cream cones begin to congregate in the Main/Mill Street parkette – and that's happening now that Acton's Jayson Van Der Veen has purchased and re-opened the former Cones ice cream shop, on the south-east corner.

Van Der Veen runs a Jay's Ice Cream store in Milton, so his parents, Deb and Mart, will look after the Acton store during the day, under the watchful eye of their son and his video surveillance camera – he'd watched from the Milton store as Grapevine asked staff and a customer to pose for a summer-is-coming photo.

Van Der Veen promises longer and more consistent hours – 12 to 8 p.m. for now and 12 to 9 p.m. in the summer –

and more variety in sizes for cones and milk shakes.

NEW TRICKS

As dog lovers work on plans for a new off-leash park in Cedarvale Park in Georgetown, they're also looking at some up-grades for the hugely successful dog run park in Acton.

HH-DOG – the Halton Hills Dog Owners Group which helps the Town run the leash-free park, will ask Town staff to install some signs on Highway 7 and 25 directing people to Prospect Park, and some signs once you're in the park, showing people where the leash-free zone is.

HH-DOG is also looking for some monitors willing to donate a little time to ensure things run smoothly.

FOOD DRIVE

The annual Acton Scouts Guides/Calvinist Cadet's food drive benefiting Acton's FoodShare takes place April 22.

Those wishing to participate are asked to put items of non-perishable food in a plastic bag at their front door by 8:30 a.m. for pickup.

Donations of the following would be really appreciated: canned meat, tuna, stew, vegetables, baked beans, canned fruit, peanut butter, cereal, pasta, dry milks, cookies and crackers. Officials already have a good supply of red kidney beans and chickpeas. Last year's food drive gathered almost 6,000-pounds of food.

SOBEYS SKATES

As part of its ongoing efforts to raise \$15,000 for Acton's skateboard park – it's already raised \$4,000 – Sobeys is holding a car wash and barbecue on April 29 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Sobeys' fundraising team – with

its "Reach for the Sky" slogan – will be flipping burgers (and sausages and hotdogs) and washing cars in the parking lot, with proceeds going to ASAP – the Acton Sports Action Park committee – that's anxiously waiting for the design of the facility to be finalized.

MAKEOVER TIME

Can you spare 20 minutes on April 21 to help make your part of Halton Hills a little cleaner?

Local schools, businesses and individuals have signed up for the Town's second annual 20-minute make-over – a blitz where individuals and groups tackle an area to clean up all of the litter and debris.

The next day, April 22, the Town is holding its annual community-wide cleanup, when special attention will be paid to cleaning up a winter's worth of garbage in the parks, along the road allowances and in other public areas.

Gloves and garbage bags will be supplied for free – most of the gloves were donated by Acton's Superior Glove – and Tim Hortons will supply refreshments at the Trafalgar Road works yard.

On April 29, the Town will celebrate Earth Day with the sale of eight varieties of trees at great prices (\$5), at the works yard.

There will also be free giveaways of compost and wood chips and demonstrations by various environmental groups.

TRUNK SALE

No word yet when the first Acton Trunk Sale of the season will be held, but the organizers have approval to again use Town-owned land, part of the former CN lands, rent free, from May 27 to October 7, for their popular Saturday event.

While Eastern Avenue is under re-construction this spring/summer, the Town will ensure that the contractor keeps the area as tidy as possible after 5 p.m. daily and on the weekends for area businesses and Trunk Sale regulars.

MS WALK

Yvette Simpson, the owner of Acton's Silver Creek Spa who has multiple sclerosis, is once again raising funds to help fight the disease by walking in the MS Society SuperCities Walk on April 23.

Simpson is taking part in the five-kilometre walk in Milton and is collecting pledges, hoping to top the \$1,530 she raised with generous donations last year to help find a cure for the central nervous system disease that affects three new Canadians every day.

For details, or to make a pledge, call Simpson at 853-0811.



MSB VOLLEYBALLERS: McKenzie Smith Bennett's Junior volleyball team placed fourth in their group at two recent tournaments at Silvercreek Public School, Georgetown, and Hawthorne Village Public School, Milton, where they made it to the quarter finals and lost a "close, close game." The team is made up of girls in Grades 3 and 4 at MSB. – John Mein photo

It's the money, of course

The Way I See It

with Mike O'Leary



You may remember Louise Russo. She's the mom that caught an errant bullet just over two years ago in a sandwich shop in Toronto. Since then she's been confined to a wheelchair and is in constant pain. She's in the news again because of a pending deal between the accused shooters and her legal advisors.

It is reported that, if Mrs. Russo were to accept a \$2.5 million payment from the accused shooters, the alleged criminals would receive reduced jail time. So what do you think? Is this justice of sorts for Mrs. Russo or a "deal with the devil" as Tory MPP Bob Runciman claims.

I resent MPP Runciman using the phrase "deal with the devil." Those words were first used to describe the miscarriage of justice that occurred when the crown made their deal with Karla Homolka. I don't think politicians should piggyback these words onto another crime just because they think it sounds dramatic. The danger here is that repetition tends to trivialize such words just as the overuse of "Nazi" has done.

The problem MPP Runciman has is the source of the funds that the accused is offering. There are alleged organized crime ties to the accused and Runciman is concerned that the proposed settlement could be "sleaze money coming from ill-gotten gains." He is also concerned about the legal precedent this settlement might make.

While the prospect of such a plea bargain should give us all cause to pause, aren't similar deals done all the time? If a well-off individual can pay restitution to a crime victim doesn't the court take that into consideration when considering sentencing? Do these individuals have to justify where their funds come from? For that matter, do politicians, charities, churches, hospitals and other

fundraising organizations inspect all contributions to satisfy themselves they're legitimate? That's doubtful, to say the least.

I think there are two issues here. Firstly, shouldn't Mrs. Russo receive as much money as she can get to compensate her, in some small way, for her pain and suffering to say nothing of her family's? If Mr. Runciman has a problem with the proceeds of organized crime, why didn't he do more to make it possible for society to seize those proceeds when his government was in power? Does he have a private members bill on the floor of the house today aimed at seizing that "sleaze money coming from ill-gotten gains?"

Louise Russo is a loving wife and mother of three who innocently happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. She has a severely disabled daughter that she was caring for at home. It would be interesting to see what, if any, government support that daughter was receiving – but that's a question for another day.

Mrs. Russo's medical expenses in the future will be astronomical, to say nothing of providing for the disabled daughter's care. Mr. Runciman suggests Mrs. Russo should seek restitution through the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board. Let's look at what's available from that source.

The CICB MAY award victims UP TO \$25,000. In cases where there is permanent injury the maximum payment is \$1,000 per month totaling \$365,000. So, on the one hand we have the potential of \$2.5 million in restitution funds and on the other up to \$365,000 from the

CICB. Hmmm – not much of a choice if it was my family.

The CICB has a \$40 million surplus but there is a backlog of 10,000 cases. That's a ton of victims looking for a piece of the pie. Louise Russo has been paralyzed for over two years now. A possible settlement is within sight. Do we deny her and condemn her and her family to wander the bleak highways of bureaucratic red tape in search of what amounts to crumbs that fall off the government's table?

Joe Wambach, whose son was beaten to within an inch of his life, supports the Russos taking the proposed settlement. He should know the financial devastation that mindless criminal acts can cause. Wambach is quoted saying, "the elected officials against this (settlement) have lost their minds. The only thing that is important is getting the Russo family money, not where it comes from."

Wambach also notes that the CICB "is funded by fines from criminal acts." One assumes that those fines are sometimes paid for by the same "sleaze money" Runciman is so incensed would go to the Russos.

Runciman is also upset that with time served these alleged criminals may be freed a lot sooner than their actual sentence. Give me a break! How many times have the vast majority of citizens in this province shook their heads in disbelief at the woefully inadequate sentences handed out to violent criminals? How many murderers, rapists, wife beaters and child molesters are wandering our streets today courtesy of "time-served" sentencing protocols and lax parole provisions? Not by any stretch of the imagination am I saying that's right, but I do think it's audacious for the MPP to tie that argument into this situation.

It's all well and good to be self-

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Spring clean-up...

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be let in. More importantly Kodi is sad. He is looking for his sister. He looks to push Shadow out of the way when he goes outside first. He is looking for her in the backyard, and in the house. He is lost. And, in a way so are we.

As I made my way around the

yard picking up the poop, I'm sure Shadow had the last laugh. Kodi always pooped near the fence. Shadow found great pleasure in going wherever she wanted. I'm sure during the summer I will find Shadow's memory in the yard while she is in doggy heaven having a giggle as I find more "trinkets."