

# GRAPEVINE



## MUSIC FEEDS MORE THAN THE SOUL

Mozart, British band music and solos of all styles fill the bill for Sunday's fundraising concert by the Acton Citizens' Band for Acton's FoodShare food bank.

The 2 p.m. "Three Themes Concert" is at the Christian Reformed Church, which is donating its space (with top notch acoustics) and the Band is donating its time and talents to help FoodShare, as the admission is a non-perishable food item or free will offering to buy items like milk and fruit.

Along with a selection of the best of British band music and a tribute to Mozart – marking 250 years since his birth, the concert will feature solos from Adam Burgess, Hayley Burgess, Karin Pelka, Marissa Kidd and Hjoerdis Stockinger.

## PARENTING INFO

For new parents and wanna-be parents – Halton Region has two programs of special interest.

Calling New Parents is a free program for parents with babies under six months that features weekly meetings with a public health nurse to discuss infant care and parenting.

If there is a baby in your future, the Healthiest Babies Possible prenatal program promises sessions to help parents-to-be get off to a great start from conception to one year after birth.

For details, call Halton at 1-866-442-5866.

## EARTH DAY

Robert Little School will celebrate Earth Day on Saturday (April 22) with a "Dig In."

Families are invited to pitch in and help spruce up the school grounds and front garden and take part in environmental activities including feeding worms, going on a habitat hunt and making bird feeders.

Saturday's events wrap up a

## Foot loose, fancy-free...

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was the dozens of facial and head piercings.

I was glad I couldn't see what else was pierced. The four-year-old had his ears pierced as well. I just shook my head. The Dude rushed me out of the way. I think he was worried I would say something that would lead to Americans pull-out-a-gun and shoot me syndrome.

After our market adventure and as we started to make our way back to "civilization," we stopped for breakfast at the infamous Bob Evans restaurant. It was a family style place and had consistent meals. It was just what we needed. What I couldn't help but notice was that everyone we saw was wearing Western wear and we were in Pennsylvania. It was odd. I even joked that the Dude should have been wearing his cowboy hat.

week of environmental events at the school that featured a special concert, litterless lunches, a 20-minute cleanup blitz, a food drive and the kickoff for a community-driven naturalization project on the school property.

Organizers hope the school community will pitch in and help make the Robert Little School corner of the Earth a little greener. Tim Hortons and Giant Tiger will provide free refreshments for participants.

## RETIRED TEACHERS

The Lydia Snow branch of the Retired Women Teachers of Ontario – including its Acton members – meets at the Boston Presbyterian Church in Milton at 10 a.m. next Thursday for its annual general meeting.

Expect lunch and good fellowship. New retirees are welcome.

## POSITIVE PARENTING

Space is still available in a free, four-session Triple P Positive Parenting Program being offered at the Acton Hub in Robert Little School beginning April 25.

The program is a small group parenting series for parents of kids from one to six years and the sessions run from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Call the Halton Health department at 1-866-442-5866, ext.: 7877 for details.

## CANDIDATE DECLARES

There's been no action on the Acton political landscape – except for Mayor Rick Bonnette to deny he'll run for the Liberals in the October 2007 provincial election – but in Georgetown, the municipal race in Ward Four is heating up.

Kevin Duggan, a political newcomer who describes himself as director of operations in Global Logistics Firm, said he is a strong advocate of families who hopes to lead the fight to reduce the continuing explosion of residential development in Halton Hills.

Veteran Ward Four Councillor Ron Chatten is retiring.

As we sat down for a late breakfast and were reading the local paper, the Dude made a comment about taking a peek at the kid behind us. "Ahhhh, why didn't you warn me?" I scolded him. I was startled. There he was. He was in a high chair and you couldn't miss him because he had a great big mullet hair cut with the back of his hair in a pony tail down to almost his bum.

"Why would someone do that to a kid?" I asked the Dude. "Maybe he wants it that way," he offered. By then, I was looking forward to going home to Acton. It was only an hour or so away, but it felt like a million miles away. Acton...home sweet home where there's no deep fried chocolate bars or kids in restaurants running around barefoot and I am positive I hadn't seen any four year olds with blue Mohawks...yet. It's nice to go away, but it's sure nice to come home.



**EASTER TREASURE:** Ashtin Campbell, Kristi McIsaac and Sheyanne Campbell squint in the bright morning sun reading clues to a scavenger hunt which was lovingly put together by their moms as an Easter surprise. The youngsters awoke to find they had to race all over Acton on Easter morning to gather their treats and, at the end of it all, feed the ducks in Fairy Lake. - Danielle McIsaac photo

## Should MPAC be history?

At a meeting last week, one of an ongoing series regarding the obvious errors in the MPAC assessment system, I became concerned that people are misinterpreting the Ontario Ombudsman's recent report. Like most Ontarians I was pleased with the recommendations made. But almost all the advice Ombudsman Martin had for the government had to do with improving customer service. No surprise there since Mr. Martin's 22 recommendations come after this single agency has generated more complaints against it in 30 years. Queens Park has created a monster with too much power and little accountability.

Years ago many never bothered to open their assessments or, if they did, seldom made the connection to property taxes. That's because the municipality had a formula they multiplied the assessment by and most folks were content to let the town do that. We knew we were going to get a modest increase every year but were satisfied to bitch about it in Tim Hortons and grumble while paying their way. Not so these days.

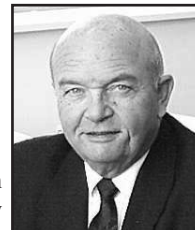
People are fed-up with the autocratic attitude shown by MPAC staffers. They are irate with the apparent lack of respect shown to taxpayers who have the audacity to appeal their assessment. Taxpayers question the methodology used to assess their properties. I believe they have lost all faith in the abilities of MPAC to be fair and objective.

Mr. Martin had limitations put on his area of study. While the Ontario government has so far only agreed to "explore" the Ombudsman's recommendations, MPAC to their credit, has agreed to implement 18 of Martin's recommendations.

One of the most important items is still in limbo. As things stand now, if you appeal your assessment, you have to prove that the assessment is wrong. Mr. Martin would see that process reversed. Once they receive an appeal

### The Way I See It

with  
Mike O'Leary



MPAC would have to prove their assessment is correct. How they would have to do that is unclear but one assumes it would involve more than saying "we're right – just because!" It seems to me that Mr. Martin's suggestion is more in line with the "innocent until proven guilty" attitude on which our justice system is built.

The whole property tax situation is reaching a critical stage. Seniors, many of whom bought their houses years ago at a more modest price, are now afraid of losing their houses because of skyrocketing taxes. Their fear is real. Rural residents, whose property includes woods and swamp as well as a single family dwelling, have their entire property assessed as residential and have seen their taxes escalate dramatically. Those are but a few of the injustices imposed upon us by the Ontario government through MPAC.

Now for the \$64,000 question. What can we do about this terrible situation now? For one thing, keep the pressure up. Through letters to the editor, radio talk shows, letters to MP's etc. Don't let this story die. If you think your assessment is too high – appeal it! The appeal period has been extended to the end of June so you still have time. Talk to your neighbours and compare assessment. Investigate any huge discrepancies and point them out to your MPP. Get involved in the local committee questioning MPAC's figures. There's strength in numbers.

There's an Ontario election in October 2007. If you've never been involved in politics now would be the time to start. We have to make tax assessment an election issue. Tell your candidate that in order to get your vote he/she has to act on MPAC and your other issues.

Many people still vote party lines.

If your candidate won't support wholesale changes, real changes, at MPAC then hold your nose and vote for the other party. Taxpayers have to have a united front on this matter.

I personally think the matter of property tax assessment should be put back into the hands of municipalities. Market value assessment is a good idea in theory. I don't believe it can be done in an equitable way by cyborg computers or part-time people wandering the streets asking homeowners innocuous questions. I believe local administrators can best determine local market values based on local conditions. That's the system that was in place before the Conservatives came up with creating the Goliath that became MPAC.

At least, that's the way I see it.

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It's not possible to ignore the Liberal leadership race alone any longer. We're all familiar with the concept of one person – one vote. The federal Liberals seem determined to go one better than that old political adage. I call it the "one candidate for every delegate" syndrome.

In Edmonton, a couple of weeks ago, there were 16 hopefuls crowded onto a stage all dreaming of the big job. They should be careful in case they get it.

Several wannabe leaders have since fallen by the wayside. Belinda Stronach bailed out so she could spend more time as a backbencher faster than it takes to have a cup of coffee. That and the fact she had a snowball's chance in hell of winning, of course. Bob Rae has joined the Liberal Party and is planning to take a run at the big prize. So far all he's done is complain how hard it was to govern in a recession. Seems like an odd way to gain support but it is true to form. We'll look at the other candidates down the road and have some fun.

My concern; so far I don't see a nationbuilder in the bunch. Do you?