



DUCK POWER: Power washer help from Duck dad Owen Johnston (left) helped Acton Aqua Ducks Swim Club members handle a steady stream of cars at their car wash and garage sale in the parking lot of the Christian Reformed Church on Saturday morning. — Frances Niblock photo

AIDS awareness evening has stories of despair, hope

By Rebecca Ring

Rockwood Presbyterian Church hosted an AIDS awareness evening last week. More than 100 people attending from as far away as Arthur and Gordonville. Donations to the Masai Centre were \$550 with more to come and \$315 to the Presbyterian World Service and Development (PWSD), also with more to come. The latter is in partnership with CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency), which will match the donations dollar for dollar.

One speaker was Dr. Anne-Marie Zajdlik, founder and director of the Masai Centre for Local, Regional, and Global Health, a community-based outpatient clinic offering holistic, compassionate care and treatment for those living with HIV/AIDS in Wellington-Dufferin, Grey-Bruce and Waterloo Region. She is heading the “Guelph and Region - Masai for Africa Campaign”, which is spearheading Ontario’s part in an urgent, humanitarian effort. They are partnered with Stephen Lewis, the Ontario Hospital Association, and the Ontario Hospital’s for Africa (OHAfrica) project. The goal is to raise \$1 million by July 1, 2006. Zajdlik said, “I will take these funds with me to the southern African country of Lesotho to use them to assist the OHAfrica sponsored Tšepong Clinic. Our support will help sustain this existing HIV clinic and help establish a much needed sister clinic to be named in honour of Guelph.”

Zajdlik described the devastation that HIV/AIDS is

causing in Africa. She said, “There are 30 million people infected with HIV/AIDS in Africa. Sixty per cent of them are women. Eight million are between the ages of 15 and 24. The disease is wiping the continent bare of entire generations of parents, teachers, factory workers, shopkeepers, farmers and professionals leaving 15 million AIDS orphans and vulnerable children. Without a massive response, eight African countries are at risk of extinction in the next decade.”

Mary Rife, an activist who is raising funds and awareness for the PWSD in Malawi, shared some stories of hope. She spoke of a young woman named Maria, widowed while pregnant with her fourth child. Shortly after giving birth, she and the baby fell ill with tuberculosis. She was dying while her young children tried to care for her and the baby, Ed. They went to the Ekwendeni mission hospital where both were diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. Both were treated with anti-retroviral (ARV) drugs and are now living well and healthy. She was so grateful for this second chance that she became an advocate for AIDS awareness.

Maria reached a pregnant 16-year old girl named Ousie. She agreed to be tested for HIV but refused to believe the positive result. She was healthy and had been with only one man. How could she have AIDS? She went away but returned six months later. She tested positive again and was devastated. She knew she and her baby would probably die. She met Maria who helped her get into a drug

treatment program. Timing was crucial to give the baby his best chance. She is now 18 years old, doing well and raising her HIV-negative baby.

Reverend Linda Paquette, of the Rockwood and Eden Mills Presbyterian Churches, visited Malawi last November to learn more about the problems facing the people and to see the difference volunteers and donations make. She witnessed both hope and devastation. She said, “Currently, ARV drugs are not readily available in Africa so they wait to use them for secondary infections in HIV patients.”

In Canada, HIV patients are treated with these drugs when their CD4 count reaches 200. In Africa, HIV patients are treated when they have full-blown AIDS and their CD4 count reaches four or five. At this point, it is very difficult to recover.” She stressed that education and nourishment is needed just as desperately as the drugs.

The evening began with “Women who Sing” singing African songs. They volunteered their time and talents when they heard of the event. Janet Wilson donated her paintings and sketches to raise money for the orphanages in South Africa. Karen Hutchinson coordinated the event. She also sold beaded red ribbons and “Little Traveller” dolls, which are made by African women living with HIV and are paid for their work. The dolls are purchased then sent to an African child orphaned by and/or suffering from AIDS. To purchase these crafts, contact the Eden Mills or Rockwood Presbyterian Church.



ACTON SENIORS' RECREATION CENTRE

By Julie Conroy

We certainly have some active Seniors in our group. Victor Bissonnette tells me he did the stair climb at the C.N.Tower last week in 21.05 minutes which is 22 seconds slower than his last climb in October. He said he’s sure it will be faster next October, after he has lost his winter fat. His son who is much younger, obviously, took 52 seconds longer.

Don’t forget to pick up your ticket to the picnic lunch before they are all sold out. It’s on Tuesday, May 23 at noon. “Bobolini the Great Magician” will confound us and amaze us. This event is open to all members from Acton and Georgetown Seniors Centres plus their guests. Tickets are available at the front desk.

The latest update on the Walk-a-thon is that M&M’s meats have kindly offered to staff and operate a B.B.Q in the park during the Walk-a-thon, and any participant who has more than \$10 pledged, will receive a ticket for a hamburger or hot dog plus drink. The first 20 walkers will also receive a tee shirt donated by Canada Trust. Hot dogs and hamburgers will be available to everyone else at a nominal cost, so come out and enjoy the day.

The Walk-a-thon starts with a ribbon cutting ceremony at 10 a.m. on Saturday, May 27. It will run, rain or shine. For more information call Louise Marjerrison at 853-4360,

or stop in and ask at the front desk. There is still lots of room for more walkers.

The following day many seniors will be rolling up their sleeves, cracking eggs, making toast, serving food, and helping in general at this month’s Community Brunch run by the Kinettes. Come and join us. It’s a great way to catch up on what friends and their families are doing. It’s held every month in the community centre, and each month a different group help the Kinettes as a means of raising funds.

It was a beautiful day last Wednesday for the trip to Blue Heron Casino. We travelled along the 407, and everywhere the trees were just starting to leaf, the daffodils and tulips were incredible in the gardens. It made you appreciate how lucky we are to live in such a beautiful part of the world. The buffet lunch at the Casino certainly lived up to expectations, and I saw quite a few smiling faces on the bus. I did hear one gentleman hit the jackpot, and a lady won \$250 with a Nevada ticket.

Mind you, the smiling faces might have been after we visited the Ocala Winery where we were taught the correct way to appreciate a good wine by swizzling it in the glass to check the “Legs” (alcohol content I think it was), to smell, and then to sip. We tried four different wines including some fruit wines.

The last stop was at a great gift shop called the White Feather, and it was choc-a-block full of interesting items, as well as baking. Everyone wished they had brought a cooler bag with them to bring home some of the frozen items for sale there. The casino kindly donated cookies, water and two prizes for the bus, and Susan Bonnelle, and Caroline Willis were the lucky winners.

We will be having the annual garage sale and plant sale on Saturday, June 3. If you have any plants or items in excellent condition you can bring them to the Centre on Friday, June 2 between 9-4. If you have an item that is too heavy for you to bring call the Centre (519-853-5951) and a pick up can be arranged. I must stress no clothes, and only items in excellent condition, as last year we had quite a few items that weren’t suitable.

The next Rama trip is Wednesday, May 31. Call Ruth if you are interested at 853-5124.

Something I think would interest all men is a trip to the Toyota Plant in Cambridge on July 6, but I see there aren’t many names down yet. If you are interested put your name on the sheet, so they can confirm the trip and arrange the bus. These things can’t be arranged at the last moment.

The weekly 50/50 was won by our President Dave Dodgson this Friday. Congratulations, Dave.



PUBLIC REMINDER

Springtime in Greenwood and Fairview Cemeteries



In accordance with Town By-laws, wreaths on gravesites are to be removed after April 1st in order to facilitate cemetery maintenance.

Saddle wreaths are permitted throughout the year when they are securely affixed to the monument, kept in good condition and follow the season.

The Town offers Full Service Flower Bed, Fresh Flower and Monument Cleaning Services to care for your plot. Contact Sharon Perkins at (905) 873 2601 ext 2246 for more information or e-mail sharonp@haltonhills.ca

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