

GRAPEVINE



FANTASTIC FLOATS

Congrats to Limehouse Public School whose float earned the best over-all prize of \$100 from judges at the Acton Santa Claus parade. It's a repeat win for the school that also grabbed top float honours last year.

Judges, who had a tough time selecting the winners because of the high level of competition this year, were impressed with the detail that went into the winning float.

The \$50 float winners include Busy Kids Day Care, Giant Tiger, Acton Aqua Ducks Swim Club and the Acton Seniors' Centre.

Initially concerned that they didn't have enough floats in the parade, organizers were pleased with the turnout that included 32 floats and six bands.

There were complaints some floats were not clearly identified, so next year, organizers will ask entrants to make sure their name is prominently displayed in several places on the float.

TREE TIME

Christmas trees of every shape, size and type will be on sale at the Acton Kinsmen tree lot beginning December 5.

It's the 10th year in a row for the Kinsmen to sell trees from the olde Hide House parking lot.

The lot will be open from 6 to 9 p.m. daily, and from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on weekends until all the trees are sold.

JOB SKILLS

Tools and techniques to find unadvertised jobs – experts say 80 per cent of job vacancies are not advertised – will be offered at two upcoming workshops at the Acton Employment Resource Centre on Mill Street.

The December 5 workshop deals with tapping the hidden job market – how to find out about unadvertised jobs through networking.

The second workshop on December 7 deals with developing a personal networking card – a business card listing hard skills and contact information.

Both one-hour workshops are free. To register call 519-853-5014.

TECH@MSB

There's "tons of technology" at McKenzie-Smith Bennett School these days thanks to the acquisition of 70 new computers – including 20 laptops.

The Halton District School Board purchased 30 of the computers for the newly refurbished computer lab, and the laptops came through an Industry Canada Computers for Schools program that gives tax receipts to companies that donate used computers.

As well, the school was able to get 100 new office chairs through a program that takes used office

furniture from large corporations that are redecorating and donates it to charity.

MSB also received \$5,000 from the Halton Learning Foundation and used the money to buy Literacy resources and new volleyball standards for the south gym, along with new volleyballs and nets.

POWER & POISE

Good luck to Acton's Maja Vermeulen and ice dance partner Andrew Doleman who compete today (Thursday) at the Skate Canada Western Challenge in Moncton.

Vermeulen, 16, and Doleman are on a high heading into the competition which is a qualifier for February's Junior Nationals in Brampton – they set a new Novice dance record at the Western Ontario Sectionals in Waterloo earlier this month.

SANTA RIDES

Santa will offer free rides through downtown Acton in a horse drawn carriage/wagon as part of the Acton BIA's Christmas Extravaganza on Saturday.

Along with special sales from downtown merchants, the festivities include a community caroling with the Acton Citizens' Band, at noon at the Mill/Main Street parkette.

Ken and George, the mammoth Percherons that pulled Saint Nick's sleigh in the Acton Santa Claus parade, will have their antlers on again for the BIA Extravaganza, pulling the wagonette with Santa along two downtown routes, departing from the MacKinnon Family Funeral Home from 1 to 4 p.m.

The horses belong to Tara Oaks Horse Dawn Carriages, owned by Acton's Steve and Leah McLean and McLean's father Keith Frost of Caledon; they are popular in parades and summer weddings.

Another McLean horse – Miday Special – was recently named Reserve Canadian Champion in the Roadsters class at the Royal Agricultural Fair in Toronto.

The retired 19-year-old Standardbred placed second in the bike pull Stakes class at the Canadian championship, his 15th consecutive showing at the Royal.

FREE SKATE

The Acton Fire Fighters Association will collect food for FoodShare on December 10 when it sponsors a public skating session at the Acton arena.

In lieu of regular admission fees, the Fire Fighters hope skaters will donate items of non-perishable food for the food bank.



FIRST PRIZE OVERALL: Limehouse public school's delightful float was first prize overall in the annual Acton Santa Claus parade. The float draws admiring looks as it passes through downtown Acton. The parade, one of the longest if not the longest in years is sponsored by Acton Firefighters' Association with Bill Spielvogel the parade chairman, a post he's held for over 20 years with assistance from wife Diane.

My annual rant - part 8

Yes - friends, it's that time of year again. Time to battle the forces of the dark side and appeal to you to join in the fight to stomp out "festive."

For my new readers I should explain, that for several years this column has been part of a growing army dedicated to calling Christmas what it is. Of all the politically correct names that businesses have tried to force on us over the years, "festive" is the straw that broke the three wise men's camel's back.

This year we celebrate a great victory in our fight, Wal-Mart, the world's largest retailer, has announced they will feature the word "Christmas" in their stores. There will be a Christmas shop in their store selling Christmas trees and other Christmas gifts and goodies.

Wal-Mart even went the next step and will use Christmas in their advertising. Of course, they will also use holiday and season's in ads too but this is truly a breakthrough. Friend, when I heard the news I swear visions of sugarplums danced in my head.

I am not conceited enough to claim this column was first or influential enough to cause a retail giant like Wal-Mart to refocus its Christmas marketing. We are all but small cogs in an irresistible force that is sweeping North America. People are just fed-up with the effort to be considerate of everyone's tender psyches. In the process of trying to please everyone, they end up pleasing no-one. In fact, they are making a great proportion of the population angry.

A word of caution. Christmas people are never rude or confrontational. If however, you are faced with a "festive greetings" sign you should not let the incident pass without comment. I normally say to the clerk or attendant "Thank you for the greetings. Tell me, when is festive this year?"

Invariably the response from

The Way I See It

with
Mike O'Leary



store staff is that "It's Christmas." When I probe further as to why this store doesn't call it Christmas their reply is "We don't want to offend anyone." I tell them nicely that renaming Christmas as festive offends me. Then I leave the premises noting that their advertising offends me and I won't be leaving any of my hard earned money with them. Remember be pleasant, never huffy. Christmas people are always pleasant.

You must remember that retail staff are seldom part of the decision-making group. Christmas is a busy time of year and it does no good to add to the retail staff's stress levels. But you should ask for your comments be passed up to senior levels and be prepared to leave your name and telephone number for an expected call back.

It may cost you a few more minutes and a few dollars more to take your business to a more Christmas oriented store. It is important that you vote with your wallet as well as your verbal objections. Why do you think a huge organization like Wal-Mart changed their marketing focus?

Retailers, restaurants and entertainment establishments exist to give their customs what they want. Wal-Mart didn't have a conversion like Paul on the road to Damascus. I think rather it was on the road to the night deposit. We must keep the pressure up. If more merchants like Wal-Mart see the star over the check-outs you can bet they'll fall in line also.

It is not my intention to insult or offend people of other faiths who do not celebrate Christmas. In fact, senior clerics of Jewish, Muslim and other non-Chris-

tian faiths have all commented that they don't understand why anyone would imagine that the word "Christmas" would offend anyone. Remember the big flap about bureaucrats calling the city's official Christmas tree a Holiday Tree. Then-Mayor Mel Lastman intervened saying of course it's a Christmas tree. His facial expression said it all. "What kind of triple-fool brought this nonsense down on me."

I seldom pick out a specific merchant but I notice the Swiss Chalet/Harvey's chain is up to the same old, same old. Swiss Chalet is promoting their Festive Special again. I will not patronize them until the New Year, which is a real shame. I love their chicken. They are, I believe, a Canadian corporation, which surprises me even more. You'd think they would be supportive of Canada's traditions and heritage.

There is a religious component to Christmas. For many of us it's a celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. For those who don't celebrate in a religious manner you should care about the insidious ongoing attempt to change the name of Christmas

This holiday has been celebrated, under this name, since Canada was first settled. It's nothing less than a direct attack on our tradition and heritage to even attempt to re-name Christmas. To pick something as bland and meaningless as "Festive" as a substitute proves the forces of the dark side have little imagination and no sense of history.

I wish you all a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. I sincerely hope you will pass this greeting on to family, friends and merchants. I hope you will enlist in the growing movement to preserve Christmas. Christmas spirit lives in our hearts, that feeling of peace and love we all enjoy this time of year.

And please remember: Never, ever, use the F-word.