

GRAPEVINE

School Board Info

Halton District School Board will be holding information nights for parents to provide an opportunity to find out more about high school education. These Information Evenings are for parents of students who will attend Grade 9 in September 2008. Discussion topics will include an overview of the Grade 9 program, services for students and diploma requirements. Acton High Schools information night will be on Wednesday, Jan. 16 at 7 p.m. Call 519-853-2920. Georgetown High Schools information night will be on Tuesday, Jan. 15 at 5:30 p.m. Call 905-877-6966.

Safe parking

With winter underway, the Town of Milton is reminding residents to abide by parking regulations on Milton roads during the season. Residents are reminded to refrain from parking their vehicles on roadways during a winter storm, as this can slow down snow clearing operations, impacting not only the residents on that street, but also having repercussions throughout the town.

Library promgramme

Both Acton and Georgetown branches of the Halton Hills Public Library will be offering free programs for little people. Baby Tales is a one-on-one program for infants 6-23 months and their grown-ups. Tales for Twos features songs, stories and fun for 2 year-olds and their grownups. Library Lions Tales is for children 3-5 years old and they attend the program on their own. Register on line at www.library.hhpl.on.ca or call 519-853-0301 or 905-873-2681 ext. 2520.

The Georgetown Branch invites children to enter the annual Lego contest! Bring in your Lego creation by December 29 then come in to vote for your favourites between

December 30 and January 4. Call 905-873-2681 for holiday closures. There are two categories: ages 6 and under and 7 and up.

Like Maria?

The search to find Canada's Maria von Trapp starts January 25, 2008 with a seven-city cross-country audition tour that will culminate in the eight-week CBC Television series *How Do You Solve a Problem Like Maria?* produced Temple Street Productions in association with CBC Television. On this television show the Canadian public will choose who will play the most famous role in musical theatre in a brand new production of the beloved musical *The Sound of Music* (produced by Andrew Lloyd Webber, David Ian and David Mirvish) that will open in October, 2008, at Toronto's Princess of Wales Theatre.

Open casting calls will be held in Toronto on January 25. Location and times will be announced at a later date.

Unusual election

When the Grade 5 class at St. Joseph school held an election for class prime minister little did they know what was in store for them. It was an election promise to help a family in the community at Christmas time.

When Braidyn Vidler won the class election he had to come up with an idea to raise money. With help from teacher, Mrs. Nevins and fellow classmates, they came up with the idea of a used toy sale, with a goal of \$200. The kids in Grade 5 sold their toys and Mrs. Nevin donated Web Kinz to be used for a raffle draw. By the end of the week the Grade 5's had raised almost \$500. Smiles on the children's faces when they seen all the things that their money raised was amazing. They knew that they had done a wonderful thing.

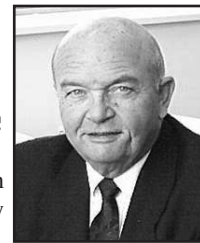


FORGOTTEN BALES: The early December snow sprinkles on top these forgotten hay bails in rural Acton along 22 Side road. - Matthew Reid photo.

Thoughts of Christmas just past

I hope you all had a very Merry Christmas and that you didn't overdo the merry part. At the O'Leary homestead as usual we bar-b-qued our turkey. All our girls made it home with the men in their lives. Mary's brother, Father Foley, rounded out our little gathering.

The Way I See It



with Mike O'Leary

When the children were little Christmas tended to revolve around church and Santa's eagerly anticipated arrival. This year some of our children were unable to join us at mass and then we returned to our house for our traditional Christmas Eve munchies and good conversation.

Our ladies have mostly moved away from home but all of them, thankfully, live less than an hour's travel time away. The sense of disconnections, especially at this time of year, must be hard to take. Even in these days of instant communication nothing can replace looking deep into your children's eyes and seeing firsthand the love reflected there.

That's one of the reasons I decided to run last week's column bringing to your attention the sacrifices our soldiers make to protect our freedom. How long do you think the Taliban would allow a manger scene to be on public display? Freedom to worship as each of us chooses is but one of the freedoms we tend to take for granted.

Whether you agree with our current mission in Afghanistan or not, you owe it to your country to support the soldiers, not only in that troubled land, but stationed at home or around the world. I chose that grainy picture depicted last week to demonstrate our troops act with compassion,

kindness and bravery. Please say a prayer for all of them to return safely home.

While I would hope we keep all our citizens in mind every day, I believe prayers are especially effective at Christmas. Christmas celebrates the birthday of the son of God. As a father myself, I have always found it next to impossible to ignore any request made around my children's birthday. Do you not think a compassionate God would feel the same way?

The music of Christmas has always enthralled me. While some Christmas carols are obviously based on religious beliefs, I have often wondered about some of the other seemingly secular ones. In particular, 12 Days of Christmas? What is that all about? A friend sent me the following explanation:

Few people are aware that the long popular carol "The 12 Days of Christmas" was once a code for Catholics in England who were not allowed to openly, or even privately, celebrate their religion.

Though many assume the 12 days refer to the days prior to December 25 (when those in the Western hemisphere celebrate Christmas) it actually refers to the days between December 25 and the beginning of the Epiphany on January 6. The Epiphany, also known as "Little Christmas,"

is recognized as the day the Three Magi arrived with gifts for Baby Jesus.

As a means to both celebrate and pass on their religious beliefs to their children, Catholics began singing "The 12 Days of Christmas," with each gift bearing some religious significance.

According to Catholic Online, a Web site devoted to providing Catholics with information pertaining to the origins, practices and issues regarding their faith:

- A Partridge in a Pear Tree: Jesus Christ, the son of God.
 - Two Turtle Doves: the Old and the New Testament.
 - Three French Hens: the theological virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity.
 - Four Calling Birds: the four Gospels.
 - Five Golden Rings: the Pentateuch, or the first five books of the Old Testament, all of which dealt with man's fall from grace.
 - Six Geese A-laying: the six days of creation.
 - Seven Swans A-swimming: the seven Sacraments.
 - Eight Maids a-milking: the eight Beatitudes.
 - Nine Ladies Dancing: the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit.
 - Ten Lords A-Leaping: the Ten Commandments.
 - Eleven Pipers Piping: the 11 faithful apostles (excluding the Judas).
 - Twelve Drummers Drumming: the 12 points of doctrine in the Apostle's Creed.
- So, I smile a little bit whenever I hear my supposed atheist friends singing this particular Christmas song. In reality, they are praying along with me. I just don't tell them!



VOLUNTEERS: Kinsmen Claude Nadon, along with Acton High School students working towards their community service hours, sell Christmas trees out of the Hide House parking lot over the holiday season. - Angela Tyler photo.

Science Matters...

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organic carbon at pre-industrial levels, a process which researchers describe as "integral to recovery from acidification." Rather than being an alarming trend, this is a case of nature bouncing back. Of course, what this increase in dissolved car-

bon will mean for the carbon cycle is still unknown.

While we should in no way downplay the environmental challenges we face today, we should also make sure that we recognize good news. In this case, clean air laws helped reduce pollution and acid rain, cre-

ating a situation that looked like more bad news at first, but turned out to be a small flame of hope. It's a reminder that our actions do make a difference and we can still fix things when we try.

Learn more at www.davidsuzuki.org.