

# GRAPEVINE



**Ethel Gardiner**

## Ethel honoured

The late Ethel Gardiner, a former Acton teacher, school board trustee and chair, will have a new Georgetown south elementary school named in her honour.

Halton District School Board trustees selected Gardiner Public School from a shortlist of names collected in suggestion boxes throughout the community.

Gardiner had a lifelong commitment to education in Halton and her career with the Halton Board spanned 40-plus years and included almost two decades of teaching at Robert Little School.

She served as a trustee for Halton Hills from 1995 to 2006, and was chair of the Board for six consecutive terms.

## Shark Boomerangs

Congrats to the Shark Recycle Team at Robert Little School whose all-consuming desire to help the planet garnered a Halton Youth Award for Environmental Excellence from Halton Chair Gary Carr.

The Grade two/three students at Robert Little raise awareness about water and recycling and hold "boomerang lunches," where any garbage brought to the school goes back home with the student. Their cash award of \$500 is sponsored by the Halton District School Board.

Club Green, a Christ the King Catholic Secondary School team also earned an Environmental Excellence award for its environmental awareness programs including the 20 Minute Makeover, Community Clean Up, Earth Day and the Eco-Schools initiative.

Club Green founder Emily Dimytosh, also earned a Halton Environmental Scholarship Award, sponsored by Petro-Canada, to help her study environmental issues at university.

## Baking treats

Overseas missions will benefit from a sale of homemade baking and a soup/sandwich luncheon at Acton's Salvation Army Community Church on May 10.

Doors open at 11 a.m. and the sale/luncheon runs until 2

p.m. at the Corps' Mill Street location.

## Lucky Campbellville

Former Acton spa owner Kristine Cieslok and partner, esthetician Tomke Roeloff, are now pampering people in Campbellville at their newly opened La Ville Salon and Day Spa.

Cieslok developed a loyal clientele at Blue Springs Spa and Salon before selling the Mill Street building and business late last year to former Acton spa owner Darlene Saunders.

## Music break

Acton area artists looking for an audience are invited to submit applications to appear in lunchtime performances at the art galley in the Cultural Centre in Georgetown.

Scheduled on the second Wednesday of every month, the popular performances will continue May 14 with the Henderson-Kolk Duo and on June 11 with guitarist Arash Noori.

Patrons are welcome to bring their lunch to the show.

Interested artists can call the Centre at 905-877-7915, ext. 2517.

## Junior JA

Unfortunately, there was no Junior Achievement Company Program operating for Acton high school students this year, so the May 8 Junior JA year-end awards dinner will feature students only from Georgetown and the rural area.

"We are trying to promote JA in Acton, but we had a really difficult time getting into Acton High School last year...the school was very reluctant to help us recruit students," Jamie Schumacker, president of the Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce, adding they hope to operate the JA program – mentoring students to be entrepreneurs and operate small businesses – out of the Acton Hub at McKenzie-Smith Bennett School next school year.

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In a related story, JA member, Milton student Priscilla Tang is the winner of the \$10,000 national Peter Mansbridge Leadership Award for her demonstrated leadership and community volunteerism.

Tang, who lives on the Fourth Line, will receive her award at the Canadian Business Hall of Fame at an awards dinner in Toronto on May 6.

## Sex assault mentors

A new sex assault intervention program for seniors is looking for women, aged 55-plus, to train as peer mentors for the seniors supporting seniors peer mentoring project.

Orientation is May 7. To register or for more information about Sexual Assault and Violence Intervention Services of Halton programs call 905-825-3622.



**DAFFODIL DAYS:** The ambience surrounding the grounds around the Acton branch of Halton Hills Public Library is never more appealing than in the Spring when the daffodils bloom and flowers in the Memory Garden, over a babbling School Creek, provide many more blends of colours, the work of Acton Horticultural Society. Across Main Street there's another riot of colour as daffodils bloom along the pathway to Rotary Park, again a tribute to the Horticultural Society and the late Max MacSween.

## It's the Year of the Frog

During high school in Ontario, I spent a lot of time at a swamp near my family's home. Smelling the sweet air in spring, listening to the frogs croak, and catching the insects that would become so important to my life and career gave me solace during those lonely years.

As much as insects became my fascination, I've always loved the frogs. These amazing amphibians occupy a crucial place in the natural order. They are both predator and prey, providing food for larger species and keeping insect populations in balance by eating them. If frogs were to disappear, the planet would soon be covered in flies and other insects. I like flies, but not that much!

In fact, frogs are disappearing. Many of us can remember drifting off to sleep to the sound of frogs, but unless we act now, it's unlikely that our children and grandchildren will hear the same lullaby. Scientists estimate that one third to one half of the world's 6,000 known amphibian species could go extinct in our lifetime – including many in Canada. This would be the largest mass extinction since the disappearance of dinosaurs. More than 100 species are already believed to have vanished since 1980.

The situation has become so critical that conservationists and institutions including universities, zoos, and aquariums have named 2008 the Year of the Frog. The motto, "Frogs matter. Jump in" is one we should all take to heart. The more we understand about frogs and the reasons for their disappearance, and the more we all get involved in trying to save them, the more likely we will be to head off this impending disaster.

It's not just the frogs we have to worry about. Biologists consider frogs and other amphibians as "the canary in the coal mine." Because they live in both the aqueous and atmospheric part of the planet, frogs are often the first species affected by environmental problems, and can thus serve as a warning to other species, including ourselves.

One of the main threats to frogs and amphibians around the world is the spread of a fungus called chytrid (kit-rid), but other factors that we can start to address immediately are also threatening amphibians. These include global warming, habitat loss, pesticide use, pollution, invasive species, and even overuse as food or pets.

### Science Matters

By David Suzuki



Dealing with the fungus will be a challenge. Chytrid is thought to have been spread initially by trading in the African clawed frog, which was used for pregnancy tests from 1934 to the 1950s. The fungus has now infected more than 100 species of frogs, killing them in a way that is still baffling scientists. The spores infect the outer layer of skin, but scientists have yet to figure out its mechanism. Ironically, the fungus is not fatal to the African clawed frog.

In an attempt to ensure the survival of frog species most threatened by the fungus, biologists from zoos, aquariums (including the Vancouver Aquarium), and botanical gardens, working with the International Union for Conservation of Nature, set up the Amphibian Ark. Under the program, conservationists have started

gathering threatened frogs to breed and protect in captivity.

There's no guarantee that the scheme will work, but it's worth a try. One of the challenges will be to maintain genetic diversity under such a program. Another big challenge, though, will come when it's time to put the frogs back. Will there even be places left for them to live? And given the crucial role that frogs play in the natural cycle, what will become of those ecosystems while the frogs are away? Global warming is already shifting the areas where species are found, so when it's time to release the frogs, it might not even be realistic to return them to their former homes.

Those are things we can all work to overcome. Some progress has been made. For example, many municipalities and some provinces, such as Quebec, have banned the cosmetic use of harmful pesticides sprayed on lawns and gardens, which threaten frogs and other wildlife. The government of Ontario has announced a similar ban. However, the habitat of frogs and other species are poorly protected when planning and development decisions are made. We can rectify this situation through involvement with conservation groups and by lobbying governments at all levels to implement and enforce laws to protect dwindling frog populations.

Our efforts to slow global warming and to cut down on the waste we produce are also steps that will add up to make a real difference. We must listen to the frogs now, so that our children and grandchildren can enjoy the symphony of their songs as we did in our childhood.