

GRAPEVINE



Literacy mentors needed

Wanted: Patient adult volunteers with a good sense of humour and three hours per week to tutor people who need help with literacy.

Literacy North Halton offers full training to tutors - no experience is necessary.

The organization offers free Read, Spell, Math and basic computer workshops, which require a small registration fee. For more information call 905-873-2200.

Library beckons

It is never too soon to introduce your children to books and there is still time to register for preschool literacy programs that begin in January at the Acton library. Free programming - Baby Tales, Tales for Twos and Library Lion Tales - is offered for kids aged six months to five years.

A family personal identification number and one for each registering child are required. For details call 519-853-0301 or visit www.hhpl.on.ca

Youth dance

Acton youth in Grades 6, 7 and 8 are invited to a Town-run youth dance at the Acton arena/

community centre on January 15.

The chaperoned dance runs from 7:30 to 10 p.m.

Owl prowl

All things owls will be featured at Halton Conservation's Owl Prowl family night on January 16 at the Mountsberg Conservation Area in Milton.

Along with lots of owl information, there will be a night hike in search of owls and participants can get up close and personal with the Mountsberg owls.

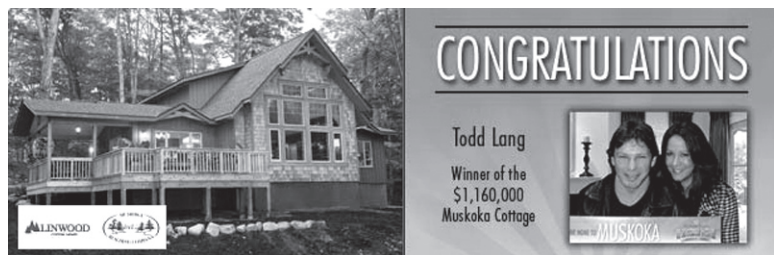
Pre-registration is required for the Owl Prowls at 905-854-2276.

Unity Service

The congregations of all of Acton's churches will join together at the annual Acton Ministerial Association's Unity Service at the Acton Legion on Sunday, January 24. For details call 519-853-2711.

Lottery winner

Congrats to former Acton resident Todd Lang who won the \$1.1-million Muskoka cottage in the Princess Margaret lottery. Lang was the winner of one of over 28,000 prizes in the December 16 draw.



Groaners

We do get some interesting e-mails at *The New Tanner*—especially during the holiday season. Here is part of a list of groaners that one wag suggested we had to know.

- The roundest knight at King Arthur's round table was Sir Cumference. He acquired his size from eating too much pi.
- I thought I saw an eye doctor on an Alaskan island, but it turned out to be an optical Aleutian.
- A rubber band was confiscated from algebra class, because it was a weapon of math disruption.
- A dog gave birth to puppies near the road and was cited for littering.
- A backward poet writes inverse.
- When cannibals ate a missionary, they got a taste of religion.
- A small boy swallowed some coins and was taken to hospital. When his grandmother phoned to check his condition she was told there had been "No change yet."
- Two silk worms had a race – they ended up in a tie.
- The butcher backed into the meat grinder and got a little behind in his work.



AND THE WINNER IS: Past president Margaret Anderson and Marj McDonough are making the draw for the huge seasonal gift hamper at the Acton Seniors Christmas Dinner. The winning ticket was purchased by Sheila Jefferies. The slightly smaller one was won by Dave Cox. – Julie Conroy photo

What do you want for Christmas?

By David Suzuki
with Faisal Moola

Science Matters
By David Suzuki



In much of the Western world, the December festive season has become little more than a celebration of excess and conspicuous consumption. We run around in malls like maniacs as we count the "shopping days" till Christmas, searching for the perfect gifts for everyone we know. We stop briefly to gorge ourselves on turkey and pie, and on the day after Christmas, we rush back to the malls to see what kind of deals we can get.

Now, there's nothing wrong with offering gifts to friends and family, and there's certainly nothing wrong with celebrating those connections with wonderful feasts. Although I'm not a Christian, I love the rituals and family time that come with the holiday season. But it's gotten out of hand. It may be good for the economy, but is it good for our mental health – and is it good for the environment?

What's really important as we celebrate this time of year when longer nights give way to longer days? I had a chance to think about some of these things this month, as I prepared to give what has been called my "Legacy Lecture" in Vancouver and to accept a "Right Livelihood" award in Sweden.

In writing them, I reflected on the values I have learned during my 73 years on Earth. It reaffirmed my belief that our most important need as social animals is love. Everything else flows from this – our commitment to protect the environment so that

our own lives and those of our children and grandchildren will be healthier; our recognition that we are all connected to each other and to the natural world through the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the food we eat; and our belief that all the world's people have a right to justice and freedom.

Whether it's for holy days or the winter solstice – or both – this time of year offers the chance to reflect and to be with people we love. For many people, the solstice symbolizes renewal and rebirth. We should take advantage of this by using the time wisely. And maybe the wisest use of our time is not to run around shopping and stressing, but rather just to spend time with our loved ones and to consider what we can do for this Earth that gives us so much.

To start, we can make the holiday season itself greener. Gift-giving is a tradition with tremendous symbolic value, but rather than giving each other gadgets and gewgaws that end up in the landfill in less than a year, we should put some thought into gifts that are meaningful, and that are preferably made locally and made to last – unless the gift is food or drink, of course, even though some of the Christmas cake I've seen seems like it could last forever! How about recycling something that we've already used, like a good book? You could also consider gifts offered by conservation groups

or other nonprofit organizations that help advance worthy causes, or give a donation in the gift recipient's name.

To me, one of our most important rituals is giving gifts to others who are not as well off as us, either at home or in poorer countries.

Gift wrap and cards also have an impact on the environment. If you must wrap your gifts, save a tree and use recycled paper, gift wrap from previous years, or even newspaper.

Use cards that are made from post-consumer recycled paper – or send e-cards. You can also tear off the fronts of old cards to re-use them, or even forego an envelope and make them into postcards. The David Suzuki Foundation's Queen of Green, Lindsay Coulter, suggests cutting old cards into cool holiday shapes to make excellent gift tags.

Speaking of trees, I'm often asked whether it's better to use real or artificial Christmas trees. A life-cycle assessment study conducted by sustainability research firm ellipsos inc. found that real trees are better for the environment overall than fake trees. In Vancouver, the Carbon-sync organization will even rent you a potted tree that they will deliver and pick up after Christmas and plant, with some of the proceeds going to the Burns Bog Conservation Society.

I'm sure we can all think of ways to make this season a celebration not just of family and friends but of the wonderful Earth that is our home. Have a happy holiday.