

GRAPEVINE



Snowshoe hike

Ever wanted to try snowshoeing but don't have the equipment or the skill? Check out Crawford Conservation Area, which has added two more moonlit snowshoe hikes to its schedule after the initial three events were filled quickly. The new dates are January 22 and February 5 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Each hike begins with basic instructions and some historical background on the sport of snowshoeing. Participants are led on a guided hike through the Crawford Lake woodlands and it ends with a story and hot chocolate by the fireplace.

Crawford Lake is in Milton, five kilometres south of the 401 on Guelph Line.

Mentors needed

There is a waiting list of local students waiting to be matched with in-school mentors and the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Halton is trying to find volunteers willing to give some time and attention to the students.

Anyone interested is asked to attend a volunteer information meeting today (Thursday) at the Halton police station in Georgetown. For more details call 905-878-8840 or visit www.bbbshalton.ca

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Halton are looking for curlers who would like to participate in the annual RBC Curl for Kids Sake bonspiel on February 20 in Oakville.

Money raised – \$30,000 last year – is earmarked for the mentor program. For more information call 905-878-8840.

Victorian Valentine Tea

There will be dainty sandwiches, sweet treats and hot tea – all served on china with

sparkling silverware – at the Victorian Valentine Tea being staged by the Nassagaweya Historical Society.

The event is February 13 at the former SS#7 school at the corner of 15 Side Road and Fifth Line, Nassagaweya. Call 905-854-4827 for ticket information.

Accommodation plan

Parents and community members are invited to have their say on the Halton District School Board's long-term accommodation plan at a series of upcoming meetings.

The accommodation plan deals with the existing and projected accommodation needs of both elementary and secondary school students and identifies new capital projects and the need for new schools. The Acton meeting is February 11 at 7 p.m. in the cafeteria of Acton High School.

Unity service

The congregations of all of Acton's churches are invited to the annual Service of Christian Unity on Sunday (January 24) at 10:30 a.m. at the Acton Legion on Wright Avenue.

All are welcome to the service that includes music led by a worship team and by a brass ensemble and a combined choir. The Acton clergy will share in leading the service and the Reverend Harvey Self, current Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Canada is the guest speaker. For details call 519-853-2711.

Celebrate literacy

All are invited to help the library celebrate Family Literacy Day with a sing-along, story-time and snacks at the Acton and Georgetown branches on January 27 at 7 p.m. Call 519-853-0301 for details.



HOME ICE ADVANTAGE: Lawn chairs and a half shovelled ice surface show that this home made rink on a storm water management pond in the rural estate subdivision under construction on Highway 25, south of 32 Side Road, gets a lot of use, but by who? There are no occupied houses in the development that is under construction. – Frances Niblock photo

Hell on Earth

We were all shocked at the level of devastation suffered by Haiti last week. Prime Minister Harper summed up the feelings of all Canadians when he said that this tragedy is of "an almost unimaginable scale." This is so true. Without being on the ground in Haiti we can't even imagine what the sounds and smells of hundred of thousands of survivors, the dead and the dying are like.

Canada, along with most nations in the world, rushed to send medical supplies, water, food and most importantly medical and logistical experts to the stricken Island. That in itself caused some problems as Haiti does not have the most up to date facilities for handling mass numbers of large aircraft. One plane full of American troops had to circle for over eight hours before being allowed to land.

The fact that Haiti has long been known to be the poorest nation in the western hemisphere only compounds the problem. The massive quake struck without warning, crushing many Haitians whose houses would pancake because of poor construction. Schools and other government buildings also collapsed entombing more innocent people. The scenes I saw reminded me of Beirut after competing armies blasted the hell out of it.

The Canadian government is doing its part. In addition to immediate cash, they are matching dollar for dollar cash donations from ordinary Canadians to recognized charities. Could we do more? Probably, but we have our own people to care for and, in my opinion, we are doing our

The Way I See It

with
Mike O'Leary



part and then some.

For those of you who are religious the only thing left to do is pray. Pray for the victims of this tragedy, pray for the relief workers and soldiers of all nations who have rushed to help. Contribute what you can to a recognized charity. You can count on some despicable person(s) trying to line their own pockets at the expense of those suffering.

There isn't even time to give the dead the dignity of a respectful burial. Many in the cities are loaded into dump trucks and put in mass graves. This is necessary to stem the spread of disease of course. Still, it breaks your heart to see these things happen. These activities are so foreign to most Canadians.

This is the fifth time in recorded history that an earthquake has struck this Island causing substantial damage and loss of life. I can't help but wonder what would happen should an earthquake of this magnitude hit Vancouver, San Francisco or Los Angeles? Would their modern construction methods save lives or would utter chaos reign as it does now in Haiti's cities and villages?

Certainly rescue workers and aid, in massive amounts, could get there faster than it's flooding into Haiti. But all of that is post disaster planning. When faced

with the sheer destructive power of Mother Nature, can any man made object survive intact?

I read last week that a Geologist in Cuba had predicted that a large earthquake would strike the area. He couldn't pinpoint when, just that it would happen. While this man was obviously proven right, there has been so many doom and gloom prophecy's the last decade, his warning may have been written off as just another boy calling wolf.

Even if the Haitian Government had acted on this warning what could they do? Empty the towns and cities and ruin what's left of their already fragile economy. Would the world have rushed aid or would they, and us, have simply said call me when it's over? I fear the latter.

The people of Haiti are not going to abandon their country, of that, I am certain. While there is no sure fire guarantee against the forces of nature, I think that after the humanitarian efforts subside, and the rebuilding process starts, the western world needs to involve its best minds in the reconstruction methods used in Haiti.

I mean no offence to the existing contractors in Haiti. But when I watch a government minister rhyme off the different government buildings that collapsed or are unsafe, I have to think there's a better way to build down there.

Yes, it will be expensive in the short term. But less expensive I think than the current rescue effort, not to mention the human suffering going on now.

I never want to see truckloads of bodies being cart off again.



BUILDING BOOM: After years of inactivity, work is underway on several houses in the Legend Homes rural estate lot subdivision on Highway 25, south of 32 Side Road. Four lots have been sold recently along with this model home. Prices range from \$699,000 to \$896,000. – Frances Niblock photo