

GRAPEVINE



Safe swimming

For the first time this month, the water at the Old Beach in Prospect Park was safe for swimming when tested last Monday. Halton tests the water at seven recreational swimming areas weekly for bacteria levels and then posts the results on a 24-hour hotline.

This is the first time since the testing began June 1 that the water at the Old Beach has been safe. Water quality information is available by dialing 311 or by calling 1-866-442-5866.

Centenary Celebration

The Bank of Nova Scotia will celebrate its 100th anniversary in Acton with an open house on July 28. The milestone party will include a cake, decorations and best wishes from customers and the community.

Summer Sunday School

During July and August, Acton's Knox Presbyterian Church hosts special Summer Sunday School classes for children with the theme of Seaquest, Diving For God's Treasure.

The classes run during the 10:30 a.m. church service and promise a fun-filled and educational summer. For details call 519-853-2360. Reverend Wayne Baswick will be the guest minister on July 4 and July 25, and on July 11 and 18 it will be Reverend Bruce Clendenning.

Owl freedom

A screech owl – found frozen and starving in the middle of winter – has made a complete recovery at the Hawkeye Bird Control south of Acton, and will be set free on July 12.

The female owl will be released in the same area where she was found near 15 Side Road and the Fourth Line, according to Hawkeye owner Dan Frankian who said he can't wait to "toss her up in the air and watch her fly." The Speyside birds of prey rescue centre rehabilitates between 10 and 20 birds each year.



Math master

Congrats to Acton's Chris-

tian Norton who is among the top four per cent of math students across Canada. Norton, a Grade nine student at Acton High School, was one of 32,000 selected students who participated in the Pascal Canadian Mathematics (CMC) Competition at the University of Waterloo.

Norton received a CMC medal and a certificate of distinction from Principal Bert O'Hearn.

In the swim

For those wanting to take an indoor dip on Canada Day – the Acton Pool is holding a leisure/lane swim from 2 to 3:30 p.m. For details call the Acton pool at 519-853-3140.

Youth clinic

Service Canada is hosting a special youth clinic on July 6 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Acton Community Hub at the south end of McKenzie-Smith Bennett School. Applications can be made for new Social Insurance Number cards – bring an original Canadian birth certificate or original proof of Canadian citizenship – and there will also be employment help including resume critiquing, job opportunities and mock interviews.

Fresh air yoga

The popular, and free, Yoga in the Park program offered by Leanne Monaghan of Acton's Staying Alive Fitness begins July 8 in Prospect Park. The seven week sessions are a fundraiser for the Upper Credit Humane Society and participants – all ages and skill levels are welcome – are encouraged to donate pet food, supplies or cash for the Humane Society.

Yoga mats will be available to rent for \$2. Registration begins at 6:30 p.m., and the class runs from 7 to 8 p.m., weather permitting. Last year, over \$1,000 was raised for the Humane Society shelter.

For details call 519-853-2650 or info@stayingalivefitness.com.

Concrete donation

Town Council said thanks to Dufferin Aggregates on Monday for donating \$20,000 worth of coloured concrete for the splash pad in Prospect Park. Dufferin's Andrea Bourrie said they are "thrilled to continue to be involved in community projects" and are looking forward to seeing the happy faces of kids enjoying the new splash pad that will officially open on July 19.



STREET PARTY: A huge crowd braved wet weather to enjoy the third annual Tidey Avenue Lobsterfest on Saturday. – Marie Shadbolt photo

Oily disasters: When will we ever learn?



By David Suzuki
with Faisal Moola

The Gulf of Mexico oil disaster was the worst accidental spill in history. No, not the one getting the headlines today, but the one in 1979 – although the current spill may eventually prove to be larger. Those of us old enough to remember may be experiencing déjà vu.

On June 3, 1979, a blow-out preventer failed on the Ixtoc I drilling platform off the coast of Mexico. The well was owned by Mexico's state oil company, Pemex, but the drilling was being done by Sedco, which later became Transocean, owner of the Deepwater Horizon rig where the current disaster is unfolding.

As with today's crisis, the experts tried to control the 1979 spill with a number of methods, including booms, dispersants, placing a giant metal "top-kill" dome over it, and plugging it with garbage and cement. None of these techniques worked then, and they aren't working now. The Ixtoc spill went on for more than nine months, spewing between 477 million and 795 million litres of oil that washed up on the coasts of Mexico and the U.S. It wiped out fishing along the Mexican coast for years and harmed and killed sea turtles, dolphins, birds, and other animals.

In the end, the Ixtoc spill was stopped when Pemex drilled two relief wells and pumped mud and steel balls into the well. BP is drilling relief wells

at the Deepwater Horizon site but expects to take up to three months to complete them.

The main differences between the two spills are that no one died in the Ixtoc disaster, whereas 11 people were killed in the Deepwater Horizon blow-out, and the Ixtoc well was being drilled in 49 metres of water, while the Deepwater Horizon was more than 1,500 metres deep.

It makes you wonder if we'll ever learn. In Canada, oil companies are drilling a well off the coast of Newfoundland that is even deeper than the BP well in the Gulf. Oil companies are also gearing up to drill in Arctic waters, and the B.C. government has been putting pressure on the federal government to lift bans on drilling and oil tanker traffic off the West Coast.

These spills are just a visual reminder of the damage that our fossil-fuel addiction wreaks on the environment every day. After all, if the oil weren't being spilled, it would eventually be burned, spewing carbon emissions into the atmosphere.

Environmental havoc is only one reason to conserve energy and switch to cleaner energy. Security is also a crucial issue when it comes to global oil supplies. From the costly war in Iraq to the instability of some of the main oil-producing countries, we're seeing increasing problems with our reliance on this ever-more-scarce energy resource.

Some people argue that's a reason to increase supplies from domestic sources by expanding production in the tar sands, extracting oil from shale, and

drilling more off our own coasts – but that's an absurd argument. Any one of these leaves us open to more environmental damage from spills and pollution during drilling, extracting, and transporting. In fact, a study led by the University of Alberta's David Schindler and published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Science found that pollution from the Alberta tar sands into the Athabasca River and its tributaries is equivalent to a major oil spill every year.

We don't seem to be good at learning from the past. No matter what the technology or energy source, whether it's fossil fuels or nuclear, we must be prepared for the worst-case scenario before we proceed. That's because, no matter how minimal the risk, the consequences of an accident, as we've seen from the Gulf of Mexico to Chernobyl, can be calamitous.

One thing we know for certain is that relying on diminishing supplies of fossil fuels for our energy needs has serious consequences for the environment, human health, the economy, and our security. And yet governments still continue to subsidize what U.S. TV host Rachel Maddow correctly referred to in a show comparing the two spills as "the most profitable industry the universe has ever seen."

Let's prove that we can learn. We need to conserve energy and we need to tell our governments that it's time to start the shift to a clean-energy economy and to keep the oil wells and tankers away from our waters.

Learn more at:
www.davidsuzuki.org.

What's Your Beef?

Put it in a letter to the Editor!