

GRAPEVINE



New hours

Beginning Sunday (September 12) Sobeys will scale back its hours and will no longer be open 24-hours-a-day. The new hours will be from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m., at least for now.

"We may change that to 6 a.m. to 12 p.m., depending on the needs of the business and our customers," said Acton Sobeys manager Mark Latimer on Saturday, adding the change was a corporate decision.

He said there are at least 20 Sobeys stores that are changing their hours from around the clock opening. He said the Acton store is "not exceptionally busy" in the early morning hours, although they have some regulars, including shift workers.

He said the change would not affect any staff – the night cashier will continue with another job during her shift and the regular overnight shift will remain as is.

"Anyone with questions or concerns can speak to me in person or call the store," Latimer said.

"Safe Start"

For the next week, Halton police will focus on a high enforcement, educational traffic program that highlights the five "S's" including: speeding, seatbelts, stop signs, school zones and school buses. Police said the campaign is "vital" at this time of the year as children head back to school. Police will also enforce the Distracted Driver legislation – no cell phones while driving without a hands-free device.

Cancer prevention

Working with the Canadian Cancer Society and Well-spring, Halton Healthcare is hosting a healthy living public education seminar dealing with prostate cancer. The event is slated for September 21 at Oakville-Trafalgar Hospital. Call 905-878-2383 for details about the free event.

Safe to swim

Acceptable levels of bacteria allowed Halton health officials to post the Old Beach in Prospect Park as safe for swimming last week – the final water sampling test done for this summer.

Old time vaudeville

Footlight Follies – a fast-paced fun show with comedy, songs and audience participation – will be staged at the Century Church Theatre in

Hillsburgh on September 24 and 25 with the final show of the summer season on September 26. For details call the box office at 519-855-4586 or visit www.centurychurch-theatre.com

Fall jazz

From gypsy jazz to klezmer to jazz standards and a harmonica trio, the monthly jazz concert series at the Hearth room at the Halton Museum begin on Sunday (September 12) with Sitar Django.

The jazz series is a fundraiser for the Museum Foundation. For ticket information call 905-875-2200, ext. 27 or visit www.halton.ca/museum.

Brunch time

If the monthly Community Brunch is on your calendar – change the date for this month as the Kinette Club of Acton has switched the date to Sunday, September 19 to take place during Acton Fall Fair weekend.

The Brunch, designed to foster community spirit and help raise money for local non-profit groups, features an all-you-can-eat buffet for \$6. Pre-schoolers eat free.

The Brunch, at the Acton arena/community centre, runs from 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. The next brunch is October 31.

Chair Yoga

Want to enjoy the benefits of yoga, but don't want to have to twist yourself into a pretzel? Why not try Chair Yoga – a new program being offered at the Acton Seniors Centre, beginning September 21 from 11 a.m. to 12 p.m.?

Trained instructor Margaret Taylor, the Town's new Active Living Coordinator, said chair yoga is as beneficial as traditional yoga, both physically and psychologically, and it helps build both physical and emotional strength while increasing circulation and flexibility.

For details call 905-873-2601, ext. 2360.

RWTO is calling

All retired women teachers who live in the Acton, Georgetown or Milton areas are invited to join the Lydia Snow North Halton Branch of the Retired Women Teachers of Ontario (RWTO) that meets monthly for "Sharing, Caring and Having Fun."

The first meeting on September 21 includes a visit from a local author followed by a luncheon. For details call Liz at 519-853-0585.



FALL ARRIVES EARLY: The cool and rainy weather on Saturday made the Splash Pad a wash-out. The place where local kids have beat the heat all summer was a dry-zone over the Labour Day Weekend as the sprinkler system was shut-off for the season. – Denise Paulsen photo

Our obsession with private automobiles

By David Suzuki
with Faisal Moola

Science Matters

By David Suzuki



Are we driving ourselves into oblivion? Or will new automobile technology save us from the environmental impact of the fossil-fuelled tanks we use to get around?

On the extreme end of the consequences of our auto-centric societies, we need only to look at the recent massive traffic jam in China that stretched for 100 kilometres and lasted almost two weeks. Apparently it's becoming a common occurrence in China, where use of the private automobile and truck transport are increasing.

On the brighter side, automobile technology has improved a lot over the past few years, partly in response to stricter fuel-emissions standards in countries including Canada and the U.S. But is it enough? We've had commercially available hybrid cars now for more than a decade, but they still use fossil fuels. Electric-car technology is picking up, but it doesn't resolve all of the issues, especially as the electricity still must come from somewhere, and in many places, that means coal-fired power plants. Car manufacturing is also energy-intensive.

To resolve some of these issues, an Alberta company has developed an electric car made out of hemp fibre. Beyond reductions in fossil-fuel use to power the car, the materials used to manufacture it are also more sustainable. Hemp grows easily outdoors with little water or pesticides, and it can be used in lightweight but durable composites to build the cars.

One invention that partly

avoids the problem of charging electric car batteries using electricity sources that may contribute to greenhouse gas emissions is U.S. inventor Charles Greenwood's inexpensive HumanCar. It can operate as an exercise-based, human-powered vehicle or a plug-in hybrid electric. Power can be generated by one to four people who "row" the car. It can reach speeds of up to 100 kilometres an hour. Of course, it has its drawbacks, especially as one must be pretty healthy to operate it.

Cars powered by solar cells and hydrogen are also being developed, along with cars that use alternatives to fossil fuels, such as ethanol or biodiesel.

The need for solutions is obvious. Cars not only contribute to air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, but they also cause water pollution from fuel-storage leaks, improper disposal of oil, and runoff from roads that washes into rivers, lakes, and oceans. Noise pollution, death from road accidents, and the impact of cars on the shape of urban environment are all issues as well.

Technological developments are welcome, but maybe it's time we started rethinking our car culture as whole. The average car in North America carries 1.5 people, which means that most cars on the road only have a driver in them. Is it really efficient to use more than 1,000 kilograms of metal to transport 100 kilograms of human?

And, as an article on The Mark News website argues: "Requir-

ing about 90 square metres for home storage, 90 square metres for storage at destination, 180 square metres while traveling and another 60 square metres for repairs, servicing, or sale, an automobile occupies more than 400 square metres altogether – more space than most apartments."

Using a life-cycle analysis, which takes into account manufacture and disposal, as well as operation, you find that cars are inefficient products.

We aren't likely to do away with private cars in the near future, especially in rural areas with low population density. But we can at least start to think differently about our "need" for them. That means improvements to public transit, urban design that is less car-centric, and other innovative ideas to reduce our reliance. Walking and cycling when possible is also great, and it improves health.

When we must drive, we should try to use cars that are fuel-efficient, and drive in ways that cut down on fuel use, such as combining trips and shutting the car off rather than idling when stopped.

Even in China, it's not all bad news. Although car culture is growing, the use of electric bikes is exploding. In 2008, people in China bought 21 million e-bikes, compared to 9.4 million autos. China now has 120 million electric bikes on the road, up from about 50,000 a decade ago.

We take our cars for granted, but really, they haven't been a part of our human culture for that long, and they needn't be an essential part forever.

Learn more at www.davidsuzuki.org.