

OFFICERS PASSIONATE ABOUT PROACTION, SAYS MILLEN

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da.”
A ProAction Halton Council made up of local community members has been established to oversee the Halton chapter of ProAction Cops & Kids.

So far this council has succeeded in fundraising \$40,000 to pay for Halton programs throughout the year.

Council chair and Burlington resident David Milten said the real strength of ProAction is the passion of the officers involved.

He said in Ontario the charity has reached more than 410,000 people and established 2,100 programs.

Currently three ProAction programs designed by local police officers have been established in Halton including:

- Gearing Up, a cycling program, which is teaching 15 Burlington youth the importance of cycling skills and safety.

- Girls with Confidence, a program in which female officers work to prepare around 15 girls to run December's five kilometre Santa Claus Run in Burlington.

The program is intended to help female youths bond and develop relationships with female officers in an effort to build youth confidence and give them someone they can talk to



Halton Police Chief Stephen Tanner speaks during launch of ProAction Cops & Kids Halton Chapter.

David Lea/Metroland Media photo

when confronted by difficult issues.

- A program involving a partnership with the Halton Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) support group in which officers spend five weeks with youths who have FASD, engaging in various activities like horseback riding and mini-putting.

Patrol Const. Matt Baker talked about Gearing Up.

He noted some of the activities carried out so far have included demonstrating the ability of helmets to

save lives through an egg drop and teaching younger children how to ride a bike.

One child named Ryan, who is originally from Syria, was initially afraid of Baker and authority figures in general, but eventually accepted cycling lessons from him.

By the end of the lesson Ryan was able to cycle on his own without support.

“Ryan had a big smile on his face. I think I had a bigger smile. I went home that night beaming and told my wife and kids. It takes you

right back to teaching your own kids and to when you learned to do that,” said Baker.

“To be able to give back to the community and do that in this role is amazing. I wish more officers could experience this because we do unfortunately see some of the worst things that are out there and it is nice to balance things every now and then and remember why we got into this profession.”

The participating youths are found through

the outreach efforts of local officers.

The audience also heard the story of Courtney, an at-risk Durham youth who was helped by that area's ProAction chapter.

“Before I got into all this I was skipping school, I was experimenting with drugs I guess you could say, I was partying.

“I had my set group of friends and everyone else could just go away. I was just really close minded from the world and the reality of things. I wasn't the

nicest kid I guess you could say,” said Courtney.

“My guidance councillor told me to look into the ProAction program. She said I'd get to go on a whitewater rafting trip and a dogsledding trip with a group of officers and other students. I didn't want to do it. I didn't want to go on a trip with a bunch of police officers. I didn't think it was going to be fun, but I talked to her a little bit and decided the whitewater rafting aspect would be cool.”

Courtney described that first ProAction trip as the best thing she ever did and stuck with the program.

She eventually signed on to become a team leader with the program and is currently looking forward to attending college so she can become a health inspector.

Courtney talked about where she thinks her life would be if she didn't get involved with ProAction.

“Not in a good spot,” she said.

“I was getting into some pretty scary drugs. I might not even be here today. I definitely wouldn't be going to college. That was not in my mindset of the things I wanted to do.”

For more information about the Halton ProAction Chapter or to donate contact Sgt. Dave Tutte at 905-825-4747 ext. 8992 or dave.tutte@haltonpolice.ca or <https://www.copsandkids.ca/chapters/halton/>.

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