

Octagon youth bring fresh faces to the Manor



Happy helpers. Janet Hobley, left, and Pam Tiffin wheel Miss Connie McSweeney back to her room after enjoying a birthday celebration at the Halton Centennial Manor.

By Jo Ann Smith
Dozens of senior citizens sit motionless and expressionless—some strapped in wheelchairs. Vacant stares suddenly vanish and smiles creep onto their faces as a young person approaches and stops for a chat.

In Milton, the chances are this caring young person belongs to the Octagon Club, which as a junior branch of the Optimist Club, seeks to serve the community.

Pam Tiffin, 17, President of the club since last November, has plunged the group of 21 young people headlong into numerous projects. "It used to be the only thing the club did was put a float in the Christmas parade."

"We want to do more things and we are always looking for more ideas of what we can do," said Pam.

Although Pam almost makes it sound as if her group is relatively inactive, but they have so far donated 30 Christmas poinsettias to residents of the Halton Centennial Manor; bought weights and bench presses for the Optimist Drop-in centre; donated \$200 to girls minor hockey; held dances to raise money and plan to help at a rummage sale being held at the drop-in.

Of all the projects the Octagon Club tackles, by far the favorite is the time spent visiting senior citizens at the Manor.

Members of the Octagon Club go to the Manor at least once a month to talk with older people. They also help out at Manor social events and take residents to the socials.

Janet Hobley, secretary and Community Director of the Octagon Club heard about the need at the Manor through her mother who works there.

"Some of the people don't get to the socials unless we bring them over."

"A lot of them don't have any family to visit them. They just like to hold your hand, smile and say hello," Janet said.

Janet speaks affectionately of one 94-year-old man who she

describes as "the sweetest gentleman I have ever met." He treats Janet much like his own granddaughter and his eyes light up when she approaches him.

Peggy Odehnal, Activities Co-ordinator at the Manor has nothing but praise for the Octagon members.

"They're a great bunch of kids."

"If it wasn't for these kids I wouldn't have any help."

"The very first time they came they acted as if they'd been here 10 years."

"They take hold right away and have everything under control."

"No matter what you want—they're right there to help," she said.

The Octagon members are planning to hold a fashion show Tuesday, April 28 at the Optimist Centre to raise money for other projects.



Taking time to care. Darlene Johnson stops for a chat with Manor resident Mrs. Harriet Godley. As an Octagon member Darlene visits the Manor once a month to help with activities.

Town-workers near accord

Milton and its 27 outside workers are "very close" to an agreement on a new contract according to Mayor Gord Krantz.

Mr. Krantz said Friday the town and members of Local 636 are "not far apart" in a contract which deals with salaries and benefits.

He did not say what the term of the new contract will be but they have been two-year contracts in the past.

Be a friend to the mentally retarded

For many mentally retarded adults living in group homes such as Countryside, on Trafalgar Road near Steeles, meeting people and making friends is not an easy task.

"Be a Friend", a new program planned by the North Halton Association for the Mentally Retarded may change this for mentally handicapped adults with the help of local volunteers.

The "Be a Friend" program needs volunteers to become involved with mentally handicapped adults on a one to one sustained basis. Volunteer roles include providing emotional support, friendship helping the adults become more involved in community life and acting as an informal support and helper in day to day activities. They may also be involved in practical assistance with budgeting, housekeeping, socializing or helping them to learn new skills.

The volunteer acts to assist the handicapped person to live as fully satisfying and typical life as possible by helping the handicapped person to meet his or her needs on a personal basis," said Patti Wilson, director of residential services.

Wilson said they are hoping to get 16 volunteers for those living at the Hornby residence as well as volunteers for the four men now living in apartments as part of the auxiliary program in Georgetown.

Barbara Abray, co-ordinator for the program said the volunteers' involvement may be as little as once a month or as often as twice a week. Abray stressed it does not require specialized skills to become involved in the program. Sheridan College is offering a free training session designed to teach volunteers more about their role with the handicapped.

Wilson said with Countryside situated in somewhat of an isolated spot and with most of the adults working at ARC Industries during the day their contact with other people is limited and often their only friends are paid staff.

Anyone wishing to learn more about the program can attend an information night Wednesday, April 8 at 7:30 p.m. at the office of the Association for the Mentally Retarded, 9 Wesleyan Street or call Patti Wilson at 877-0440 or Barbara Abray at 877-7702. "This is a chance for the people of North Halton to get involved helping a mentally retarded adult to live a fuller life," Abray said.

Renovations are passed

Council has authorized Halton Centennial Manor Administrator Jack Charlton to "immediately" call tenders for everything needed to start phase one of the Manor food service operation.

The total cost is \$189,965 of which the region will pay half and the remaining \$94,982 will come from the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

The region had set aside \$113,300 in a reserve fund for kitchen renovations.

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