



Champion

COMMUNITY *Page*

Milton Downtown Core New downtown GM has plenty of ideas

"With so many beautiful old Victorian-style buildings in downtown Milton, I'd like to move in a tourist direction."

DARLENE ANN WASILKOWSKY

By **STEVE LeBLANC**

Special to The Champion

Darlene Ann Wasilkowsky will draw on the past to maximize the downtown business core's future.

The former Town of Milton special events coordinator said she's always had a lot of ideas on how to improve downtown business. As the new general manager of the Milton Downtown Business Improvement Area (DBIA), she'll now have the chance to put those ideas into action.

"There are two ways you can enhance a downtown business area. One is to modernize and the other is to make it into a tourist area," said Ms Wasilkowsky. "With so many beautiful old Victorian-style buildings in downtown Milton, I'd like to move in a tourist direction."

Ms Wasilkowsky took over the DBIA general manager position earlier this month. The job had been vacant since late February when Anthony Allwood resigned amid controversy.

DBIA chairman Bill Sinclair refused to comment on Mr. Allwood's departure, or on the Milton group's efforts to prevent a similar situation in the future.

He did however, say that Ms Wasilkowsky's credentials and outgoing personality make her ideal for the job.

"Darlene's a go-getter. Her experience as a special events coordinator is one of the main reasons the hiring committee selected her. She also has a firm grasp of the technical end of the job," Mr. Sinclair explained.

More than a little eager to convince the committee members, Ms Wasilkowsky didn't wait for an interview but went to the DBIA's April 11 meeting and made her "sales pitch" public.

"The job was right down my alley and I wanted to take a different approach in announcing my intentions.



Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

New DBIA general manager Darlene Wasilkowsky says she has a lot of plans to bolster commerce and revitalize Milton's downtown core.

When you want something bad enough, you have to go after it full-throttle," Ms Wasilkowsky said.

She beat out a dozen other candidates and survived three rounds of cuts. While the position has now been restricted to part-time employment, she feels that will change once action has been taken.

"Business owners want action now, as well as to be kept informed about upcoming events. You have to give these people plenty of notice, and I'll be doing that through a regular newsletter.

"I'll also visit each business twice a month, something I don't think was being done."

Her most pressing task will be organizing the annual Moonlight Magic event, slated for Friday, June 20 from 7 to 11 p.m. along Main and Martin Street.

She's also hoping to reintroduce a summer concert series in the area. She had organized such yearly events with the town until budget cuts stopped the music last year.

Ms Wasilkowsky said her track

record as the town's special events coordinator was a successful one, from both a promotions and financial aspect. "I was never over budget and on many occasions under," she said. Her employment background also includes two years as credit manager with the Toronto Auto Auction.

One of her long-term goals is to convert a portion of Main Street, from James Street to Martin Street, into a court where tourists and local shoppers can stroll about without passing motorists with which to contend.

This would further strengthen downtown Milton's position as a tourist community, she said. Her plan would include a switch to rear-store parking, which she believes would be more accommodating anyway.

Ms Wasilkowsky also hopes to erect a map of Milton in the downtown business core outlining the community's various features including retail stores, restaurants and conservation sites as well as coming events.

"Another idea I have is to get old photos of each business (from local historian Jim Dills) and put them up in the

store windows. Tourists love that kind of thing and it would help connect the town with its past."

She said the DBIA needs to take advantage of the town's tourist appeal — especially with the Ontario Renaissance Festival now in place.

"We don't promote Milton enough as a thriving tourist community. It's fine to want to maintain a small-town feel, just as long as it doesn't turn into a ghost town."

In terms of downtown beautification, one of the DBIA's mandates, Ms Wasilkowsky plans on replacing the wooden planters with stonework, and adding hanging baskets with flowers.

"The key is to get everyone involved, whether it's through major beautification or something as simple as a new paint job. It's the overall look of an area that tourists will remember and if a few buildings are run down it effects them all.

"We also need the DBIA, the Chamber of Commerce and the Town of Milton to work as a unit.

"This is essential for the betterment of Milton."

Milton Festival celebrates children's literature

Children's author Robert Munsch brings his storytelling talent to Milton's second annual literary festival on Sunday, June 1.

"I Love to Read: Milton's Literary Festival for Children" is a celebration of children's literature featuring authors, illustrators and storytellers. The fun continues from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. with Mr. Munsch's performance at noon.

Presentations by the 15 festival participants are scheduled throughout the day at various locations within Bishop Reding Secondary School in Milton.

In addition to being entertained, visitors can shop at displays by booksellers and have books signed by their creators. And what festival would be complete without clowns, face painters and food?

The festival is cosponsored by Milton Public Library, the Town of Milton and Milton Community and Information Services. Last year's event attracted thousands of families and organizers are confident this year's edition will have equal success in promoting Canadian talent and encouraging families to read together.

Admission is \$5 per adult, \$2 for students over 12, children 12 and under free when accompanied by an adult. Tickets available at the door or in advance from the Milton Public Library, Milton Leisure Centre, Milton Town Hall, Smith Books (Milton Mall) and Halton Hills Public Library.

For information call 875-4636 ext. 113.

Welcome to the Bavarian Chalet Banquet Hall & Catering

SUNDAY BRUNCH

Over 50 Items featuring
HOT ROAST BEEF

\$12.95 Adults

Children Half Price

324 Steeles Avenue East, Milton • Call 878-7934 for Reservations



Great Lunch & Dinner Specials
Tuesday thru Saturday

SPRING ICE STOCK DANCE

MAY 24, 1997

Dinner Specials Live Entertainment

Admission: \$10.00



All proceeds towards the Milton Ice Stock Athletic Club.

