



Champion

COMMUNITY Page



Increasing volunteer base key to meeting a lofty goal

By KAREN SMITH
The Champion

Poverty, hunger, domestic violence, isolation, family crisis and despair — all of these are present in Milton today.

They have faces — children and youth, the elderly, women and men of every background and occupation. Their numbers are growing and their situations are getting worse.

The future doesn't look much brighter. Local social service agencies that treat these problems are still trying to adjust to major provincial government funding cutbacks over the last couple of years, and further chops are on the way.

Regional government has confirmed it will phase out its existing social service grants program over either a two or three-year period.

The Region intends to reinvest the funds released into community initiatives in support of Halton's new goals.

The plan is based on the principle that regional government should finance services and functions that are not eligible for core funding from other levels of government.

That's where the United Way of Milton — the agencies' main source of funding next to government grants — is stepping in.

"The United Way of Milton is transforming itself to meet this challenge," said Bob Wallace, who is co-chairing the organization's annual fundraising campaign with his wife Judy for the second year.

"The new United Way has a compelling cause and a clear vision. All we need is help from the community."

This year's campaign was kicked off Saturday at Milton's Executive Fairways Golf Centre, where fundraising golf and mini-putt tournaments were held.

It was also the opportune time for the United Way to announce its 1997 \$260,000 fundraising goal, which has been set \$10,000 higher than the \$250,000 target last year, when \$237,000 was collected.

"We tried to be somewhat conservative," Mr. Wallace said. "We had a concern about coming up with a goal too aggressive and turning people off."

But even the 1997 goal doesn't represent all of the demands on the United Way for funding, Mr. Wallace said. With government cutbacks especially, there isn't enough money to accommodate all agencies' requests.

On average, about 25 local agencies annually receive United Way funding for specific programs,

but the amounts and client base change according to need.

As economic times change, so does the United Way. The organization is undergoing restructuring at the board level to better support fundraising efforts.

And more organization is in the works to prepare United Way chairpersons for their leadership roles.

This is all leading up the United Way's plan to double its collection of funds, as well as the number of agencies it serves, over the next three to four years.

But it can only do so with a major increase in its volunteer base, which currently sits at about 450 people, Mr. Wallace said.

Other areas of improvement will surround achieving more donor designations.

Support is lost when Milton residents who work out of town fail to designate their United Way contributions, made through their employer, back to their own community, he said.

More work must also be done in letting Miltonians know that the money they donate stays in the community.

"Donors are often surprised to hear that their money is given to local agencies only," Mr. Wallace said.

Overall, Milton's fundraising figure is impressive. More than \$2 million has been allocated by the United Way to community programs and services since 1982.

Other fundraising events in the 1997 campaign will include the seventh annual dinner and auction September 26 at Granite Ridge Golf Course and the new Christmas House Tour November 15.

The door-to-door canvassing campaign at urban homes will be conducted over a seven-day period from October 5 to 11, instead of the traditional one-day blitz.

"I think the campaign is looking good. We're optimistic," Mr. Wallace said. "I think we're going to do well with special events."

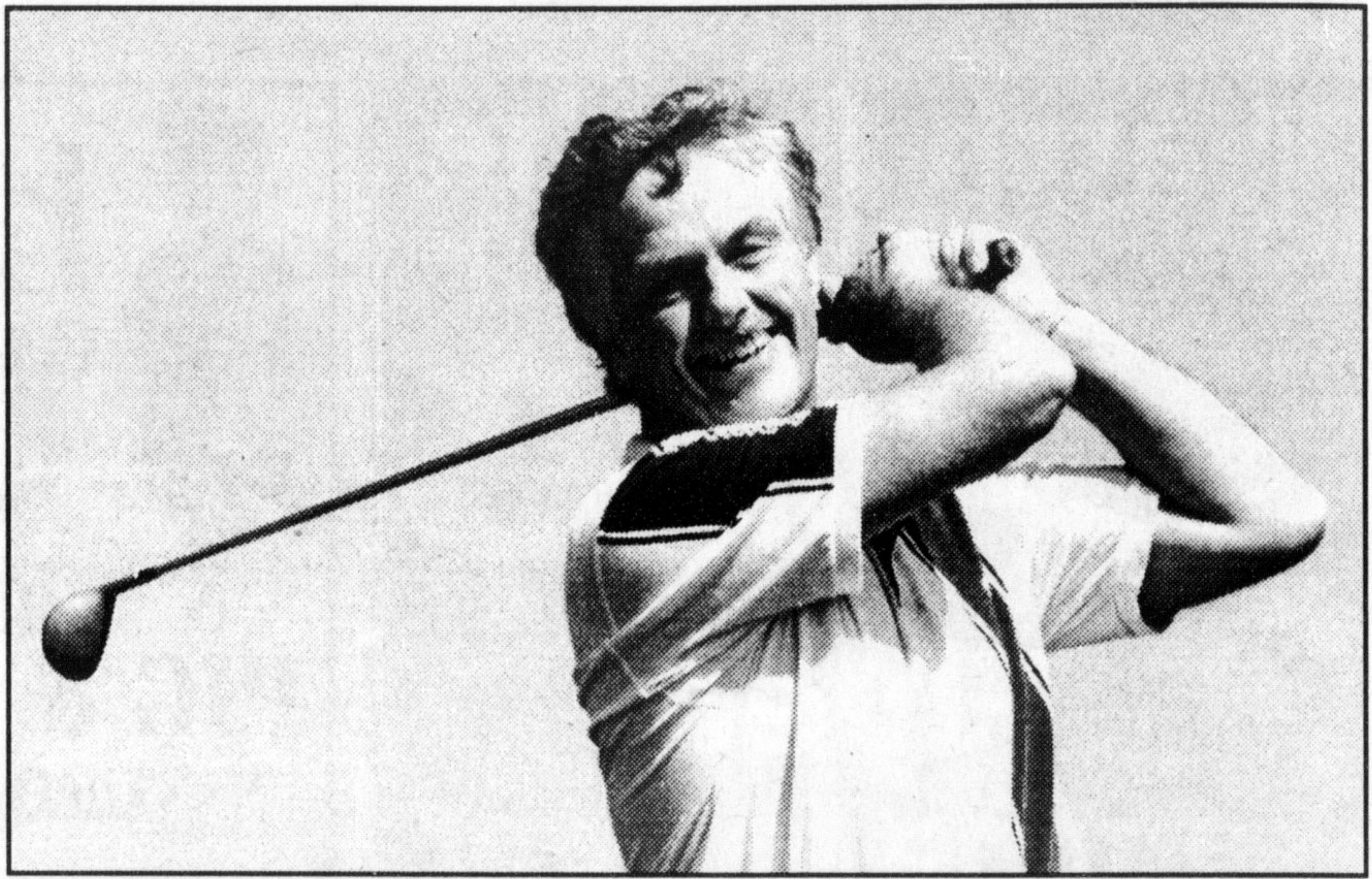
But increasing the volunteer base will be the key to future expansion.

"We must engage the whole community," said Anne Eadie, United Way executive director.

"We need men and women from every occupation, all ages and backgrounds.

"There is work to be done on the board of directors, on the many parts of the campaign and on the committees which deal with communication, recruitment and training of volunteers, finance and allocation of funds to the agencies."

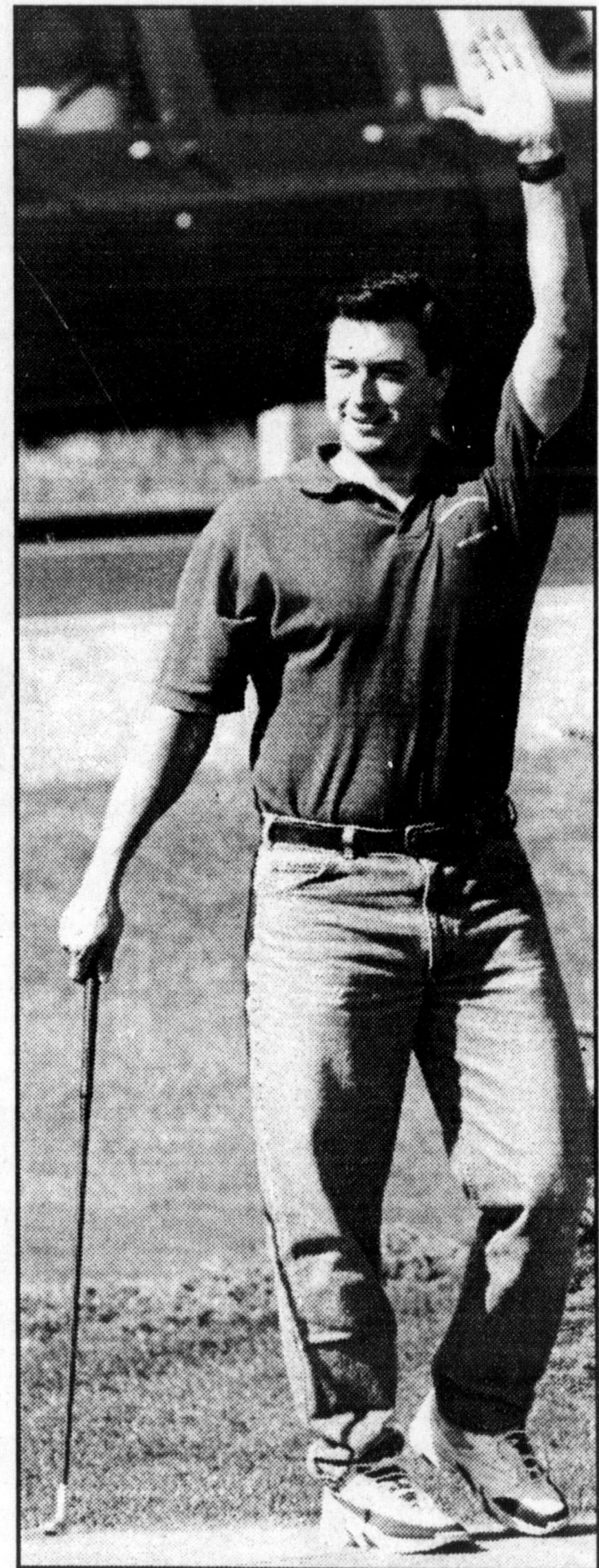
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Photos by GRAHAM PAINE



United Way of Milton president Peter Ramsden (top) is leading the organization's restructuring initiatives to meet future social services funding challenges. Here, though, he takes a shot during the United Way's golf and mini-putt tournaments Saturday. Also participating was Brian Schultz, who celebrated sinking a mini-putt. Volunteers are more important than ever to the group.



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