



Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Splash works

Nine-year-old Emily Irvine has a whale of a time with baby-sitter Danielle Milette as the two splash away a summer afternoon in the shallow waters of Kelso.

Free calling to Guelph, maybe even beyond

By BRAD REAUME
The Champion

Long distance telephone calls to Guelph can now be made for free.

The catch is, after calling 853-1314 people must listen to a short ad message, and then call the number of their choice.

The duration of each call is unlimited.

John Stix, vice-president of Ad-Tel Communications, has set up 50 similar long distance calling centers which utilize rules allowing calls to be passed through a single long distance boundary. Canadian Radio and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) regulations do not allow calls to hop across more than one long distance border.

Mr. Stix arranges a sponsor for the calls, allows that sponsor to include a short commercial message, and then organizes the calls through a central telephone number.

In the case of calls between Milton and Guelph the number is in Acton.

Thus any number which is a local call from Acton becomes a local call from Milton if the caller first connects with the Acton line.

Mr. Stix said that he first began the business with partner Jody Schnarr about four years ago.

Currently the sponsorship of the Milton-Guelph line is locked up for six months by a paging company.

"The next stage is to try to link it all together," said Mr. Stix.

"We have developed a way to channel calls through the internet on a phone-to-phone basis."

He said his company can avoid paying

long distance charges through such a system. He expects to launch the new service in about a month and make it available locally in the fall.

Currently Mr. Stix said he pays Bell for a certain number of telephone calls. If demand increases beyond that number he usually renegotiates with his sponsor to cover the costs.

In the event a sponsor leaves, Mr. Stix said he keeps the service open long enough to get a new sponsor. So far, he claims, he has not had difficulty getting them.

Average call 10 minutes

Mr. Stix said Bell Canada statistics indicate the average long distance call lasts 10 minutes.

Take those 10 minute calls, at 15 cents a minute multiplied by the 6,000 phone calls per day many of his long distance lines handle, and communities are saving as much as \$9,000 per day or \$270,000 a month.

According to Mr. Stix, this is spending money that stays in communities.

"Most people can't believe it's free," Mr. Stix said, though he admits there is a non-monetary cost.

"The real cost is a few seconds of your time."

Mr. Stix explained that his company is still expanding in Ontario, trying to get all the local calling zones tied together. He said he would investigate the Milton to Hamilton zone next.

He said his company is also well along the process necessary to enter the same market in Florida.



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