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# Weekend Champion



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Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Friends volunteer Monica Nowak spends a little quiet time with eight-year-old Michael Giles in the library of Holy Rosary school. See story below.

## It's nice to have 'friends', these kids are discovering

By IRENE GENTLE

The Champion

Little Michael Giles has a new friend. Since October, the fine-boned Holy Rosary student with close-cropped brown hair and energy to spare has been the recipient of a mentoring initiative called Friends.

The idea is to reach out to kids who may have self-esteem issues and pair them with an older friend for

some one-on-one attention.

"These are not the problem, acting out kids who are getting into trouble," said Diane Salter of Halton's Children's Aid Society (CAS). "These are shy kids who maybe have difficulty making friends. School isn't always a happy place for them."

To make it better, the kids are matched with a volunteer, who has undergone everything from a police

• see MISS on page 8

## Snow clearing means a big tab for the taxpayers

By IRENE GENTLE

The Champion

As the snow from the major storm of 1999 melts into water, more than the ground may be soaked.

A review into snow policy has revealed that a storm that began January 2 and dumped 40 cm. of snow on Milton in 48 hours has lightened Town coffers by about \$186,000.

That figure includes about \$79,500 in contracting costs. Of the remaining \$107,000, about \$31,000 will be recoverable from Halton Region, Milton council was told recently.

The policy review came at the request of Councillor John Challinor after the biggest snowfall in 30 years resulted in councillors fielding a flurry of calls regarding snow clearing.

Though Jennifer Reynolds, the acting director of public works went out of her way to praise the Town's snow removal team, she admitted there were a few glitches along the way.

Slow snow removal on streets such as Woodward and Childs were noted as problems, as was the lack of simultaneous sidewalk clearing, especially in school zones.

Faulty equipment resulting in breakdowns was also an issue, said Ms Reynolds.

Improved communications with the public through a storm hotline, plus new snow fences and the addition of weekend snow clearing may be ways to improve service levels, said Ms Reynolds.

They come at a cost.

Once a regular sight in rural areas, relatively dry winters have made protective snow fences scarce in recent years.

To reinstall them would cost about \$3,000.

A more expensive proposition is the hiring of three standby graders to ensure continuous snow clearing during weekends.

Keeping the graders on call would cost \$27,000 by itself, based on a five-month season.

Actually using the graders for an estimated average of 10 storms would tack another \$33,600 on the snow tab.

That was enough to make at least some councillors wonder if amending the policy would result in a Town-wide snow job.

"Okay, we've had one major storm in

January, it was a one in 100-year storm," said Councillor Rick Malboeuf. "Forget the storm of '99. Have we needed standby in the past five years, or are we reacting to this one storm?"

Relatively mild winters meant it was a dry time for standby equipment, said Jim Finn of municipal public works, who headed the snow removal teams.

"The contractor we had for three years before, we never used him," he told council. "That's why we let him go at your direction." Councillor Wally Hunter said it wouldn't hurt to have some kind of provi-

• see BILL on page 4

### NEWSLINES

#### Be careful at arena

Police are warning patrons of John Tonelli Sports Centre to ensure they lock up their belongings when leaving them unattended.

In addition to two recent break-ins, thieves have been stealing money and other items from lockers at the Laurier Avenue arena, said Det. Sgt. Jackie Gordon of Halton Regional Police.

The most recent incident occurred Sunday morning when someone took cash and lottery tickets from the pocket of a pair of pants left in an unsecured locker.

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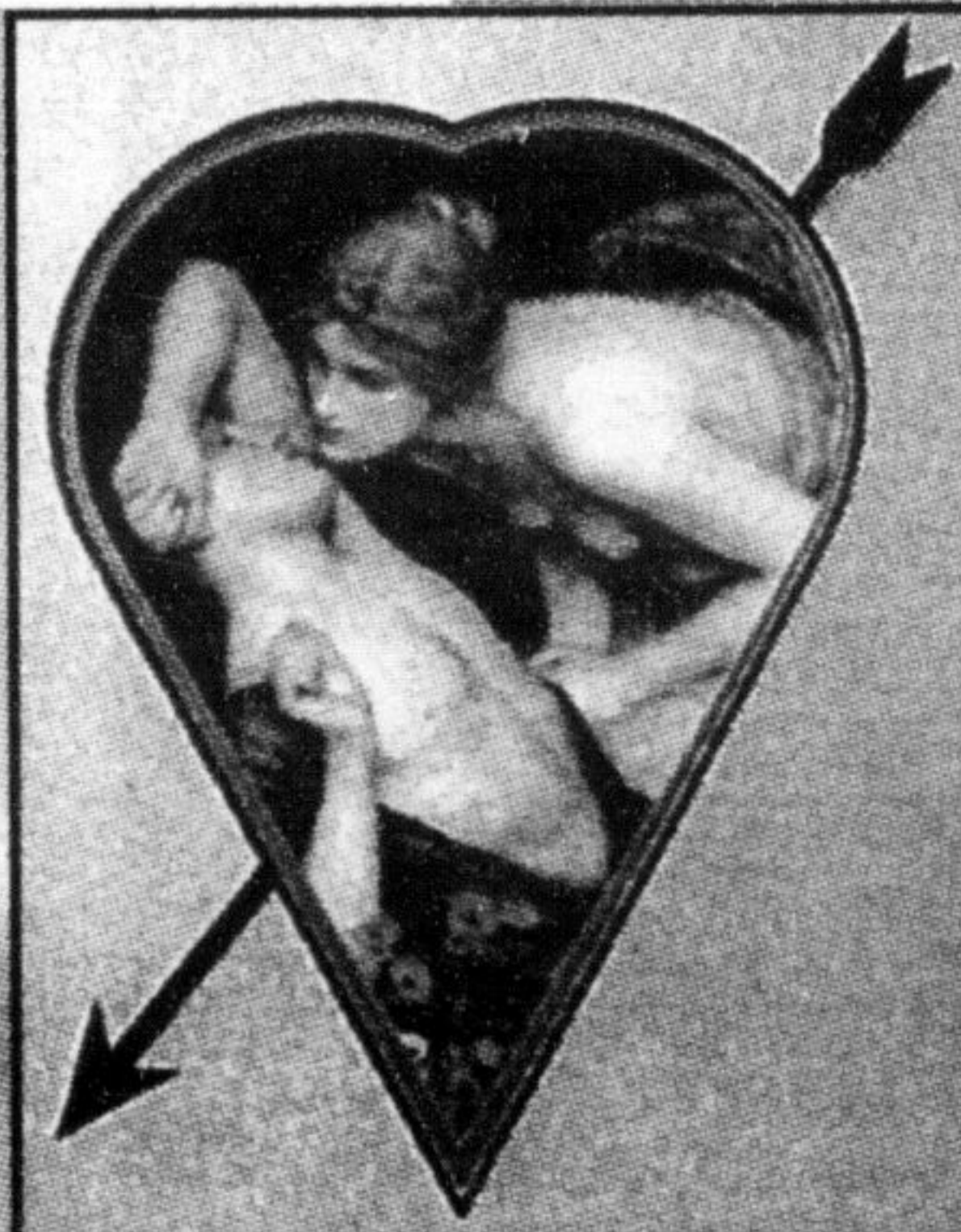
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