

Amity asking for help from the community

By IRENE GENTLE
The Champion

Amity Goodwill Industries workers are looking up to the sky and praying for sunshine these days.

Donations to the non-profit organization's retail stores have dropped way below the norm for cold weather months, said Amity's director of community relations Barry Coe.

"Traditionally there's a bit of a decrease at this time of year but it's usually not this quiet," he said.

Donations of clothing and household goods have been so low that Amity has issued its first public appeal in five years encouraging people to clean out their closets for spring.

"It's supposed to be warm this weekend," he said. "Hopefully all this sunshine will spur people on."

Mr. Coe is hoping that the first signs of warmth will inspire people to start their spring cleaning.

"Warm weather is indicative of spring," he said. "That ties up with spring cleaning."

In 1997-98, the newly centralized Amity, which takes in 10 Halton and

Hamilton stores, received 11.5 million pounds of goods from more than 200,000 people.

Mr. Coe said that figures are not yet available on the extent of the donation decrease so far this year.

Competition from other areas may also be crowding out donations to Amity, said Mr. Coe.

"The big thing is increased competition from the private sector," he said. "People are calling for donations. Some are legitimate, some are illegitimate."

Donation boxes are popping up all over Halton, not all with a good pedigree, he warned.

There are people who are putting drop boxes out there that are linked to nothing," he said. "The key is for the donor to check if the boxes are legitimate."

Some examples of legitimate organizations are the Salvation Army and St. Vincent de Paul.

Other boxes may not be affiliated with any non-profit organization at all, he cautioned.

At Amity, proceeds from donated goods go toward job training for people facing employment barriers.

Those include mental, emotional and physical disabilities. Amity also helps

older people who have been downsized out of a job.

Manager of Milton's Amity Goodwill store Karen Olden confirmed that donations have been more than a little sluggish in the first months of 1999.

"We're very low," she said. "I don't know whether we have more competition

with all the Value Villages and Phase II's opening up or if it's just the weather."

Either way, Ms Olden said she hoped a break in the weather will bring a steady flow of donations into the 550 Ontario Street store.

To reach the Milton store, call 905-875-3533.

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Curriculum on website

• from CHUDLEIGH on page 8

Strengthening student skills in math, science and English while easing away from OAC has been in the works for a while, said Mr. Chudleigh. "It has been done in every other province. All of the states have four-year programs. We've been working on this for years."

Other hallmarks of the curriculum include specific learning requirements for students and classes that are separated into applied and academic categories. Students will also be required to pass a standardized literacy test in grade 10 to graduate.

The new curriculum's clearly defined requirements are to be applied uniformly to all schools in Ontario.

Anyone can get a first-hand look at the curriculum by plugging in to the Ministry of Education's web site. That means that for the first time, parents can be clearly informed about what their child should be learning each year.

"Mostly parents like the curriculum because they understand what is expected of their children and their teacher," said Mr. Chudleigh. "Before, it left a lot up to the local boards."



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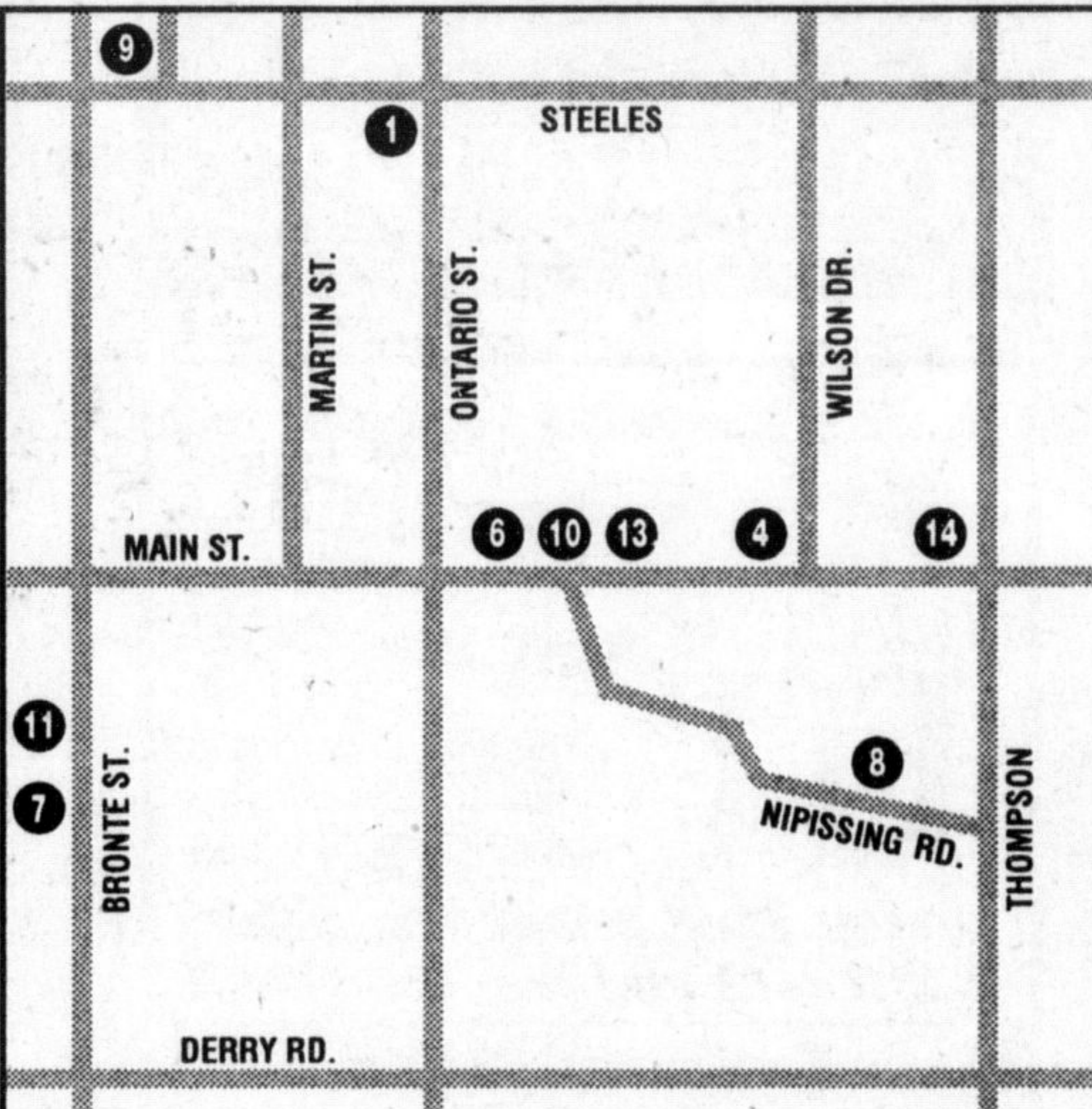
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