

Our next issue will be published Wed. due to the holidays.

Foster child caught in battle over care

Handicapped eight-year-old girl taken by CCAS during school, leaving long-time foster mother with broken heart

By IRENE GENTLE
The Champion

For the first time in almost nine years, a Milton family will celebrate Christmas without their Purple Butterfly.

Purple Butterfly is the eight-year-old

child who was placed in foster care with Sharron Fergus when she was just three months old.

But in November, a police officer and three Toronto Catholic Children's Aid Society (CCAS) workers took the child out of her Milton school and permanently out of Ms Fergus' care.

They haven't seen each other since.

To raise awareness of the case, Ms Fergus' sister-in-law, who lives in Beamsville, has launched a purple ribbon campaign.

The ribbon is meant to represent the full-blooded Ojibway child, whose native name is Young Purple Butterfly Woman.

Blind and mentally challenged, Purple Butterfly has the mental age of about 4 years, agreed Ms Fergus and the child's birth mother, who can't be identified to protect the identity of the girl.

Lots of foster children

She's one of close to 100 foster children Ms Fergus has welcomed into her home in the past 30 years, many of whom were considered medically fragile.

CCAS can't comment on the specific case, but said there must be solid reasons for a child to be taken out of long-term foster care.

"Any move is given careful thought and consideration," said CCAS director Mary McConville.

"A conscious decision is made with reasons behind it."

And moving a child who has been placed in foster care is never the first choice of the agency, she added.

"A change of placement is not desirable in general," said Ms McConville. "It's our hope that when we do place a child, that they can at least remain in that one place without disruption."

Conflict has history

Conflict between CCAS and Ms Fergus began brewing in February.

The CCAS planned to enroll the girl in a Guelph residential school for the blind, said Ms Fergus, but she argued that another year at home was vital.

In September, Ms Fergus was informed the child would be moved and she immediately appealed the decision.

But 10 days prior to the November 26 appeal date, the child was taken from her



Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

A purple butterfly illustrates friend Darlene Zulak's efforts to bring a young child back to her former foster home in Milton.

Milton school, and the hearing has since been postponed.

Foster parents, said Ms Fergus' lawyer Dino Mazzorato of Hutchinson, Thompson, Henderson and Mott, have few options when CCAS decide that a child's best interests will be served by taking them elsewhere.

"Foster parents really don't have many rights," he said.

"(Ms Fergus) has no rights as a party to the action."

If the child has been in their care for more than two years, they do have the ability to appeal, he added.

Awareness campaign

But Ms Fergus is also making her case in the court of public opinion, and many are already onside.

The awareness campaign has seen hundreds of the small, purple ribbons sold in the Halton, Hamilton and Niagara regions, as well as Sudbury, where the birth mother lives.

And those who know the Fergus family have launched a letter-writing campaign on their behalf.

• see **MUST BE SOLID** on page 17

Boxing Week Blowout!

In-Stock
Leather
NO GST &
NO PST!

Absolutely Everything In The Store Has Been Marked Down To Move For Boxing Week!

Clearance Items	Quantities	Regular	BOXING WEEK BLOWOUT
Condo Sofa - Floral	2 Only	\$1,149.99	\$599.99
Traditional Swivel Chair - Brown	1 Only	\$959.99	\$499.99
Contemporary Leather Recliner - Yellow	1 Only	\$2,589.99	\$1199.99
Camelback Leather Sofa - Mushroom	1 Only	\$3,799.99	\$1999.99
Casual Sofa - Beige	1 Only	\$1,539.99	\$799.99
Rattan Accent Entertainment Unit	1 Only	\$4,599.99	\$2499.99
Oversized Leather Recliner - Plum	1 Only	\$2,199.99	\$1299.99
Contemporary Reclining Sofa - Pastel	1 Only	\$2,079.99	\$1199.99
Sport-Motif Tall Man Recliner	1 Only	\$1,299.99	\$799.99

Absolutely Everything In The Store Has Been Marked Down To Move For Boxing Week!

DO NOT MISS THIS AMAZING SALE EVENT!
BOXING WEEK ONLY, AND ONLY AT LA-Z-BOY FURNITURE GALLERIES® IN BURLINGTON.

LA-Z-BOY FURNITURE GALLERIES
LOWEST PRICES GUARANTEED!

SOLID WOOD BEDROOM/DINING ROOM SETS

NO GST*

ALL LAMPS, AREA RUGS AND ACCESSORIES

NO GST*

OUR BIGGEST FINANCING OFFER EVER!

0 DOWN, 0 INTEREST, 0 PAYMENTS TIL THE YEAR 2001!

ALL COFFEE, END AND SOFA TABLES

NO GST*

DISCONTINUED FLOOR/CLEARANCE MERCHANDISE

FINAL MARKDOWN*

100'S OF MODELS IN STOCK FOR IMMEDIATE DELIVERY!

BURLINGTON POWER CENTRE
Q.E.W. & BRANT STREET
(905) 331-7600

Closed Fri., Dec. 24

Dec. 26 - 9am-6pm, Mon.-Thurs. 9am-9pm, Fri. - 9am-2:30pm, Jan. 1 - Closed, Jan. 2 - 9am-6pm

*Customer may choose only one of the following offers: "No GST" - "NO GST/PST" as applicable or "0 Down, 0 Interest and payments til the Year 2001". Offers do not apply to Dotted Flyer/Clearance merchandise. See store for details. On approved credit only on your La-Z-Boy Charge Card. Applicable taxes, delivery charges and \$29.99 administration fee due at time of purchase. Offer ends Jan. 2, 2000.



WE MAKE THE ROOMS THAT MAKE A HOME.®

BEVERLY HILLS

Weight Management & Nutrition Centres

Dreaming of a new lifestyle?
Jane has achieved her new lifestyle

by losing . . .



BEFORE

**100 lbs.
15% B.F.
83 inches**



AFTER

Enroll now with our Christmas special.

Join now. Start immediately or wait until the New Year.

- Call for a free consultation
- One on one support & service
- Guaranteed Results
- Focusing on a lifestyle change.

50% OFF enrollment fees plus 6 weeks free weight loss.*

*Based on Full program. Excludes product. Expires Dec. 31/99

550 Ontario St. S. Unit 18 875-2889



90 DAYS SAME AS CASH