

Gay pride celebration to be held at Bronte park June 3

Halton Pride 2000, the region's first-ever gay and lesbian pride day, will take place Saturday, June 3 at Bronte Provincial Park.

According to organizers, the event will be a celebration of Halton's gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered communities, featuring everything from live music, crafts and displays to a barbecue and a dance. In short, a family-style picnic.

"We're not making it a political day at all," says Halton Pride 2000 spokesperson Kim Abbott.

Instead, she stressed that the day will be one of de-mystification and an attempt to "normalize" the gay and lesbian lifestyle as much as possible.

Everyone welcome

To that end, Ms Abbott said she hopes those from the heterosexual community will attend as well — to learn and to share and to simply have a good time.

After all, she continued, Halton Pride 2000 will feature displays by involved area agencies, music, literary readings and much more. Planned by the Halton Anti-Homophobia Committee, the day has been designed to support gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered culture, to raise awareness about

their contributions and to promote emotional and physical well-being and healthy living.

Halton Pride 2000 will run from noon to 10 p.m., with an afternoon barbecue and a 7 p.m. dance.

Bronte Provincial Park is located on Burloak Drive just south of Upper Middle Road. Parking will be free and there will be no alcohol. More details about activities are forthcoming.

According to Jean Clipsham, a Halton Region Health Department public health nurse and Anti-Homophobia Committee member, promotion of the day has been mainly limited to Halton, since places like Hamilton and Toronto already have annual pride events.

Since this marks Halton's first attempt, however, Ms Clipsham said organizers have no idea how many people will attend the event.

Neither Ms Clipsham nor Ms Abbott could predict whether there will be any local backlash to the event.

"Being that this is the first one, we have no idea what to expect," said Ms Clipsham, who explained that not all members of the committee are gay or lesbian.

"This is a celebration, period. More of an educational, literary event."

Funding for the day came last year in the form of a \$6,000

regional Healthy Communities grant.

(When that was announced, one resident wrote a letter in opposition that appeared in the Hamilton Spectator, but further criticism has been absent, said Ms Clipsham.)

In fact, both Oakville and Burlington municipal councils have already proclaimed June 3 as Halton Pride Day. Committee members will make presentations before Milton and Halton Hills town councils and will do the same at Halton Region May 31.

Founded in 1997

The Halton Anti-Homophobia Committee was founded in 1997, originally to address youth-related issues.

Today, it's committed to increasing education and support and helping community service providers understand the added struggles youth face when coping with everything from their peers to their parents.

Eliminating negative stereotypes and making the community safe for everyone are also goals.

Committee membership currently includes representatives from the Halton Rape Crisis Centre, Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, Ontario March of Dimes, both Halton school boards, Halton Regional Police and more.

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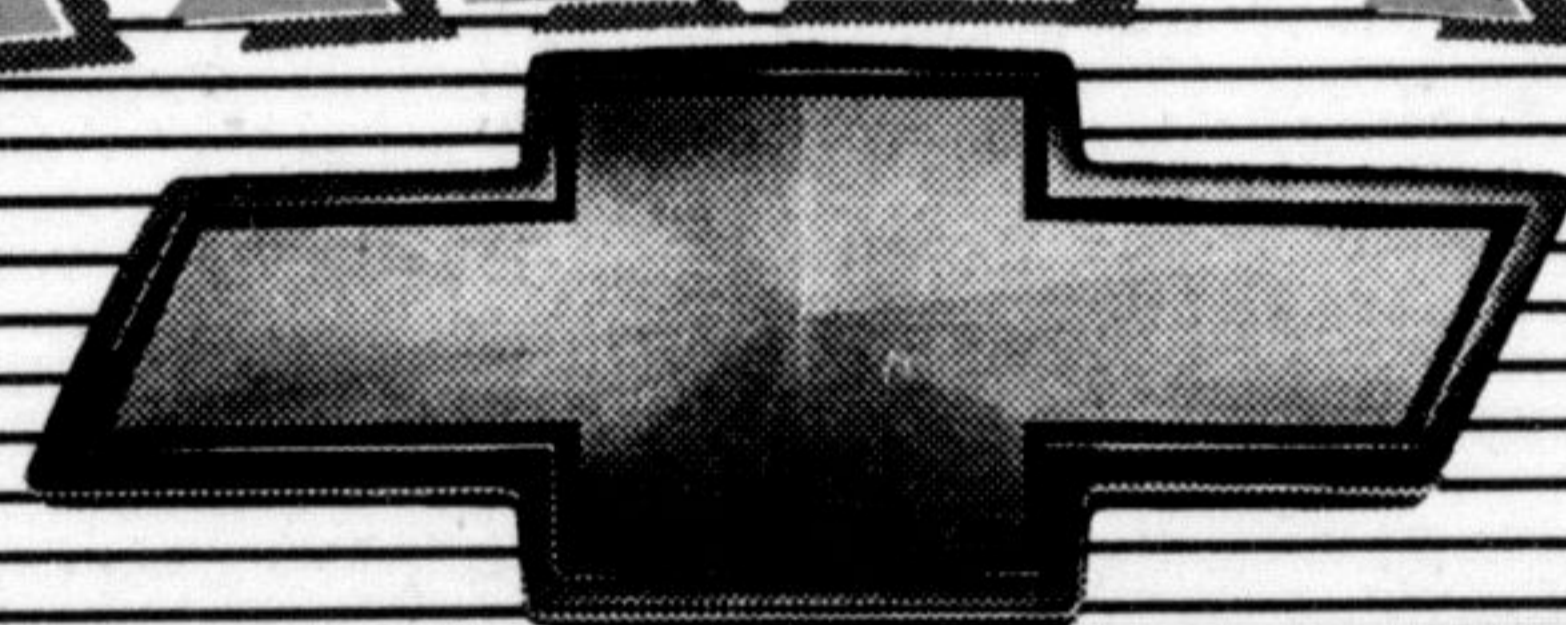
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