

Young and old show gay pride

By KAREN ROBBINS
Special to The Champion

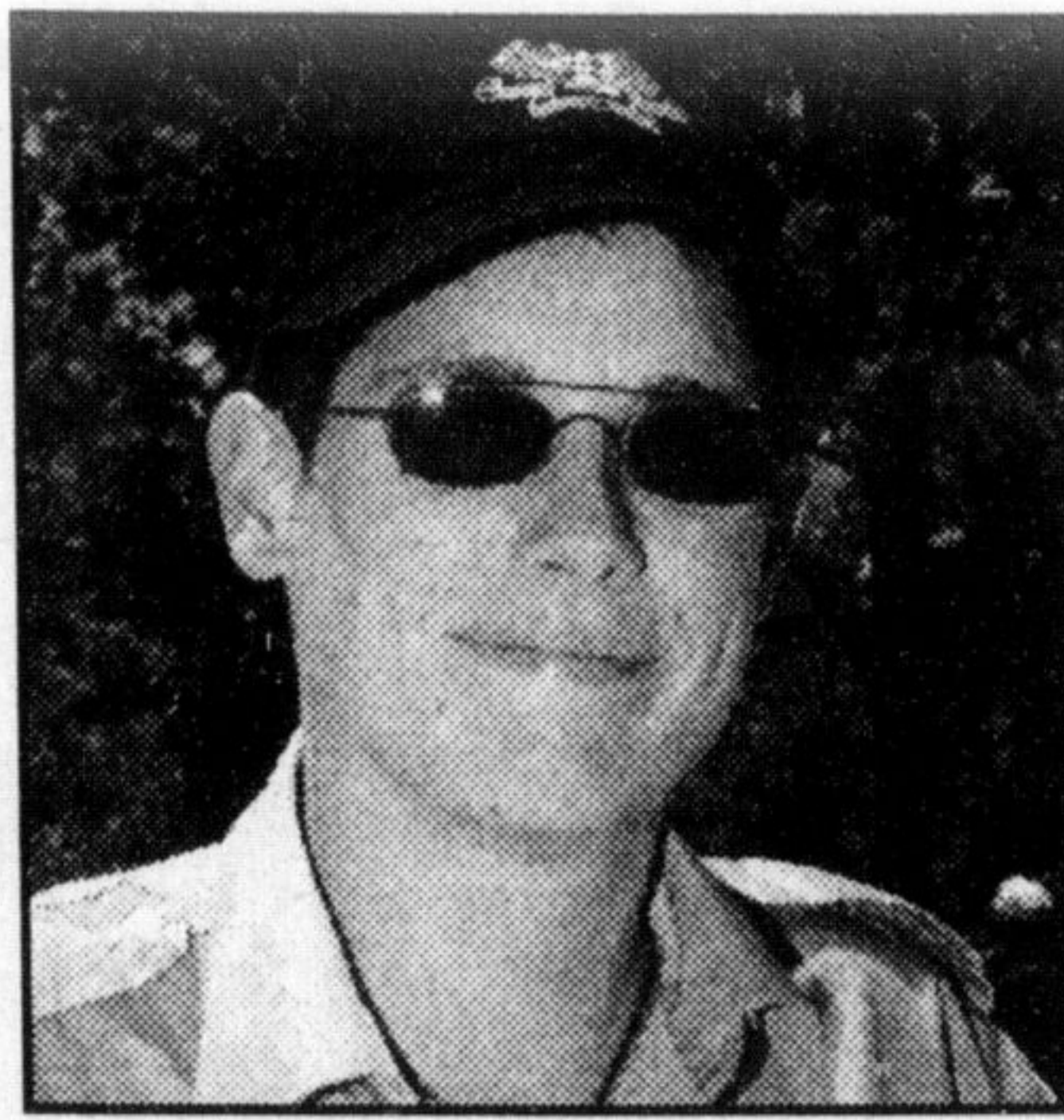
Colourful balloons and flags swung in the wind. Folk music spilled out from large speakers. People casually chatted on picnic benches, strolling through the park or grabbing something from the barbecue.

Halton's first Gay Pride Day, held at Bronte Creek Provincial Park June 3, went off without a hitch and even managed to achieve the 'family atmosphere' that was hoped for by organizers.

About 100 people — young and old, gay and straight — gathered in the park to hear writer Sky Gilbert read from his latest works, to meet the creator of the "A Day in the Life" comic strip, Finnean Cole, and to enjoy the sunny afternoon.

Event organizer Kim Abbott of the Halton Anti-Homophobia Committee said she was impressed by the positive atmosphere.

"It's important to celebrate and affirm that we do exist in Halton region, that one in 10 people are gay or lesbian and we have families and none of us look any different from anyone who is heterosex-



Constable Melanie Hannah

ual. We just want to have some fun and to enjoy each other's company," she said.

Ms Abbott, who was named the "most visible lesbian in Halton region" by Extra Magazine, said having the event in the park worked out better than having a parade — like other regions have done — in terms of safety and alleviating conflict.

The committee rented the park space, which was designated as private property. If anyone had disturbed the event, they could have been forced to leave. This provided better security than parades, which are put on in public places where preserving participants' safety is much more difficult.

Melanie Hannah, a Halton Regional Police officer assigned to

Georgetown and a member of the organizing committee, was at the event on duty to help protect people against harassment.

"For the people to feel safe is one of the most important things for us. If they don't feel safe they won't attend, so we don't want that," Constable Hannah said.

"There had been some people that weren't too pleased about the fact that it was being held, but I think the majority of people understand that we're just here to celebrate," she continued.

Increasing awareness about gay and lesbian issues was also a major theme at the event. Sponsors like the Halton Regional Health Department had display booths providing information about gay issues such as discrimination and suicide. It also gave out free samples of sunscreen and condoms.

"We're not shooting for special attention," Constable Hannah said. "We just want people to become more accepting and to realize that we are just like everyone else."

Constable Hannah also pointed out that the event is a way of giving people who are gay or lesbian in Halton a chance to socialize and develop contacts in the community.

She remembers when she first "came out" that it was very difficult to meet other gay people.

Introducing the Champion Kids Club

Starting Tuesday, Milton's *Champion Kids* are invited to join our club for children of all ages. Memberships are free and include special discounts at participating stores.

Watch for a membership registration form on the *Champion Kids* page in Tuesday's edition. *Champion Kids* will be published monthly featuring games and activities for great prizes.

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FILMING NOTIFICATION

DATES: Friday, June 16th (12:00 Noon to 5 a.m.)

Monday, June 19 (12:00 Noon to 5 a.m.)

PLACE: Dufferin Aggregates Quarry, Dublin Line

Filming will be for the Canadian television show "Relic Hunter".

The filming will take place within the Dufferin Aggregates Quarry property.

SPECIAL EFFECTS: Friday, June 16th - Between 9pm & midnight

Some of the scenes will require special effects that would create low level noise, a small fireball, and a limited amount of smoke. The quarry floor will also be lit up for filming. The entire special effects scene may last up to 10 seconds. In the event that the scene needs to be reset, it can be done within 30 minutes. All safety precautions will be followed including the presence of Halton Regional Police.

May we take this opportunity to thank you for your attention to this notice and for your co-operation and understanding.

QUESTIONS: Please contact the Locations Dept. Relic Hunter
416-368-9948

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Sharleen Weadge was the lucky winner of 4 tickets to Wonderland. Sharleen (right) receives her tickets from Champion Advertising Rep Adèle Read (left)

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