



# Champion COMMUNITY Page

## Alternative high school education program putting many young people back on track

By FANNIE SUNSHINE

The Champion

Just like classes in a regular school setting, the Secondary Teen Education Program (STEP) isn't for everyone.

"We started this program in the fall of 1999," said STEP teacher Marg Campos. "The classes are taught in the same format (as regular school) just delivered differently. The kids work independently."

Classes run during the week from 9 a.m. to noon. The program can take up to 30 students at a time and offers courses from grades 9 to 12 and a minimum of three courses must be taken per semester. And unlike the regular school system, teachers don't stand in front of the class to teach.

"The teachers are there to help, but the work is done independently by the student," Ms Campos said, adding one full-time and two part-time teachers work with the students, along with one teaching assistant.

There are many reasons why a student might choose this format of schooling over the more traditional one, she said.

"They might have attendance and behavioural problems or they don't fit into the routine in a regular school setting. The program gives them an opportunity to continue with their studies if they're not functioning well in regular school. On the downside, the program doesn't suit everybody. Some can't function in an (independent) setting."

The general age range of the students in STEP is 16 to 20, with an average age of 17 to 18, Ms Campos said.

"You have to be at least 16 to take the program and 20 is the limit," she said. "After that age, or if students want to take OAC classes they'll have to attend adult education classes at E.C Drury."

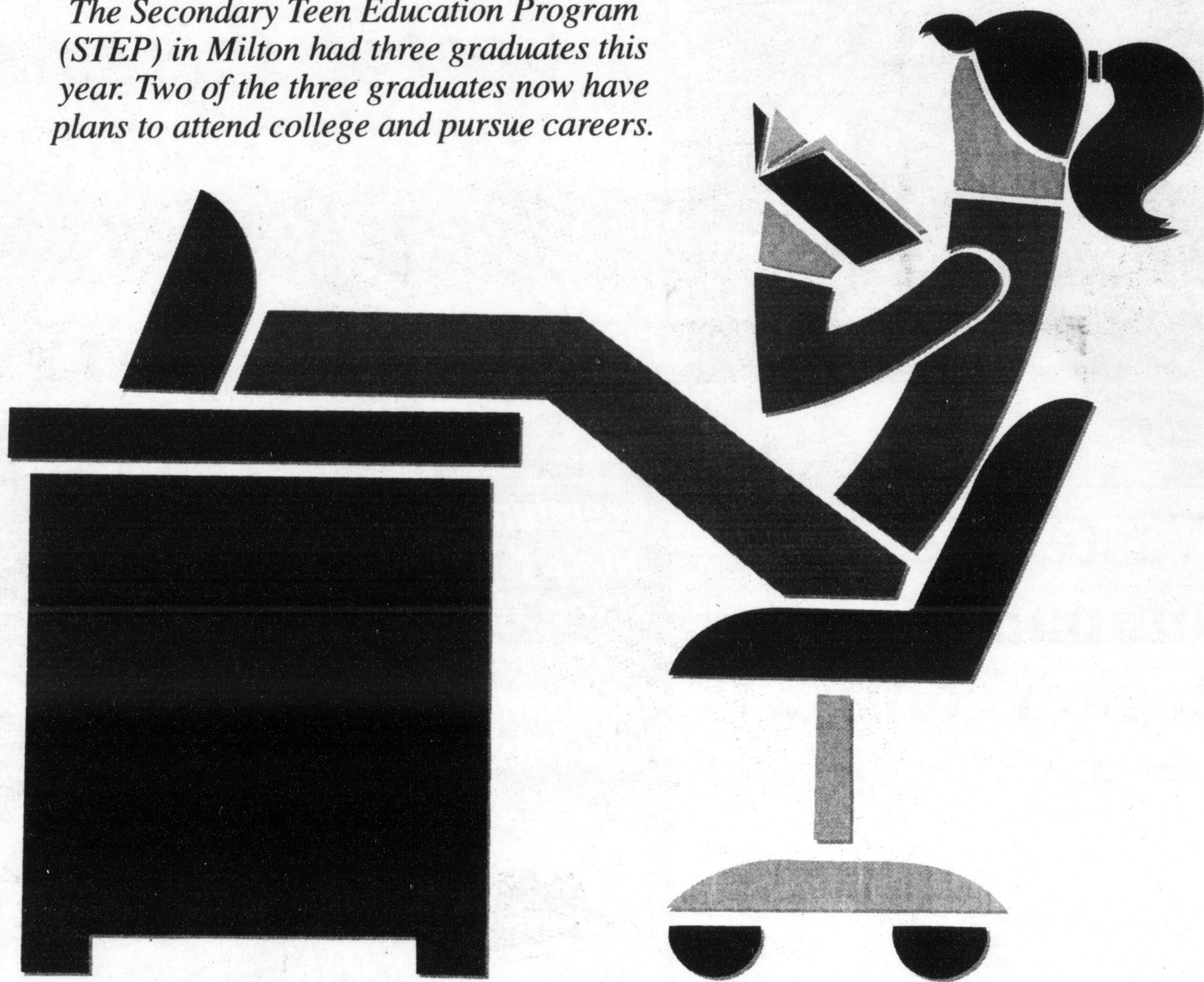
She said the goal of STEP isn't necessarily to produce graduates but to get the students back on track to attend classes in a regular school setting.

"They might only need a few credits to graduate and just can't seem to pull it off in regular school," Ms Campos said. "But if they can be successful (in STEP) we definitely encourage them to stay."

The program had three graduates this year — Sara Robertson, Ashleigh Bunt and Amanda Pollock.

"The graduation ceremony emphasizes the positive aspects of the program," Ms Campos said. "We recognize the success of the students

*The Secondary Teen Education Program (STEP) in Milton had three graduates this year. Two of the three graduates now have plans to attend college and pursue careers.*



and celebrate them. They worked hard to get here."

Attending STEP allowed Ms Robertson to work full afternoons.

"The program was awesome. The teachers are there to help you," the 18-year-old said at STEP's graduation ceremony last month at Milton Baptist Church. "I tried correspondence (courses) but it was one credit at a time and you don't get any help from teachers. I got nine credits (from STEP) this year."

Ms Robertson is taking a year off before she attends college to pursue a career in the floral

industry.

"This program is for anyone who thinks they don't want to go to high school anymore but still want to graduate."

Ms Pollock spent two years in STEP and found the program better accommodated her lifestyle opposed to regular high school.

"I was working afternoons (while attending STEP)," the former Milton District High School student said.

"I loved it (program). The teachers are understanding of your problems. You're supposed to go from 9 (a.m.) to 12 (p.m.) but they made

exceptions. I didn't find any downsides to the program."

The 19-year-old will study office administration at Sheridan College in the fall.

Ashleigh was able to receive the nine credits she needed to graduate in one year from STEP.

"I wanted to graduate this year and in a regular high school you can only get eight credits a year," the 17-year-old said. "My brother attended this program so that's how I heard of it. It (atmosphere) was a lot more relaxed and we worked at our own pace."

Her future plans remain undecided.

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### COGECO 14 Programming Schedule — July 3rd - July 9th, 2001.

Tuesday, July 3rd	Wednesday, July 4th	Thursday, July 5th	Monday, July 9th
9am, 10am, 11am, Noon 5pm, 6pm & 7:30pm 5:30pm	9am, 10am, 11am, Noon 5pm, 6pm & 7:30pm 5:30pm	9am, 10am, 11am, Noon 5pm, 6pm & 7:30pm 5:30pm	9am, 10am, 11am, Noon 5pm, 6pm & 7:30pm 5:30pm
Plugged In! Early Week Edition Plugged In! Early Week Edition Road Watch: Alternative to Anger Cable in the Classroom Colonel Chris Hadfield's STS-100 Presentation	Plugged In! Early Week Edition Plugged In! Early Week Edition Quick & Easy Ways to Healthy Eating D-Day: The Story of Canadian Assault Troops The Hadfield Brothers Concert	Plugged In! Early Week Edition Plugged In! Late Week Edition The Issue Is... Money Week Osler Health Connection Halton Regional Council - July 4th	Plugged In! Late Week Edition Plugged In! Early Week Edition Quick & Easy Ways to Healthy Eating Money Week The Issue Is...
6:30pm 8:00pm	6:30pm 8:00pm	6:30pm 7:00pm 8:00pm	6:30pm 7:00pm

Feature this week: "Plugged In!" Early & Late Week Editions - Everyday, 5pm, 6pm, & 7:30pm