



Champion COMMUNITY Page

Work as Halton police auxiliary officer offers priceless rewards, promises 11-year member

By **HOWARD MOZEL**
Special to *The Champion*

Linda Babcock hasn't made a dime from her 11 years as a volunteer member of the Halton Regional Police Auxiliary Unit, but she's easily lost count of the rewards.

Ms Babcock, who's now an auxiliary staff sergeant, is one of the unit's biggest boosters and she encourages anyone who's interested in serving to consider it.

"The interaction with the public, as well as the education and knowledge I've received is priceless," said the mother of two. "I'm loving it every day."

Authorized to have 58 officers, the unit currently has 40 and is actively recruiting new members. To that end, information sessions have been scheduled for October 11 and 18 at police headquarters, 1151 Bronte Rd., in Oakville at 7 p.m.

According to Halton police Sgt. Joe Prasad, co-ordinator of education services, the auxiliary unit is a perfect fit with Halton's community policing concept and helps blur the line between professional officers and the public.

"It's no longer them and us," said Sgt. Prasad. "We are the community."

Unlike some unit members — who range from a chemical engineer to a minister — Ms Babcock was well-steeped in law enforcement life prior to being sworn into the unit in 1990, at which time she worked in security and was married to a police officer. Membership in the auxiliary unit simply crystallized her enthusiasm and interest.

"It was everything that I expected, becoming involved in the community and assisting regular service officers as required," said Ms Babcock, who has been a member of the Blue Knights motorcycle club for 23 years.

While the unit helps with traffic duties and crowd control at communi-

ty events, Ms Babcock added that membership has also opened many other doors.

"The unit is like being in an officer's shoes without all the formality of being an officer," Sgt. Prasad explained. "Members are civilians who get to see all aspects of policing in a uniform. The idea is not to replace regular officers, but to augment their ranks."

Added Ms Babcock, "You get an undying respect for what regular officers do."

According to Sgt. Prasad, membership in the unit isn't linked to being a specific kind of person. In fact, people from divergent backgrounds only add to the mix.

"Basically you have to be a good person... and have an unblemished background that won't embarrass the service," said Sgt. Prasad.

Especially gratifying to Ms Babcock are the constant opportunities to meet the public, have multicultural experiences and participate in events she might otherwise miss.

"It's actually a lot of fun," she said.

Ms Babcock went on to say that the "extensive and excellent" training that unit members receive is also first-rate. In fact, of the nine original auxiliary recruits in her class, three are still volunteering after 11 years and three more are regular service officers. Over the years, 14 unit members have made the jump to the professional ranks.

"We're even thinking of getting involved with the marine unit now," said Sgt. Prasad.

Considering all the training involved, all that's asked of members is a two-year commitment, he said.

Those who do leave, but who still wish to volunteer can join Victims Services or the Communities on Phone Patrol (COPP) Program, for example.

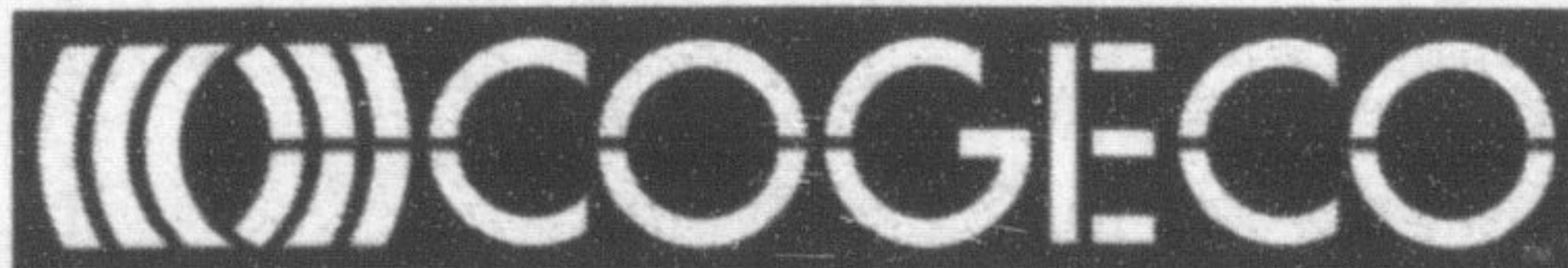
The bottom line, though, is that those with a real interest in police work can find true camaraderie and fulfillment in the auxiliary unit, said Ms Babcock.

"They come out because they enjoy it."



Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Halton police Auxiliary Staff Sergeant Linda Babcock and Sgt. Joe Prasad invite interested citizens to attend an upcoming information session on becoming a member of the auxiliary unit.



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COGECO 14 Programming Schedule — October 9th - 14th, 2001.

Tuesday, October 9th	Wednesday, October 10th	Thursday, October 11th	Friday, October 12th & Saturday, October 13th	Sunday, October 14th
9am, 10am, 11am & Noon Plugged In! - Week in Review	9am, 10am, 11am & Noon Plugged In! - Tuesday Edition	9am, 10am, 11am & Noon Plugged In! - Wednesday Edition	9am, 10am, 11am & Noon Plugged In! - Thursday Edition	9am, 10am, 11am & Noon Plugged In! - Week in Review
5pm & 6pm Plugged In! - Tuesday Edition	5pm, 6pm & 7:30pm Plugged In! - Wednesday Edition	5pm, 6pm & 7:30pm Plugged In! - Thursday Edition	5pm, 6pm & 7:30pm Plugged In! - Week in Review	5pm, 6pm & 7:30pm Plugged In! - Week in Review
5:30pm Seniors Showcase	5:30pm Osler Health Connection	5:30pm Osler Health The Issue Is...		5:30pm Money Week
6:30pm Optimist TV Bingo	6:30pm Prostate Cancer: No Big Deal	6:30pm Osler Health Connection		6:30pm Seniors Showcase
7:30pm Meet the Managers	8:00pm Milton Council, Oct. 9th	7:00pm Money Week Halton Region Council, Oct. 3rd		7:00pm The Issue Is...
8:00pm Halton Hills Council, Oct. 1st				10:30pm Osler Health Connection