

# Program seeks families willing to give shelter to homeless youths

By **KIM ARNOTT**

Special to The Champion

The homeless youth of Halton are looking for a few good beds.

Actually, they can even be pull-out couches — if they're under someone's warm, safe roof rather than a bridge.

Teenagers kicked out of the house by parents or roommates, or evicted from their apartments, face the reality that Halton has no emergency shelter capable of accommodating them while they get back on their feet, explains Catherine Dove-Smith, program co-ordinator for Halton's Bridging the Gap program.

Since the Bridging the Gap program began serving the region's youth last spring, it has faced difficulty in finding safe places to temporarily house young people who need help.

"Our biggest obstacle has been that there are no beds in Halton," explains Ms Dove-Smith.

While some kids have friends or family who will let them stay while long-term housing arrangements are made, those who don't must be shipped off to Hamilton or Mississauga for shelter.

Sending teens out of the region often means disrupting job or school attendance, and makes the process of getting them back on their feet even more difficult, says Ms Dove-Smith.

With that in mind, program organizers are establishing a Halton "host family" program, to try and accommodate kids in private beds across the region.

What are needed are families or individuals willing to offer an emergency bed or couch to young people who have no other place to go.

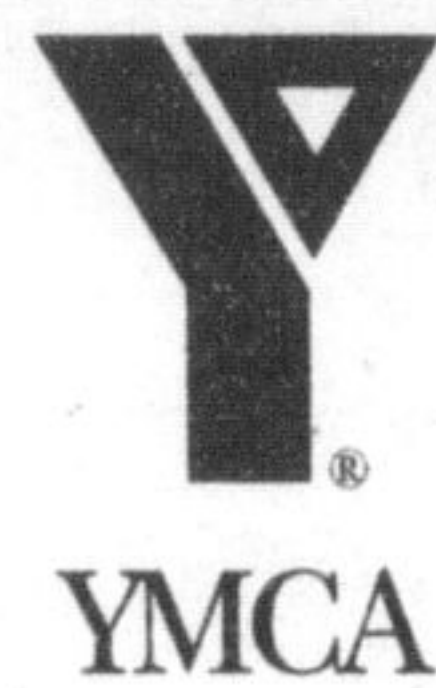
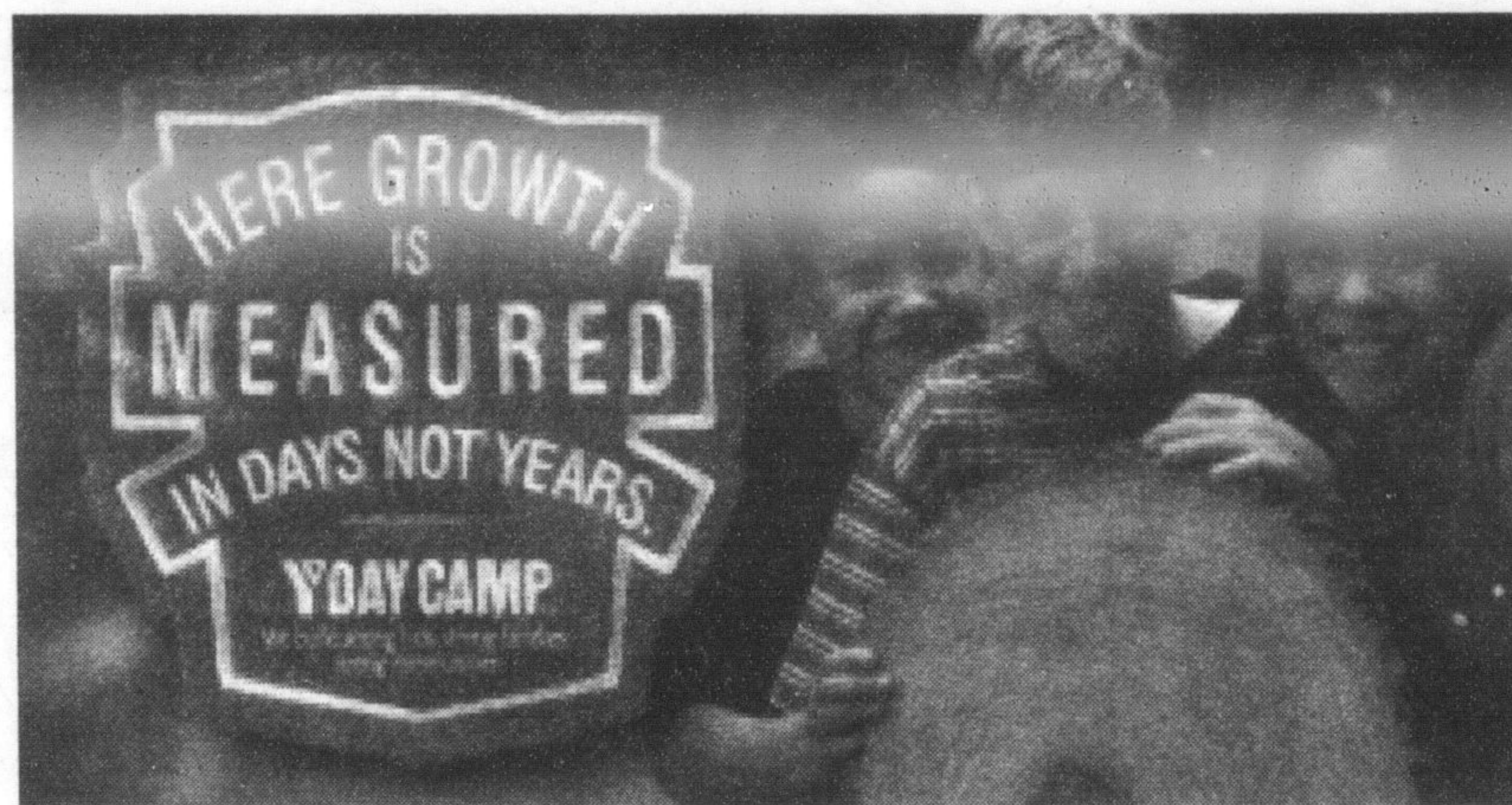
Ideally, hosts would be willing to accommodate their teen guests for four to six weeks, while long-term housing is located. But Ms Dove-Smith says she would also like to hear from people prepared to offer emergency beds for a night or two.

"We're willing to work with people who are interested," she said.

A per diem will be provided to hosts, to cover the basic costs of providing shelter, and Bridging the Gap staff will provide ongoing support to both the youth and host.

"I really believe Halton is not aware of the homelessness issue," says Ms Dove-Smith. "But we are a community, and the community needs to take some responsibility for this."

Anyone interested in becoming a host family can get further information at an orientation tonight at Hugh Foster Hall. The meeting will begin at 7 p.m. Anyone unable to attend can call Ms Dove-Smith directly at (905) 632-6531, ext. 28.



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*We sincerely apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused our valued customers.*

## How Kimberley Mason helps meet the demands of growth in Milton.

Kimberley Mason believes that one of the cornerstones of any community is its hospital. That's why she has aligned herself with the Milton District Hospital Foundation.

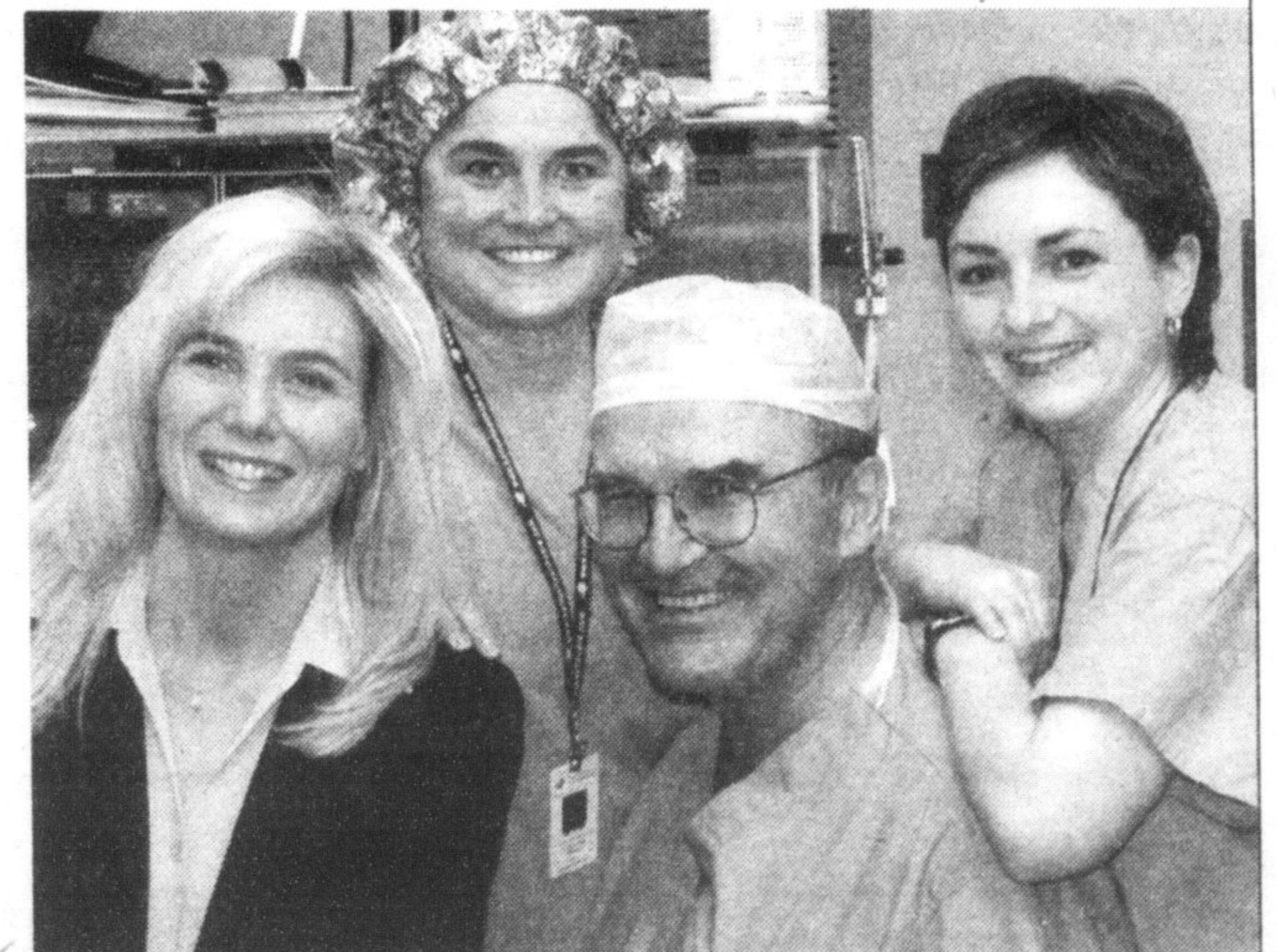
As a volunteer director of the Foundation's Board, Kimberley helps build community support for the Hospital and solicits donations on its behalf. She is a member of the Equipment Appeals Committee and is currently chairing a campaign to fund a new mammography unit.

"With the rapid growth in our area, the demands on the Hospital are great," says Kimberley. "To meet this demand, the Hospital needs financial support and I aspire to doing all that I can to help the Foundation achieve its goals."

We would like to thank Kimberley and the many other dedicated RBC Royal Bank employees who are involved in their communities volunteering their time to help make dreams come true.

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(l to r) Kimberley Mason, Carol Ann Hinton, Dr. W. Koslowski, Debbie Lupton

I would like to take a moment and recognize a group of dedicated Guiders who take many hours from their busy workweek schedules to provide opportunities for the girls of this community.

They spend countless hours planning weekly meetings, attending district events, and other trainings and organize camps to help the girls develop the self-confidence and skills required to succeed in today's and tomorrow's world.

The talents, flexibility and capabilities of these people are endless and they provide a wonderful role model that can influence academic and athletic achievement of girls. Their reward is the smile in the face of a child who has met another challenge and is now ready for the next one.

On behalf of the girls and Halton Division, I would like to thank the Guiders for their many hours of dedication. Halton Guiders, you are the best.

Carol Harper  
Halton Division Commissioner  
Girl Guides of Canada



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