

Inexpensive fun will be on hand at police festival

The Halton Regional Police Family Festival may act as a bridge between officers and the community, say organizers, but the bottom line is that the annual event will simply be a lot of inexpensive fun.

Set for Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Halton Regional Centre in Oakville, the day will feature everything from climbing walls, mini-golf, pitching cage and an old auto cruise-in to the Bomb Unit robot, live entertainment, displays and giveaways. "This is a free family day that is affordable and accessible," said Const. Gregg Davidson. "If not for the barbecue and the penny auction, it's free. If a family of five stays all day and enjoys the barbecue, it will cost them only about \$20."

One exciting feature of the day will be the public's chance to see a variety of law enforcement units up close and personal. These include the Bomb Squad, Identification Unit, K9 and Tactical Unit. They will also have the opportunity to meet representatives from Canada Customs, CN Police, Conservation Halton, local fire departments, the Ministries of Natural Resources and Transportation, OPP and RCMP.

Entertainment will include magic by Halton Regional Police officer Al Grose, children's performer Paul Behnke, 'Britney', Dream Girls and more.

Const. Davidson said he wants to make it clear to the public that the festival isn't for police and their families but for the community "to be invited into our family."

And judging by the attendance numbers (700 visitors in 2000, 2,000 in 2001) people seem to be getting the message.

"It's growing every year," said Const. Davidson. "Last year we got double the attendance we planned for."

According to Const. Davidson, positive word of mouth about the festival attracted visitors last year from as far away as Owen Sound and this year he's received calls from many more outside the region who want to attend. "Everyone is welcome to come. The event is put on for the people of Halton but we're certainly not going to turn anyone away."

This year, arrangements have been made for additional parking at the Wycroft Road GO lot and shuttle buses. More food (which they ran out of last year) has also been ordered. Regional headquarters is located at 1151 Bronte Rd.

Proceeds from the barbecue and penny auction at this year's fest will go to the Make-A-Wish Foundation. In 2000, \$4,000 was raised for the Smile Trust Foundation, which in turn provided \$6,000 to two local charities, Child Find Ontario and Food For Thought. Last year, \$6,720 was raised and shared between Rose Cherry's Home, a children's hospice and respite centre being built in Milton, and Toys For Tots.

Hearing in murder case to start Friday

The preliminary hearing for a Mississauga man charged with first-degree murder in the slaying of Murray Parrott will begin Friday in Ontario Court (provincial division) in Burlington.

The hearing was scheduled to begin last week, but was postponed.

A preliminary hearing is held to determine if there's enough evidence against the accused to go to trial.

Mr. Parrott's badly-beaten body was found near the train tracks, just north of Millside Drive, August 31.

Mr. Stokes was arrested and charged with the murder of the Milton man in St. Catharines September 5.

He remains in custody.

Four days have been set aside for the preliminary hearing.

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