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The literature on ski programs at Glen Eden will include a lesson schedule and calendar. For more information, call (905) 878-5011 or visit www.gleneden.on.ca.

TERRA Trends

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Entire community hurt when hate crimes occur: conference

By HOWARD MOZEL

Special to The Champion

While 78 per cent of respondents to a Halton Multicultural Council (HMC) survey feel safe in their community, Police Chief Ean Algar is determined to keep it that way.

Chief Algar made that commitment during Wednesday night's 'Partners Against Hate' initiative promoting the importance of reporting hate crime to police. The crowd, largely visible minorities — appreciated his resolve and appeared eager to forge further alliances with police and other stakeholders.

"I am glad to be part of this gathering," said Burlington businessman Nabil Harb. "It is a step in the right direction."

Halton Sikh Cultural Association president Sansar Singh Rai, who called Wednesday's forum a "noble cause," added: "Everyone should understand love and work together. I am honoured to be part of this group today."

That spirit of co-operation was music to Chief Algar's ears, since he explained that keeping Halton safe is a responsibility that rests on everyone's shoulders, not just law enforcement.

"We place significant value on our relations with the community," said Chief Algar, who added that all hate crimes in Halton — six to 12 a year on average — are brought to his attention within hours.

According to HMC managing director Sophia Makridis, the survey was circulated in the Muslim, Sikh and Hindu communities and determined that 23 per cent of respondents had been a victim of a hate crime. Only 16 per cent of those who said yes, however, reported it to police.

Like Chief Algar, Deputy Police Chief Gary Crowell said hate crimes remain a "high priority" with the service despite being difficult to solve for several reasons, including their random nature, lack of witnesses and low rates of reporting. Turning a blind eye, though, only makes the problem worse.

"Halton is a safe community, but we're not immune," said Deputy Police Chief Crowell, referring to the 1993 Ku Klux Klan rally in Georgetown that prompted the creation of the North Halton Cultural Awareness Council.

According to Canadian Race Relations Foundation executive director Dr. Karen Mock, all incidents — whether or not they meet the legal definition of a hate crime —

should be reported since these incidents can reveal the pattern of "something brewing."

"The key is working together," she said. This is often easier said than done, Dr. Mock continued, since victims can be reluctant to report hate crimes for fear of reprisal or being blamed. Many assume nothing will be done anyway.

While people of colour are the prime targets, Dr. Mock said, anyone can be a victim, including religious minorities as well as gays and lesbians. As a result, it is in everyone's best interest to remain vigilant.

"Hate crimes hurt not just individual victims, but the entire community," added Deputy Police Chief Crowell.

According to Assistant Crown Attorney Jim Coppolino, one of the "great Canadian societal values" is tolerance, so laws have been created in order to deter intolerance. That can be a tough balancing act, but with everyone's help, strides can be made.

In keeping with the partnership theme of the evening, Mr. Coppolino encouraged the crowd to mobilize against hate and refuse to be silent. Be a political force, he continued, and make the issue a public one to affect change and to "light a fire under the ass of Crown attorney's like me."

By all means report incidents, Mr. Coppolino said, since the courts and the police won't be able to best deal with the issue if they don't have the experience of investigating and prosecuting hate crimes.

In addition to the survey, the HMC and police recently launched phase one of the program by distributing an information pamphlet that explains what a hate-motivated crime is, what to do if you are a victim of hate and the importance to contacting police. Translated into several languages (French, Arabic, Urdu, Punjabi), the brochure is part of an information-sharing and fact-finding effort designed to educate residents while allowing police a look inside the community's hopes and fears.

"Leave here confident that the police do care," said Diversity Officer Constable Diane Hendry, who told the crowd that she hopes the brochure stays in their drawer and that they never have to call police.

FUTURE SHOP CORRECTION NOTICE

In our September 18-24, 2002 Future Shop flyer the following error occurred:

- On page 2, the RCA "Complete Home Theatre Audio System With 6 Speakers" was incorrectly advertised at "\$199.99" the correct price should read "\$399.99"
- On page 13, the Toshiba "Progressive Scan DVD Player" advertised for \$299.99 is only available at Future Shop in black.
- On page 40, the Compaq "Intel Celeron Processor 1.4GHz, Including Cicero 17" Monitor" advertised for "\$999.99" is not available at all Future Shop locations, and is in limited quantities where available, no rain checks will be issued on this product.

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



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