

Affordable housing, transportation among concerns expressed by Halton youth: forum

By **MELANIE CUMMINGS**
Special to *The Champion*

Adolescence is a time of ultimate confusion. It's a time of perpetuating anomalies for youths, parents and social service agencies.

According to Dr. Reuven Jhirad, a Burlington-based family and community practitioner who specializes in adolescent care, the teenage years are the most ignored among all generations — when more is expected with the least amount of guidance. But, in Halton at least, that's about to change.

At the first-ever 'Truth About Youth' forum, held at the Halton Regional Centre on the weekend, the 70 people who attended last Friday's opening session proposed 25 topics of discussion.

Like Dr. Jhirad, who said he learns more from his young patients than they do from him, community leaders are hoping to glean the same from this sector of the region's population.

"We must show respect for youth. We can't be false or fake to them. Just tell the plain old truth and communicate in whatever format on whatever issue," said Dr. Jhirad, who was the keynote speaker at the weekend conference.

To raise confident, happy and healthy young people "all you need is love," said Dr. Jhirad, "and adequate nutrition, housing, social support, clothing, financial support, access to health care and adequate legal support."

After Dr. Jhirad's presentation, youths took centre stage, and one by one raised their voices. In creating their own agenda for the conference — a process called open space — they wrote down their concern on paper, along with their name, and announced it to the group.

Youths, parents and service providers then posted a time and place to gather and discuss their topic. Anyone interested would meet them there and then.

Among the topics chosen were:

- Affordable housing for youth,
- Why aren't there more places for youths to hang out?,
- Runaways,
- Subsidized public transportation for youth,
- Sexual health services,
- Anti-gang information,
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual issues among youth,

• Access to services and jobs for disabled youth.

While Saturday was dedicated to discussion, Sunday closed with a live concert featuring local bands.

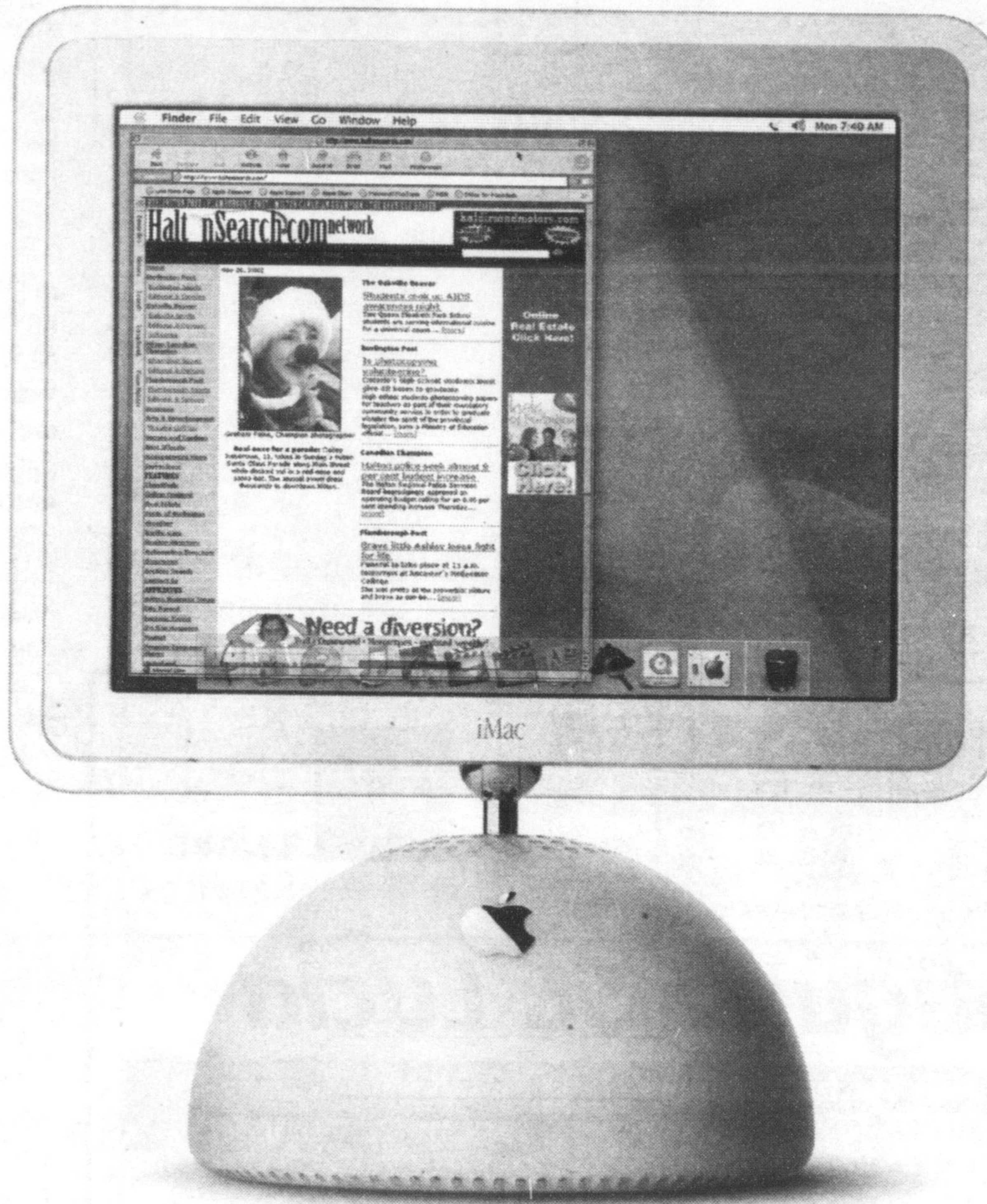
The conference aimed to find ways to improve life for youths across the region after a report released last month revealed that existing services don't meet their needs, aren't well known, or difficult to access.

The idea for the conference came out of a youth services steering committee composed of 13 local youths representing students, street kids and at-risk youth. The group formed in October 2002 as a result of a need identified by the Region's social and community services department.

Suggestions that arose from the weekend forum will be documented, prioritized and put forward in a future Youth Services Plan.

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OPEN HOUSES THIS WEEKEND

Saturday, Sunday & Wednesday 1-4:30pm
CHURCHILL ESTATES
Brookville Guelph Line (5 min. north of Hwy 401)
\$464,000 all 1.5 acre lots
GARY THOMAS in attendance
Re/max Blue Springs 905-878-7777

85% sold out

Sunday February 9, 2-4pm
662 Harrison (off Laurier/Holly)
DONNA STARK in attendance
Prudential Town Centre Realty
905-878-9100

Sunday February 9, 2-4pm
153 Riverwalk Place Rockwood
PAT RIDEOUT in attendance
Royal LePage Meadowtowne Realty
905-878-8101

Sunday February 9, 2-4pm
550 Childs Drive, Unit 10 Milton
JENNIFER ELMASLIE in attendance
Wildwood Realty

Sunday February 9, 2-4
158 Robinwood Crescent
DIANE MAYNARD in attendance
Royal LePage Meadowtowne Realty
905-878-8101

Sunday February 9, 2-4
9706 Guelph Line
DEBRA TURK in attendance
Royal LePage Meadowtowne Realty
905-878-8101

Sunday February 9, 2-4:30
110 Glenariff Dr., Antrim Glen, Freelon
6 km w of Hwy 6 on Flamborough 8th Conc. W.
ALAN MCDONALD in attendance
Royal LePage Meadowtowne Realty
905-878-8101

Sunday February 9, 2-4
781 Roseheath Dr. \$229,900
CHERYL GRAY in attendance
Remax Blue Springs
905-878-7777

Sunday February 9, 2-4
1434 Alderson Rd., Carlisle \$349,900
SUSAN RECOSKI in attendance
Royal LePage Meadowtowne Realty
905-878-8101