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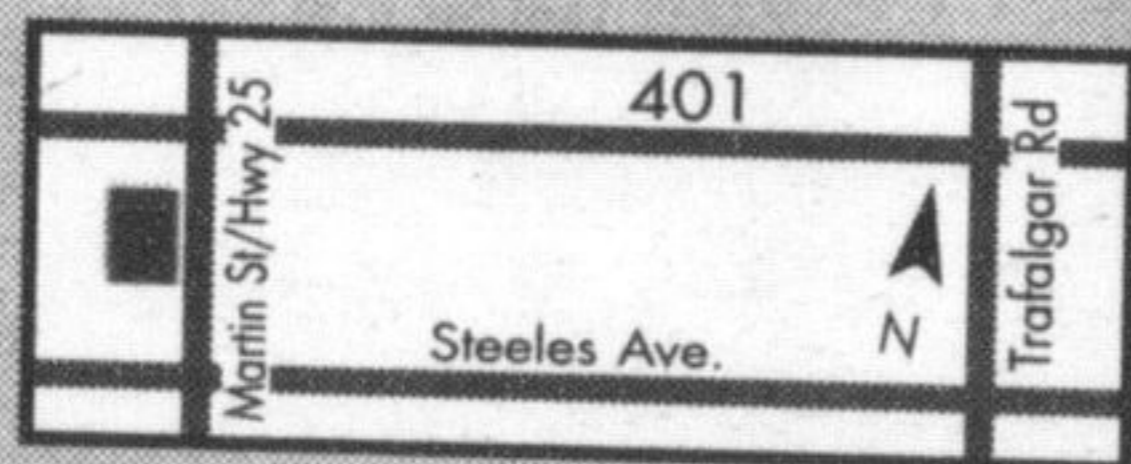
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Domestic violence issues addressed at police forum

BY ROBB SWYBROUS

Special to The Champion

Bridging the gap between police services and civilian professionals who work in the family violence field is an important key to reducing incidents of domestic abuse across the country.

That idea was a key to the message delivered last week at Burlington's Holiday Inn during the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police National Forum on Family Violence, co-hosted by Halton and Waterloo regional police services.

The two-day forum that took place April 3 and 4, saw police and civilian professionals from across Canada meet to discuss how best to combat domestic violence.

Halton Regional Police Chief Ean Algar was impressed with information shared at the conference and was particularly encouraged by the civilian participants who indicated a need and willingness to work with police to deal with the problem some call an epidemic.

"Going outside of the police role we learn (other group's) responses, how (domestic violence) affects their organizations and how we can better interact with each other," Chief Algar said. "With a conference of this nature you learn there are other opportunities out there... if we can learn from each other that's what it's about."

Civilian participants included professionals from the fields of social work, education and health care.

Much of the forum was held behind closed doors.

Topics discussed included a statistical review of family violence in Canada, risk-assessment tools, family violence in aboriginal communities and the affect of family violence on children.

Deborah Sinclair, a Toronto-based social worker, attended the conference and felt her concerns were heard.

"This is one of the most inclusive con-

ferences I've been to in a long time," said Ms Sinclair, whose been in social work for three decades. "We had the voices of young people here, of aboriginal people and certainly of women."

Ms Sinclair said while conferences like last week's work to identify the issues, front-line workers — like her and police officers who investigate family violence — need to work even harder to deal with family violence.

"I think it's (family violence) an epidemic. Of all the work I do this is the toughest area," she said. "I think we've only touched the tip of the iceberg in terms of creating safe communities, ones where survivors can really speak out."

Statistically, family violence across Canada continues to be a concern.

According to the General Social Survey on Victimization (GSS), a 1999 Statistics Canada study, roughly 8 per cent of women and 7 per cent of men in Canada reported experiencing at least one incident of violence by a current or previous partner during the five-year period prior to the survey.

And while occurrence rates for men and women aren't overly lopsided (8 per cent of women represents about 690,000 people, while the 7 per cent of men works out to about 549,000 people), types of violence based on gender are quite different.

According to GSS, women are more likely than men to experience more severe forms of violence. Women are more than twice as likely to report being beaten, five times more likely to be choked and twice as likely to have a gun or knife used against them.

Based on the Statistics Canada Homicide Survey between 1991 and 1999, homicides involving intimate partners accounted for 27 per cent of all murders (a total of 1,056 people were killed by intimate partners during that period.)

Car seat clinic tomorrow

If you knew there was something simple you could do to reduce the likelihood of your child being injured or killed in a car accident, would you do it?

Of course you would. Yet in Canada, four out of every five children aren't properly restrained in their car seats — something that increases the chance of injury or death in a vehicle collision by 75 per cent.

Halton Partners for Car Seat Safety and Milton Chrysler-Dodge-Jeep want to equip parents with much-needed information to help them protect their children. Tomorrow, the groups will celebrate 'Love Me, Buckle me Right Day' with a free car seat clinic at Milton Chrysler-Dodge-Jeep, 81 Ontario St. N. The clinic will run from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Common car seat installation mistakes include improper use of the tether strap, failure to use locking clips on seat belts and improper tightening of seat belts.

During the car seat clinic, trained inspectors will be on hand to check car seat installations and provide car seat safety education to parents and caregivers of young children. Participants should bring their child, the car seat manufacturer's instructions and their vehicle owner's manual. Each safety assessment will take about 20 minutes.

Halton Partners for Car Seat Safety include: Milton Road Safety Committee, The Co-operators, Halton Hills Fire Department, Halton Regional Police Services, Ontario Provincial Police, Ministry of Transportation of Ontario, Infant and Toddler Safety Association, and the Region of Halton.

For more information on 'Love Me, Buckle Me Right Day', call Halton Region's Child Health Line at (905) 693-4242, ext. 7877, TTY (905) 827-9833.

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