

# Arts & Entertainment

## McKenzie's first children's book launched tomorrow



Milton's Lynda McKenzie, whose battle with Parkinson's disease has touched many people, is set to launch her first children's book tomorrow.

File photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Well-known Miltonian set to introduce some magical characters

By JAIME BURNHAM  
Special to The Champion

Milton children's author and artist Lynda McKenzie will unveil her first published illustrated children's book at the Kids Craft Café in Oakville tomorrow.

The special event will showcase the delightful words and artwork of Ms McKenzie, who has been battling Parkinson's disease since 1987. Over the years, from her home in Milton, McKenzie has created hundreds of colourful and enchanting posters, cards and books.

"Although I am physically classified as disabled, my mind still works constantly and I have been given the gift of hands that still work most of the time," Ms McKenzie says.

Her magical characters include a chubby little angel named Annabelle. Tomorrow, Ms McKenzie will read from and sign her first published book in the Annabelle series entitled 'Meet Annabelle'. Partial proceeds of books sold will go to the Jack

Clark Chair for Parkinson Disease Research at the University of Toronto.

Kids Craft Café owner Judith Lee invites parents and children to come for a morning coffee and attend the reading. The café, which has a different craft each week for its little customers, will offer a special angel-themed craft in recognition of Ms McKenzie's Annabelle.

"Lynda's art is wonderful," Ms Lee says. "I am really pleased to be able to support this inspiring individual with such a great cause."

A mother of two, Ms McKenzie received her diagnosis 17 years ago while living a very independent life. At the time she was a single parent and the owner of a country décor store in Milton.

"Parkinson's is an awful disease, stripping its host of mobility, dependability, independence, livelihood, the ability to communicate and in many cases their self-worth," Ms McKenzie says.

The high stress of running her own business forced Ms McKenzie to sell her shop and put her arts and crafts supplies away indefinitely.

"I was sure I would never be able to use them again," she recalls.

Ms McKenzie then got involved with the National Parkinson's

office. She began writing for their newsletter and eventually became the associate editor of the Parkinson's Post.

"Obviously playing host to this intruder has changed my perspective on many things, but I can honestly say I am thankful for the path it has caused me to take," she says.

That path has taken her across Canada speaking to Parkinson's support groups. On her journey, Ms McKenzie has met fellow Parkinson's patients Mohammad Ali and Michael J. Fox. She was also the subject of David Suzuki's 1999 documentary titled Parkinson's, Lynda's Story.

Eventually Ms McKenzie dusted off her art supplies and returned to her passion. Her home is a showcase of her work with paintings lining the walls and albums overflowing with drawings.

"Now my first little book 'Meet Annabelle' is in print and I am working on several follow up books and spin-offs including greeting cards, posters and dolls," says Ms McKenzie.

The 'Meet Annabelle' reading will take place at 10:30 a.m.

For more information on tomorrow's event, call the Kids Craft Café at (905) 257-7002.

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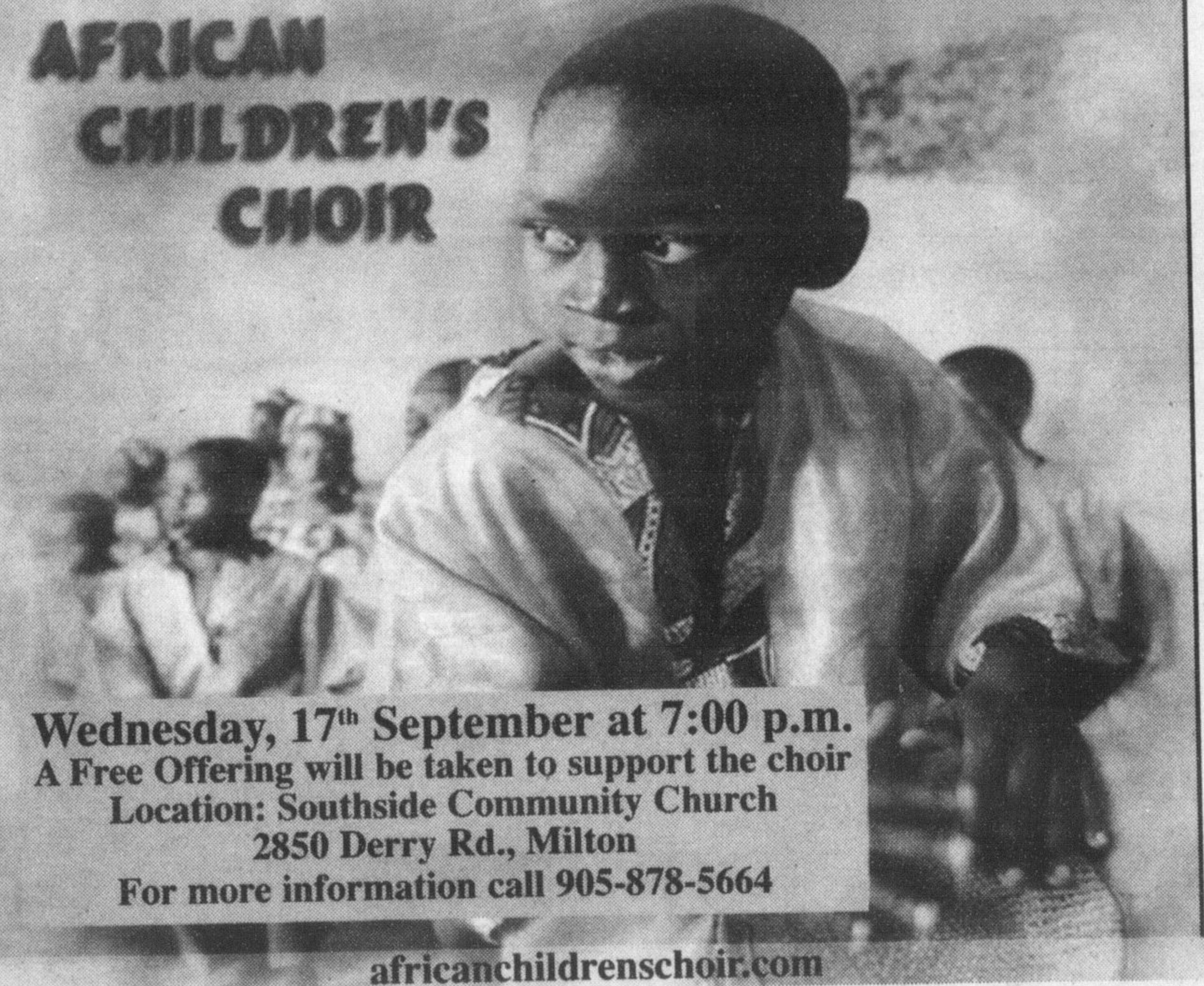
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