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# Community Page



Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Jennifer Sutton, who helps run the Town's Hip to be Me program, shows a 'love line' — consisting of envelopes participants fill with positive messages about themselves.

## Program aims to instill self-esteem in pre-teens

By **STEPHANIE THIESSEN**  
*The Champion*

For many kids, life is pretty great until — wham! — those dreaded pre-teen years hit. Suddenly, it seems everything is turned upside down.

Issues like bullying, smoking and the pressure to make wise decisions do little to ease the turmoil.

With that in mind, the Town of Milton is starting up a new program that's designed to help students in grades 5 to 8 learn how to cope with this difficult time. In a social setting with plenty of activities, the Hip to be Me program aims to instill positive self-esteem and provide role models kids feel comfortable talking to.

"It's great to have positive role model leaders," said program assistant Jennifer Sutton, adding

that the leaders are old enough to have the needed maturity for such a position, but young enough for kids to feel they can confide in them. "They feel comfortable — it's a big brother, big sister type of thing."

Hip to be Me will begin January 21 and run from 6:30 to 8 p.m. for eight consecutive Wednesdays at the Milton Seniors' Activity Centre, 500 Childs Dr. The final day for registration is Monday. The program costs \$64.

Each week will feature games and activities and a discussion on a topic of importance to pre-teens.

The first week is designed to help participants get to know each other. Ensuing weeks' discussions include bullying, body image, team work, communication, anger management and decision making. The final week will include a spaghetti dinner participants make themselves.

"It's not all serious," Ms Sutton was quick to

add.

A question box will be set out, giving kids the opportunity to ask anonymous questions on just about anything. At the end of each night, a few questions will be selected and answered, Ms Sutton said.

Often the friendships built in the program last far longer than the program itself, Ms Sutton said.

The program wasn't designed just for kids with low self-esteem or specific problems. It's for everyone, Ms Sutton said, adding there isn't anyone who wouldn't benefit from it.

"This is a time (grades 5 to 8) when life is so up in their air," she said, adding she's young enough to remember what it was like.

In fact, Ms Sutton said she wishes a similar program existed when she was in her pre-teen years, and has high hopes for this group.

"I hope the kids make beneficial life-changing

decisions. If they feel good at that age, who knows what they'll be able to do later in life."

Ms Sutton said it's important that parents know the leaders are well trained and qualified for the important task of working with their children.

"They've all worked with children before, and have taken the Healthy Child Development course. The big thing is that the staff is mature. They have good direction in their own lives. This age group (grades 5 to 8) is vulnerable, and they need someone who can give them confident answers," she said.

For more information on Hip to be Me, call Tammy or Jennifer at (905) 875-1681. To register, you can visit the Milton Leisure Centre or Town Hall, or you can use the registration form found in the community services guide and fax it to (905) 878-6995.

Stephanie Thiessen can be reached at [sthiessen@miltoncanadianchampion.com](mailto:sthiessen@miltoncanadianchampion.com).

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**CHANNEL 14**

Programming Schedule — Tuesday, January 13th - Monday January 19th, 2004

Tuesday, January 13		Wednesday, January 14		Thursday, January 15		Friday, January 16		Saturday, January 17		Sunday, January 18		Monday, January 19	
5pm, 6pm & 7:30pm	Plugged In! Early Week Edition	5pm, 6pm	Plugged In! Early Week Edition	5pm, 6pm	Plugged In! Early Week Edition	5pm, 6pm & 7:30pm	Plugged In! Late Week Edition	5pm, 6pm & 7:30pm	Plugged In! Late Week Edition	5pm, 6pm & 7:30pm	Plugged In! Late Week Edition	5pm, 6pm & 7:30pm	Plugged In! Late Week Edition
5:30pm	Seniors Showcase	5:30pm	PeopleSpeak in Halton	5:30pm	Oster Health Connection					5:30pm	Be Inspired	5:30pm	With Good Taste
6:30pm	Optimist TV Bingo (Live)	6:30pm	Be Inspired	6:30pm	Money Week					6:30pm	Seniors Showcase	6:30pm	Oster Health Connection
8:00pm	Halton Hills Council - Jan 5	7:00pm	Swap Talk (Live)	7:00pm	Main Street					7:00pm	PeopleSpeak in Halton	7:00pm	Be Inspired
		8:00pm	Thyroid Cancer Forum							8:00pm	Money Week	8:00pm	SportsZONE Live (Live)

Game Highlights from the IceHawks & Raiders on SportsZONE Live Monday 8 pm