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A METROLAND COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER VOL. 144 NO. 95 TUESDAY, JANUARY 10, 2004 \$1.00 (GST included) 48 PAGES "Using Communication to Build Better Communities"



Mental health group alarmed by suicide numbers in Halton

By **JASON MISNER**
The Champion

Diane Doherty is disheartened that suicide is afflicting Halton residents.

"It's very concerning," said the executive director of the Halton branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association.

A regional health department study released last Tuesday found a leading cause of injury-related deaths among Halton males, all ages, from 1995 to 1999 was suicide, resulting in 96 deaths. However, it's much lower than the provincial average.

It also shows that hospitalizations from suicide attempts among Burlington and Oakville females, all ages, is higher than the provincial average.

Ms Doherty said limited provincial funding and few mental health beds for youth in the region must be addressed to reverse these sobering statistics.

"We've tried to get more funding from the Ministry of Health and it hasn't been forthcoming," she said, noting the branch

gets \$325,000 a year from the Province towards its \$600,000 budget. The rest comes from the United Way, an annual auction and local and regional grants.

"The hospitals have huge waiting lists and only so many beds available. It's quite bad."

There are 10 mental health beds in Oakville for youth and none in Milton, Burlington and Halton Hills.

It's difficult to explain suicides or attempts, she said.

"There's no one reason for suicide. It can differ from every person."

Treatment, Ms Doherty said, is key. "If they get on proper medication and get treatment, they can have a successful life. Without treatment, of course you'll deteriorate."

Ms Doherty said there are programs and resources out there to help, though she wishes there were more. There are seminars offered to professionals to learn suicide prevention training, as well as a hotline for those feeling in despair.

In Milton/Halton Hills, the hotline is • see **MENTAL** on page 17

Spring colours

Model Erica Coobs shows off the latest in fun, bright colours for spring during a fundraising fashion show for the Red Cross at Pasqualino Cafe and Bistro Sunday afternoon. The entire fundraiser consisted of a luncheon and two dinner shows. See more photos from the event on page 20.

Photo by **GRAHAM PAINE**

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TUESDAY INSERTS

- Tuesday, February 10 •
- Ennisclare Interiors* • Branciers Jewellery*
- Rona/Cashway* • Sportchek*
- Goodlife Fitness* • Giant Tiger*
- Southside Community Church*
- Coast Mountain Sports*

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