

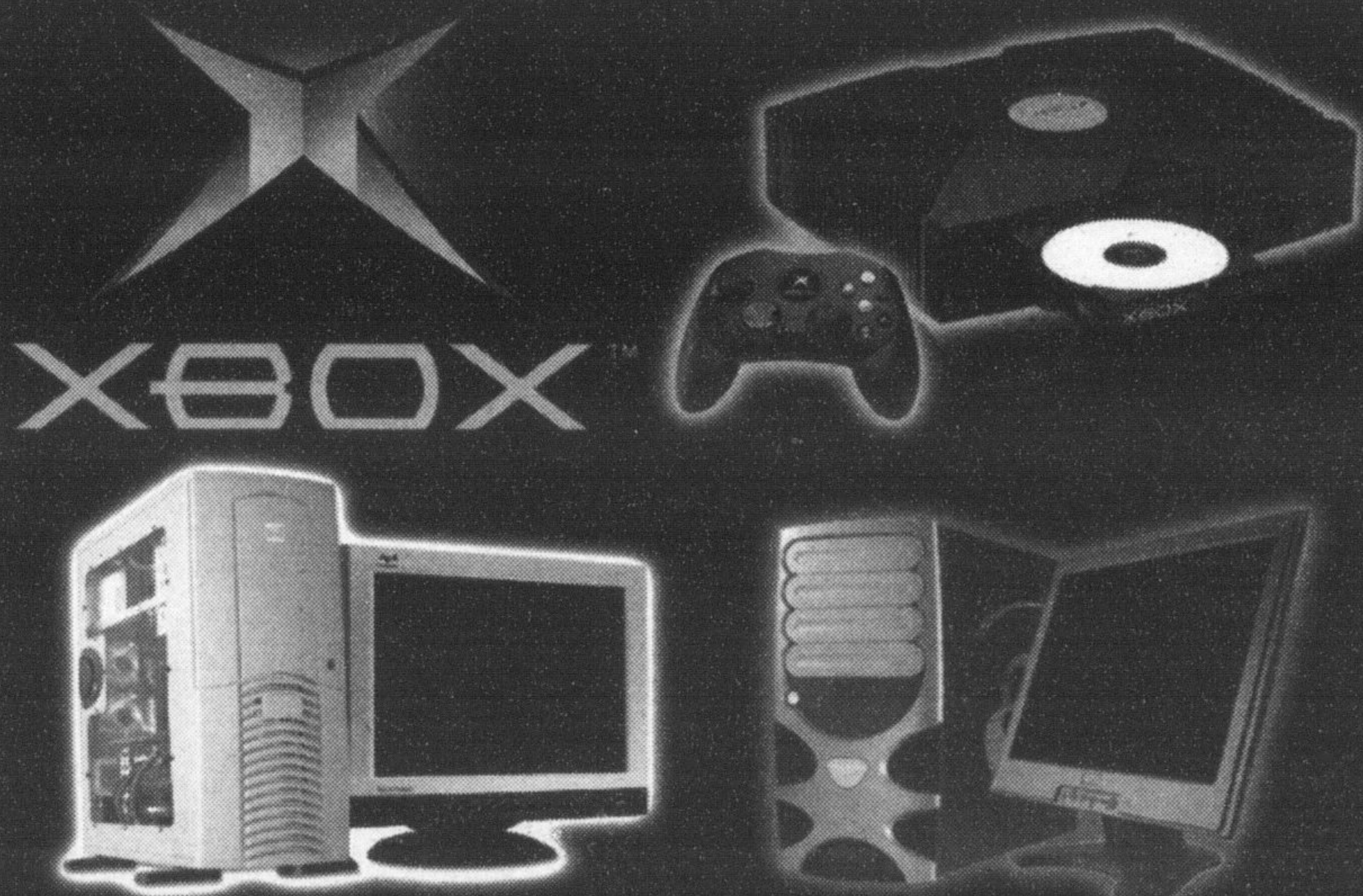
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Clientelle doubles at Halton kids' mental health centre

But merger of two social service agencies is nonetheless smooth

By TIM WHITNELL
Special to The Champion

It has been a smooth transitional year for Halton Child and Youth Services (C&YS) following its creation from the merger of two regional social service agencies.

The new agency, which continues to serve Milton and the rest of the region, resulted from the marriage of Halton Adolescent Support Services (HASS) and the Children's Assessment and Treatment Centre (CATC) in late 2002.

HASS's Burlington office closed in September 2002. CATC absorbed the service for youths into its Burlington location while continuing with its own services for children.

A new wrinkle to Halton C&YS which began around the time of the merger was the introduction of a walk-in clinic where families can meet a social worker immediately instead of having to sit on a waiting list.

"That's a really exciting thing that has come to the community. They can come back to the walk-in as many times as they want. The important thing is the service starts immediately," said Lorri Interisano, director of administration for Halton C&YS.

The walk-in clinic in Milton at 443 Centennial Forest Dr. is open Wednesdays from noon to 8 p.m. It can be reached at (905) 875-2575.

Minors must come in with an adult family member while those aged 16 years and older can come on their own.

Ms Interisano said Halton

"What we are hoping is that with the merger we become more efficient and better serve the youths and adolescents of Halton. I think it's been something on people's minds for some time."

HEATHER COOK

C&YS's clientele has doubled this year with approximately 3,000 clients now seeking help through all of its services.

Heather Cook, who was CATC's director of clinical services before the merger and is now clinical director of Halton C&YS, said late last year that consolidation of the two entities' services and facilities had not been recommended or mandated by the provincial government.

"What we are hoping is that with the merger we become more efficient and better serve the youths and adolescents of Halton. I think it's been something on people's minds for some time," Ms Cook said of the merger at the time.

"One (executive) board approached the other," she added.

The intent of the merger was to create one organization to better serve children, youth and their families experiencing mental

health problems in the community. It's client-centred to help children, teens and families reach their potential.

Expected advantages of the merger were resources, such as staff and programs, being managed more efficiently, an opportunity for program enhancements, expansion of residential services to younger age groups and the provision of assessment/diagnostic services to older youths.

Halton C&YS is a non-profit, charitable organization and a provincially-accredited children's mental health centre.

It provides a multi-disciplinary approach to assessment and treatment while offering non-residential and residential treatment services within Halton.

Changes to the residential program that came out of the merger included an internal review of the treatment programs at Pilkey House and My Place, the move of Pilkey from Burlington to Oakville and the closure of the Milton and Aberdeen programs.

Among the changes to non-residential programming was the inclusion of free-standing programs, such as crisis intervention, with more trained people available to support the work.

Youth Aiding Youth is a popular program within Halton C&YS.

For the past 20 years it has been matching young children who need a buddy with teenagers aged 16 to 20 years.

At present there are several children on a list waiting for the commitment and support of a special friend.

"It takes a special kind of teen to commit themselves to a young person who has special needs," said Ms Cook.

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The following establishment has applied to the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario for a liquor licence under the Liquor Licence Act:

Application for a Sale Licence
Milton Social & Singles Club
77 Thompson Road, Milton

Any resident of the municipality may make a written submission as to whether the issuance of the licence is in the public interest having regard to the needs and wishes of the residents. Submissions must be received no later than **April 17, 2004**. Please include your name, address and telephone number. If a petition is submitted to the Commission, please identify the designated contact person.

Note:
The AGCO gives the applicant copies of any objections.

Submissions to be sent to:
Licensing and Registration Department
Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario
20 Dundas St. W., 7th Floor
Toronto, ON M5G 2N6
Fax: 416-326-5555
E-mail: licensing@agco.on.ca