

Halton Women's Place counsellors, support staff on strike; shelter open



Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Striking Halton Women's Place workers picket on Ontario Street.

Picket lines went up at a local shelter for abused women Wednesday morning.

Front-line counsellors and support staff of Halton Women's Place, members of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 1.001, walked off the job over a breakdown in contract talks. The 33 workers affected provide services to Milton, Halton Hills, Oakville and Burlington.

Union representative Pansy Donaldson said the shelter employees were forced to go on strike after management refused to make an offer Tuesday, or meet face to face with the union.

She said Halton Women's Place has offered the workers nothing since their previous contract expired December 31 last year.

"It is a shameful way to treat these dedicated workers. They must be valued for the work they do," Ms Donaldson said.

In this week's provincial budget, the McGuinty government announced a long overdue increase to agencies that provide prevention and early intervention services for children and families at risk.

"There is no excuse for Halton Women's Place not to negotiate with its staff, the

"It is a shameful way to treat these dedicated workers."

PANSY DONALDSON

money is available," said Ms Donaldson.

"In fact, funding for community and social services will increase by over \$1 billion by 2007-08 according to Ontario's new budget."

The shelter's business manager, Sandra Pemberton, has declined to comment on the labour situation at Halton Women's Place.

Counsellors require a university degree in order to qualify for employment. Right now, they earn between \$37,410 and \$42,247.

SEIU Local 1.001 is a 40,000-member, province-wide local union affiliated with the largest union in North America, the 1.6 million-member Service Employees International Union.

The shelter in Milton remains open.

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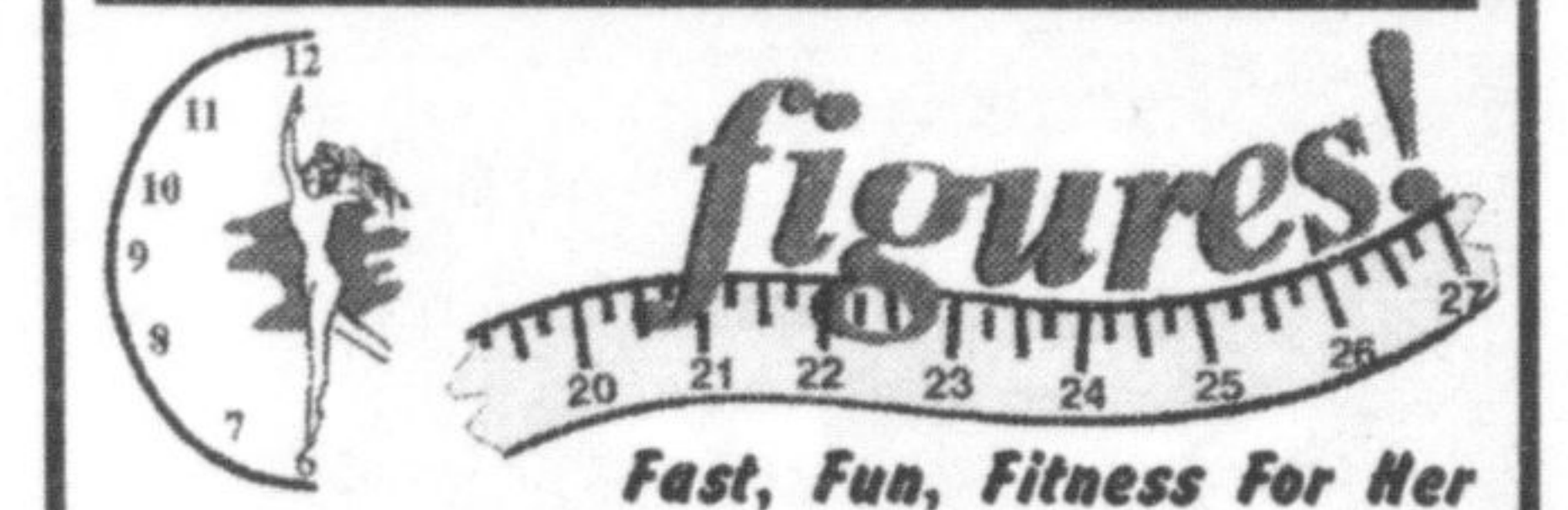
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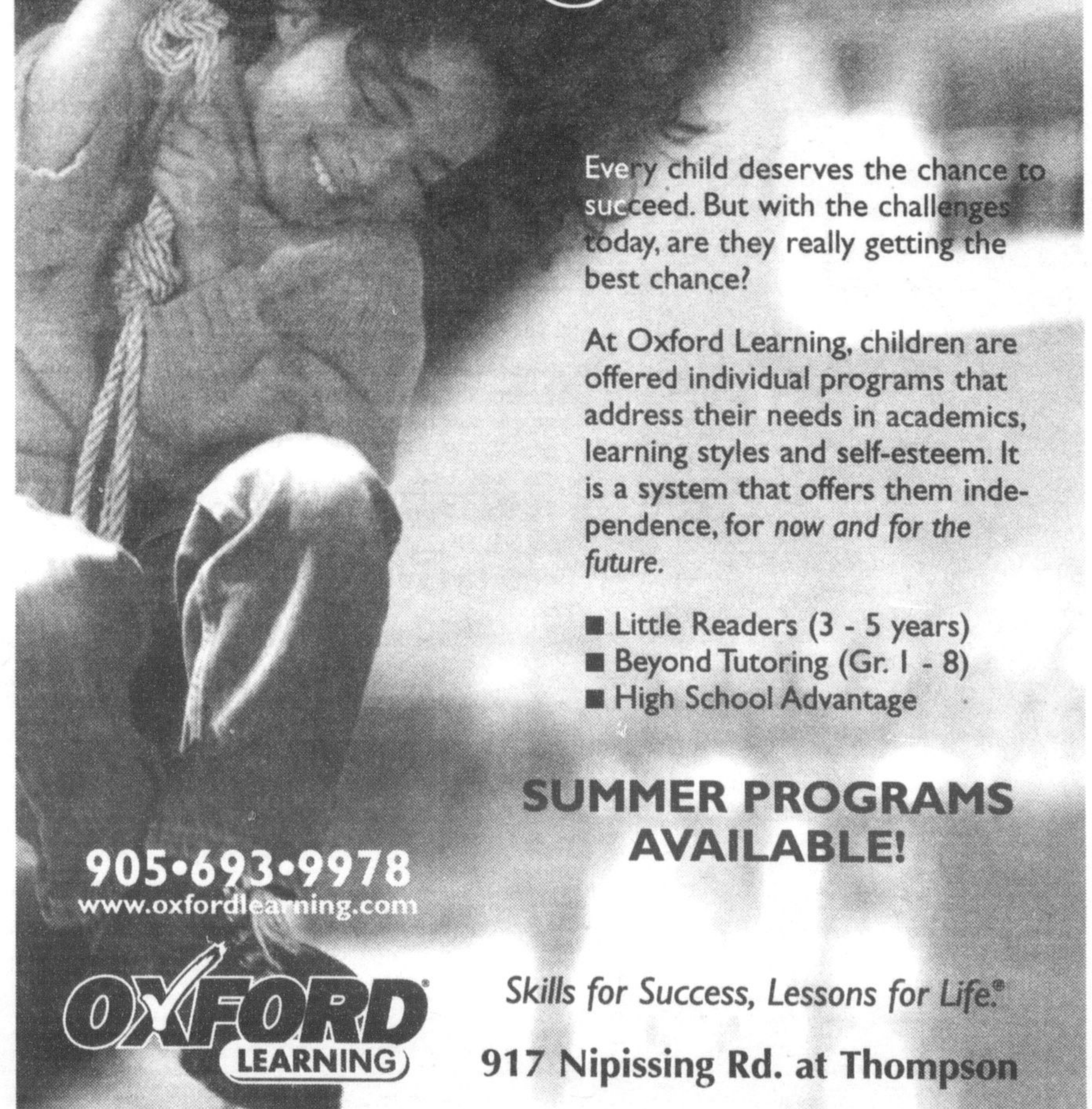
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