

Champion Country

Covering Rural Halton & Wellington County

New directory offers guided tour of area farms

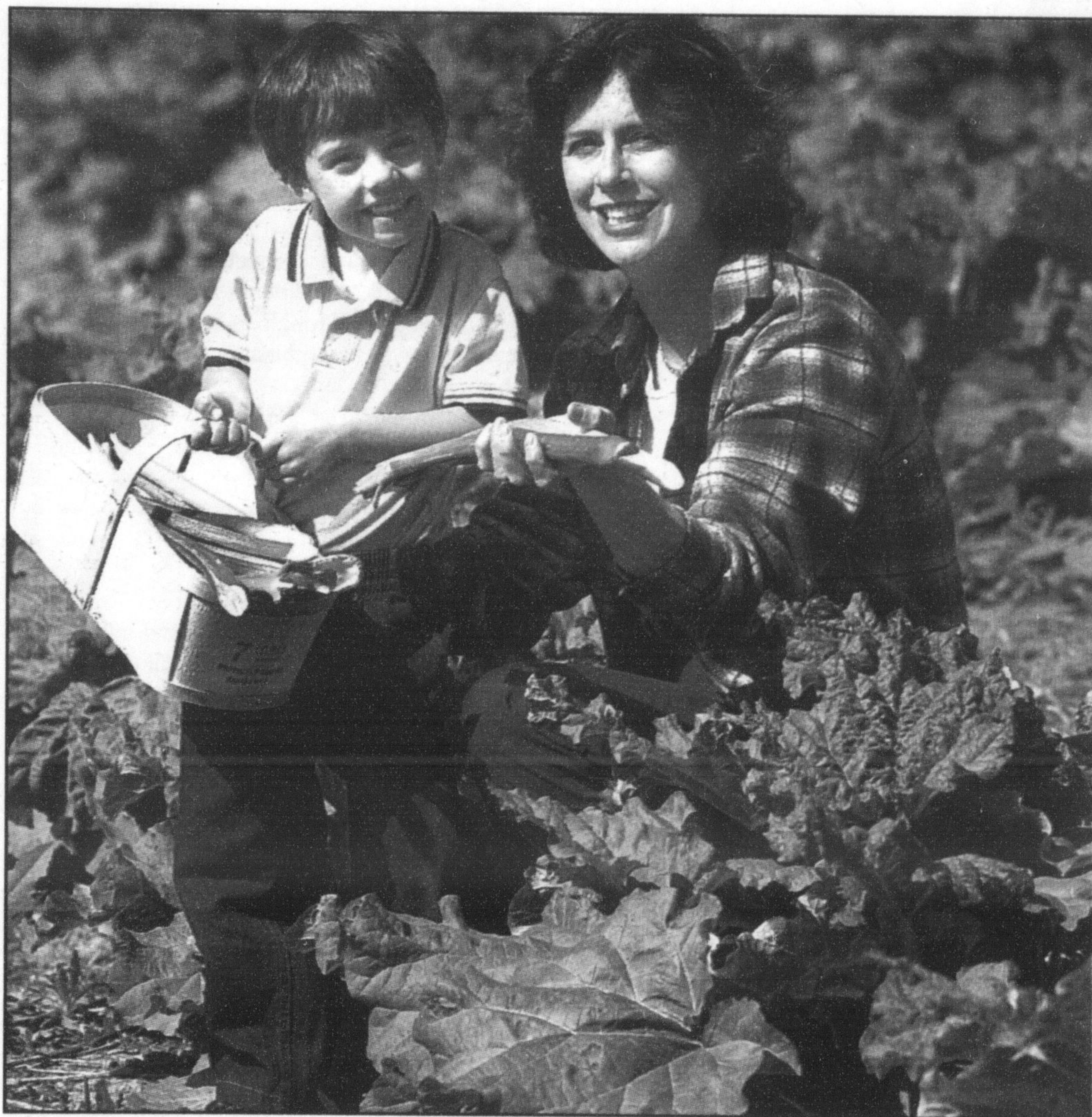


Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Oakville's Lorraine Rohm gets some help picking rhubarb from son Adam Farrow, 5, at Andrews Scenic Acres, which has rhubarb ready for picking until mid-June.

By **STEPHANIE THIESSEN**
The Champion

If things continue as they are, this season will be another late one for strawberries.

For many of us, that means we simply have to wait a bit longer for treats like fresh Ontario strawberries and cream and strawberry rhubarb pie.

But for Milton farmer Bert Andrews, it means much more. It means people will come to his farm looking for strawberries when there aren't any and be off cottaging and enjoying other summer pursuits when his fields are still plentiful.

Like any businessman, his profit won't be what he'd hoped.

With local farmers facing challenges of which many of us have no clue, Mr. Andrews is supportive of every 'buy local' push he can get. And right now, the latest is the Region's 'Guided Tour of Halton Farms' directory, which Halton residents can pick up and keep as a handy reference.

Lots of information

Inside the colourful brochure is a listing of Halton farms with a description of what they offer and when. Information ranges from where to pick your own produce to which farms have horseback riding to where you can go to cut your own Christmas tree.

The directory is part of the Region's Simply Local initiative, which is funded by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care through the Choices 4 Health program.

"Halton still has a lot of respect and values agriculture," said Regional chair Joyce

Savoline. "It's our heritage."

She said farms are family businesses that need to be supported, and Halton Region is proud to do just that through initiatives like the brochure.

"We need to continue to foster a strong agricultural industry."

She added that the nutritional advantages of buying local produce can't be overlooked.

"The food closest to home is probably the freshest, most nutritious," she said.

Mr. Andrews said he thinks the public largely doesn't understand just how important it is to support local farmers. The benefits are numerous, he said. For one, it supports the economy. Jobs are created when farmers like Mr. Andrews pay workers to plant, weed, cultivate and harvest.

"The farm directory makes local people aware of local farms and once they're aware, it contributes to the economy (because they'll buy more locally)."

He added produce bought from a local farm is also healthier, and the very act of walking around a farm and picking your own fruits or vegetables is good for your heart — not to mention it's a lot of fun and educates people about the workings of a farm.

Copies of the farm directory are available at the Halton Regional Centre, 1151 Bronte Rd. in Oakville, or by e-mailing accesshalton@region.halton.on.ca. You can also print a downloadable version on the Region's Web site at www.region.halton.on.ca.

If you have any questions about the Simply Local initiative, call Halton Region at (905) 825-6000.

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