Youths call for more recreational opportunities at forum

Say there's just not enough for young people to do in Halton

By MELANIE HENNESSEY
The Champion

About 200 local residents turned out to the Region's Truth About Youth forum October 7 to discuss what's being done throughout Halton to meet youths' needs and determine what still has to be accomplished.

Key topics of the session included transportation, youth centres, youth/police relations and housing, which were all charted on large sheets of paper mounted on the wall by organizational and community development consultant Dave Hasbury.

"The input here today is really important," Regional Chair Joyce Savoline told the crowd, which included everyone from teens to police and politicians. "We want to make our community here in Halton a friendly place for youth."

Grade 12 Burlington student Richard Huggins, who's also a member of the communications working group that helped plan and promote the forum, attended the session to voice some concerns.

"I think Halton needs more things for youth to do," he said.

He added that he would also like to see business people in Halton become more accepting of youth when they enter their stores.

Being closely involved in the Truth About Youth process, Mr. Huggins said he's learned that his voice can be heard.

"Halton really is interested in what you (youths) have to say," he said.

Another local youth on hand at the forum was Killian Hobbs, a grade 10 Milton student and member of the Halton Regional Youth Advisory Committee, who said more money is needed from the Region to get some youth initiatives off the ground.

"I think they have to increase funding toward youth centres," he said. "Also, put more money toward youth in general for advocacy campaigns and various other youth-friendly programs."

Halton Special Projects Manager Tanja Schlabitz said she saw a lot of common themes brought up amongst the group at the forum, such as: the need for youth centres, the challenge of navigating the Region through the transit system and the need for affordable, emergency and transitional housing.

She noted positive aspects of what's being done throughout the region for youth were also recognized, like providing excellent recreation facilities and youth service groups.

The Truth About Youth initiative all started last May when regional council approved a plan that engages youth and the community in discussions, problem solving and action planning based on the theme

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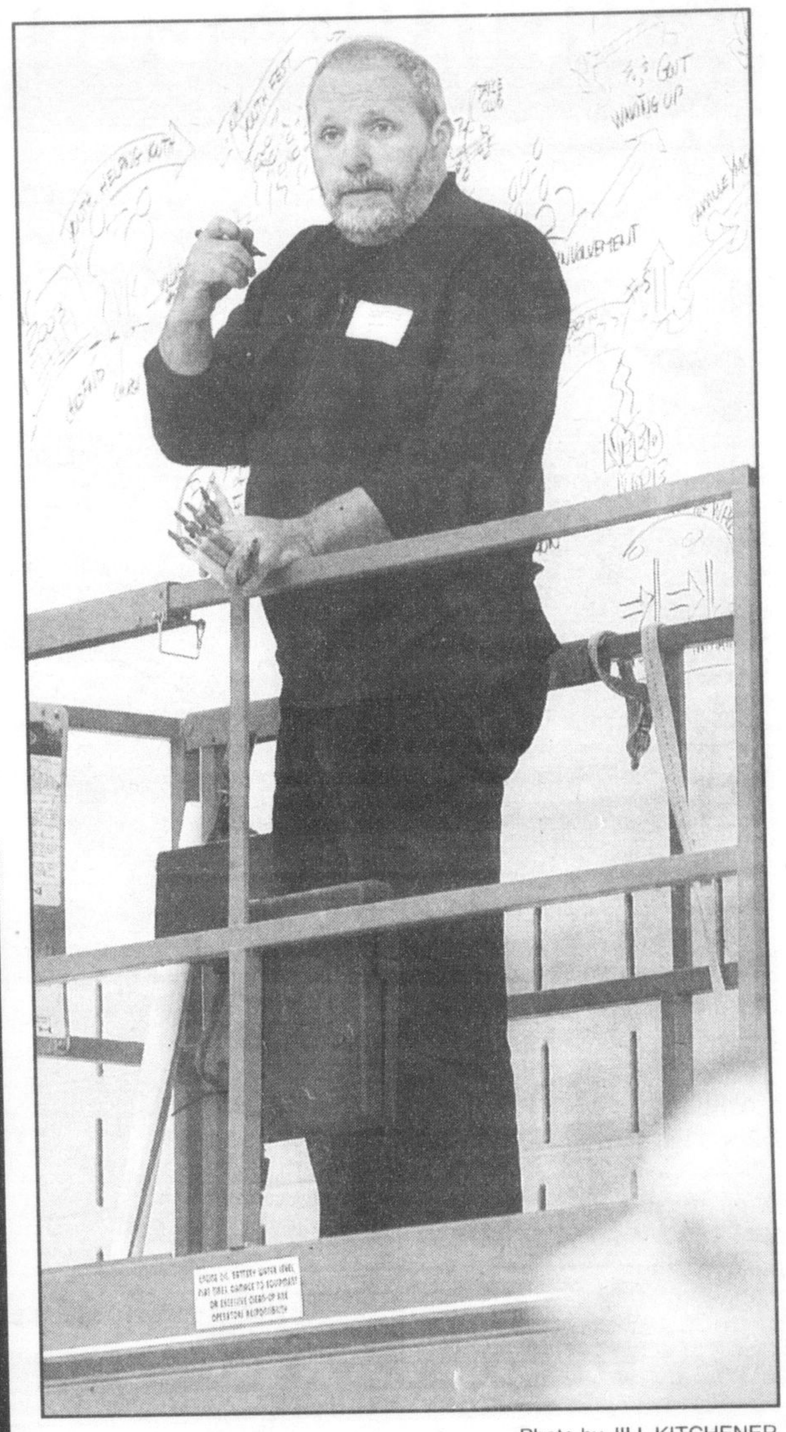

Photo by JILL KITCHENER

Dave Hasbury stands above a crowd and recites back ideas about Halton youth services after illustrating comments from groups during the 'Truth About Youth'.

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