



Community Page

Milton's Gary Allan High School offers unique approach to high school education

By **STEPHANIE THIESSEN**
The Champion

Miltonian Earl Wells knows first hand that getting an education comes with a price.

For him, that price includes long days and short nights. In the morning, he's just like any other student, taking classes at Gary Allan High School to earn his high school diploma.

But by the afternoon, he's working a full-time job — one that doesn't end until midnight. He catches what little sleep he can each night before waking for school the next morning.

Still, there isn't the slightest hesitation when Mr. Wells says the hectic schedule is worth it.

You see, Mr. Wells, 41, missed out on earning his high school diploma the first time around. As a teenager, he was lured to the working world before graduating.

And so for the past two years, he's been taking classes at Gary Allan High School on Ontario Street — an alternative school designed for students pursuing their education in a non-traditional manner.

"It'll be weird putting on the graduation cap," Mr. Wells said, taking a break from his studies. "When I was younger, I'd see all these older people graduating and say, 'Look at those old people!'"

Now, he said, his attitude is different.

"My perspective on education changed a lot since I had kids."

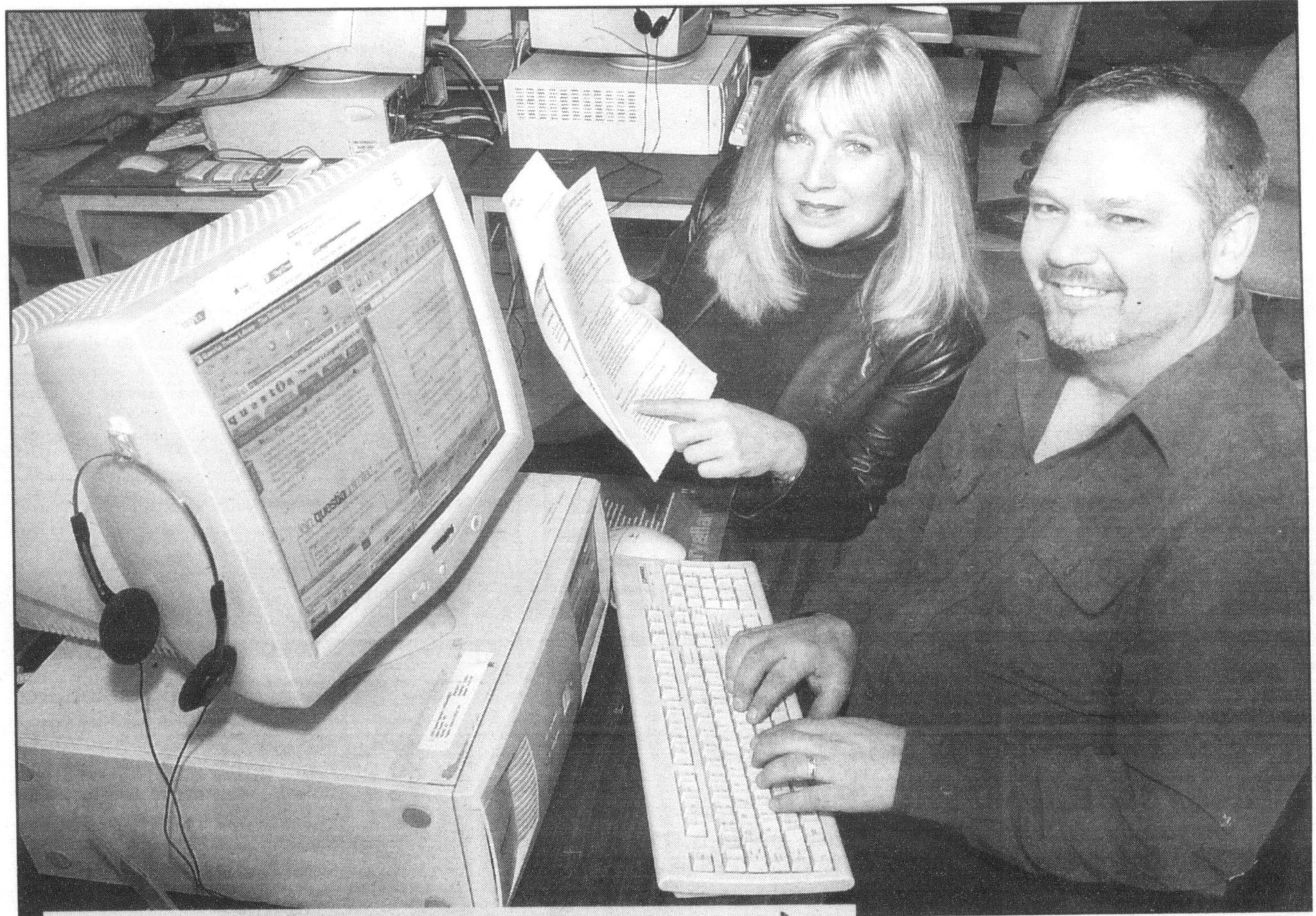
The newly-renovated Milton school offers high school credits outside of the usual high school setting, providing for flexible timetables and some evening hours. There are no scheduled classes, but an independent study format. Students can register at any time during the school year.

The reasons students attend the school are varied, said Milton site supervisor Jan Burns.

A 17-year-old raring to go might take a few courses to graduate early. An 86-year-old who currently takes classes wants to keep his mind active and have a place he can go everyday to socialize.

And people like Mr. Wells, who didn't complete high school, can take care of some "unfinished business," Ms Burns said.

There are also students who need to complete a few courses as college, university or apprenticeship pre-requisites, and students who decide mid-career they want to spend their remaining working years doing something different. Still others want to update their skills to advance their careers.



Gary Allan High School site supervisor Jan Burns goes over an assignment with student Earl Wells.

Photo by **GRAHAM PAINE**

"A diverse group comes to the high school," said Ms Burns, who has been working in some capacity in alternative education for eight years.

Gary Allan High School offers courses at a grade 10 to 12 level, as well as some at the workplace, college and university levels — in math, English, business, computer, science, and social science.

Teachers work one-on-one with students, who are required to attend at least six-and-a-half hours each week, per course. A \$35 registration fee is all that's required.

Under the umbrella of the Gary Allan High School are other alternative programs including STEP (Secondary Teen Education Program) and TEAM (Teen Education and Motherhood).

There are Gary Allan locations in Burlington, Georgetown and Oakville, as well as Milton.

Although Mr. Wells already has his GED (general equivalency diploma), he said he wants to earn his high school diploma to give him an edge as he works closer to his goal of earning his millwright diploma. Right now, he's an industrial maintenance mechanic.

"It seems that everything from high school has been leading up to this occupation," he said of being a millwright. "Everything points to this."

He said he hopes to write the millwright test next year.

Mr. Wells said he didn't return to school just for himself. He also did it to set an example for his three teenaged children. "I'm also here to

help my daughter — to show her that learning never ends," he said, adding his daughter, 19, also takes courses at the school.

There will be one problem once he reaches his goal, Mr. Wells noted.

"I'll be bored," he joked.

More seriously he added: "I'll be able to breathe and not have so much work on my shoulders."

It's through helping students like Mr. Wells reach their potential that Ms Burns said she knows she's in the right profession.

"We're always capable of more than we think we are," she said. "But unless we challenge ourselves, we'll never find out."

For more information on any of Gary Allan's programs, visit www.garyallan.ca or call (905) 878-2244.

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**Cogeco Cable
Channel 14**

Programming Schedule — Tuesday, November 2 - Monday, November 8, 2004

Tuesday, November 2	Wednesday, November 3	Thursday, November 4	Friday, November 5	Saturday, November 6	Sunday, November 7	Monday, November 8
9, 10, 11am & 12:30pm Plugged In!	9 & 10, 11am Plugged In!	9 & 10am Plugged In!	9, 10, 11am & 12:30pm Plugged In!	Midnight - 5:00am Plugged In! EXTRA	Midnight - 5:00am Plugged In! EXTRA	Midnight - 5:00am Plugged In! EXTRA
1:00pm SportsZone Live (Replay)	10:30am Seniors Showcase	10:30am Seniors Showcase	10:30am The War Amps Present Swap Talk (Replay)	8:00am - 10:30am Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am - 10:30am Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am - 11:00am Plugged In! EXTRA
5pm, 6pm & 7:30pm Plugged In!	5pm, 6pm & 7:30pm Plugged In!	Noon Milton Council Oct 25, 2004 Plugged In!	11:30am Osler Health Connection Plugged In! EXTRA	3:00pm TVCogeco Sports: HS Football - Jr. Final	10:30am TVCogeco Sports: HS Football - Jr. Final	11:00am Osler Health Connection
5:30pm Seniors Showcase	5:30pm PeopleSpeak The War Amps present...	5pm, 6pm & 7:30pm Seniors Showcase	5pm & 6pm Osler Health Connection	5:00pm TVCogeco Sports: HS Football - Sr. Div 1 Final	12:30pm TVCogeco Sports: HS Football - Sr. Div 1 Final	11:30am Plugged In! EXTRA
6:30pm Optimist TV Bingo	7:30pm Swap Talk (Live)	5:30pm 6:30pm Osler Health Connection	7:00pm TVCogeco Sports: OUA Hockey: Burl. vs Oak	7:00pm TVCogeco Sports: OUA Football - Semi Final	2:30pm - 6:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	12:30pm PeopleSpeak
	8:30pm Auto Experts (Live)	7:00pm Milton Council Nov 3, 2004	7:30pm Plugged In! EXTRA	10:00pm - Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA	6:00pm TVCogeco Sports: Jr.A Hockey: Burl. vs Oak	1:00pm The War Amps present...
	9:00pm				10:00pm - Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA	2:00pm - 8:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA
						8:00pm SportsZONE Live

AHL Hockey, Live on TVCogeco! Cleveland vs Hamilton Friday, 7:30pm