

New anti-bullying program being tested in area schools

By **KIM ARNOTT**

Special to The Champion

An anti-bullying initiative that aims to bring parents, teachers and students together to develop school-based solutions is being piloted in two Halton Catholic elementary schools.

The program, entitled Working Together, is designed to "raise awareness on a prolonged basis," according to Theresa Wilson, the board's chief social worker.

"It's not just about teaching kids about bullying," she told board trustees at a meeting last Tuesday. "It's about teaching kids about the other skills they need in a school setting — friendship skills, empathy, assertiveness and resolving conflict skills."

The pilot schools — St. Gabriel in Burlington and St. Andrew in Oakville — were chosen not

because of any specific bullying problems, but because they both were keenly interested in the subject and had already undertaken some anti-bullying work, said Ms Wilson.

As part of the project, aimed at kindergarten to grade 8 students, a child and youth counsellor spends one day per week in each of the schools training staff, providing classroom activities and lessons to the students and communicating with parents.

The staff education component of the project provides teachers with some scripts they can use when confronted with bullies, victims and bystanders.

"Often teachers will say, 'I'm aware, but I'm just not sure what to do about it,'" explained Ms Wilson.

The program also includes regular communication that goes home

to parents, including monthly newsletters.

Grade 4 to 8 students participating in the project were initially surveyed about their school experiences. Follow-up surveys with the kids, as well as input from staff and parents will help to evaluate the success of the program, Ms Wilson noted.

A project resource binder has been created and is being distributed to all Catholic elementary schools in the region. The pilot project is expected to be expanded to three additional schools in early 2005.

A presentation on the program is posted on the school board's Web site (www.haltonrc.edu.on.ca) under the school council link.

"This program, I think, really encompasses our Catholic values and our Catholic philosophy," said Ms Wilson.

Trial date set for 15-year-old

The trial of a 15-year-old boy police allege helped transport the bodies of two slain men — including Milton's Joseph Manchisi — to Quebec will be held in Brampton May 30, 31 and June 1, 2005.

The trial date was set October 28 when the boy — whose name isn't being released by police — appeared at Ontario Court of Justice in Brampton.

Peel Regional Police charged the accused with two counts of accessory after the fact to murder April 12,

when he was 14 years old.

The bodies of 22-year-old Robert Grewal, from Mississauga, and Mr. Manchisi, 20, were discovered in a rural area south of Montreal.

Mr. Manchisi's remains were found in April.

Chief suspect and convicted pedophile Douglas Moore, 36, killed himself at Maplehurst Correctional Centre April 2 before he could be charged with their murders.

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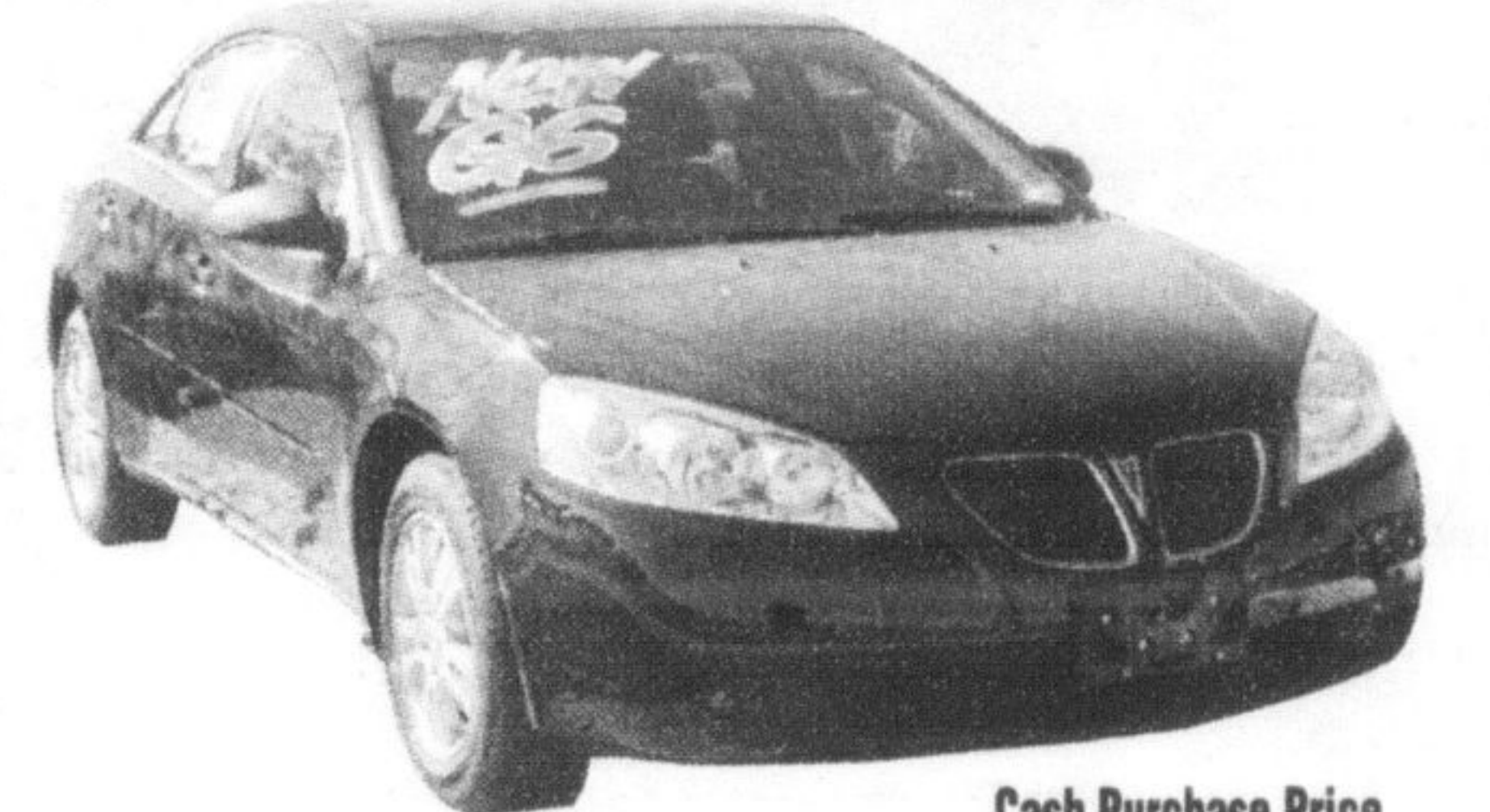
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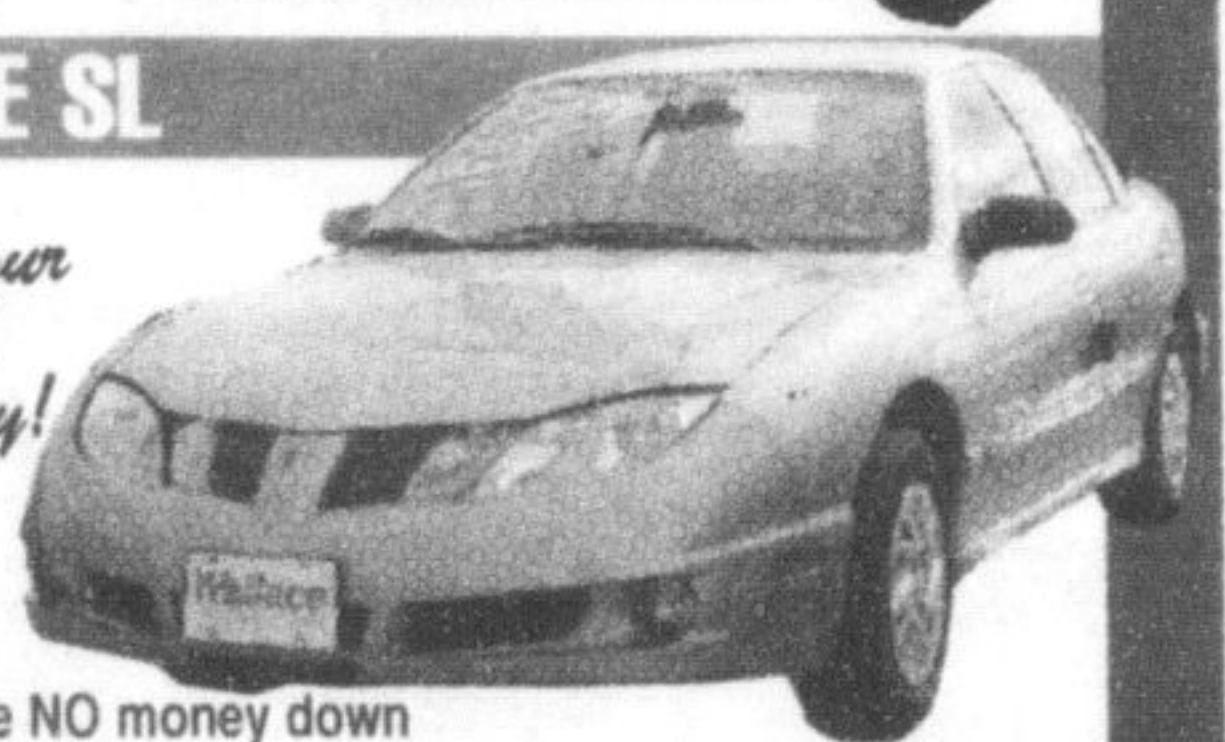
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