



Community Page

Grenada-bound teens eagerly await trip

MD students to help rebuild hurricane-ravaged country

By **STEPHANIE THIESSEN**

The Champion

It was while in Japan trying to figure out his life that Milton District High School teacher Geoff Orton had an epiphany — but not before some painstaking self examination.

“What was I doing with my life?” was among the questions he asked himself during last year’s trip.

“It (life) wasn’t going as I thought it should,” he said, explaining he thought of himself as a sort of world explorer packed full of experiences — but didn’t know how to make use of that in the classroom.

That’s when the realization came.

“I figured out I had the whole thing backwards. Rather than bringing the world into the classroom, I needed to bring the classroom into the world,” he said.

So when a parent familiar with the devastation in Grenada resulting from a hurricane presented the idea of a student humanitarian trip, Mr. Orton jumped at the opportunity.

He now senses a newfound purpose in life and teaching, and has 33 students — from grades nine to 12 — and six staff members who’ve jumped on-board.

The trip will take place from March 12 to 26. The group will be helping the people of Grenada rebuild and repair after September’s Hurricane Ivan, which wreaked destruction. Grenada’s economy depends on tourism and the spice industry — both largely affected by the hurricane.

Mr. Orton said the group should be able to build about 11 homes in the town of Corinth in the two weeks they’ll be there. Mattamy Homes has agreed to partner with the group to provide the necessary expertise to make the project possible.

Grade 12 student Ashley Clerici, 17, said she feels good knowing she’s going to help people first hand, instead of simply giving money.

Although she doesn’t have any experience building, other students do, and they’ll receive training, she said.

“It’s going to be a good learning experience,” Ashley said, adding at this point, she has no reservations about the trip and is purely excited.

Part of the learning experience will be “roughing it”. Ashley explained the girls will be staying in the basement of a church, while the boys stay



From left, Milton District High School students Logan Koeth, Alex Brennan, Aaron Fair, David Band, Brittany Russell and Ryan Hodgins show off some of the tools they’ll be using on their upcoming trip to Grenada.

Photo by **GRAHAM PAINE**

at an equally un-luxurious compound.

Mr. Orton explained that this isn’t simply a trip for the students. It’s a project. The young people have been learning about Grenada in class, and are each doing their share of fundraising — including approaching major corporations.

That’s one of the largest challenges the group has faced, Mr. Orton said. They’ve set a lofty goal — \$120,000. Most of the funds will go toward building supplies, while some — about \$15,000 — will go to resources for a high school they’ve adopted in Grenada.

Each student has to pay \$1,500 for his or her travelling costs, but half of the money each student raises will go toward their expenses — an added incentive, Mr. Orton said.

But the money isn’t there yet. So far, they’ve managed to raise \$15,000 to \$20,000.

Mr. Orton said he’s hoping the media attention the project has garnered will soon turn the tide. So far, stories have appeared in the Toronto Star, and the group hopes to get on CBC radio. Exposure on TV is also a possibility.

“We have probably half-a-dozen media contacts,” Mr. Orton said.

He added he had no idea so many students would jump onboard, originally thinking he might get a handful involved.

He said he thinks many adults sell young people short. They really do want to do their part to change the world, he said.

“Why should you or I sit on our backsides and wait for CEOs and politicians to improve the world — why not do it ourselves?”

Something else Mr. Orton said he realized is that “so much of the high school curriculum caters to academic people.”

This trip, he said, is something the average C-plus student can get involved in and feel good about. In fact, he said it’s the students who’ve never shone in school who seem to be raising the most money and throwing themselves into the project.

“It’s a project that reaches out to all students,” he said.

Mr. Orton visited Grenada last month to get a better grasp of what the island needs, and met with contacts including the principal of the school the group hopes to adopt and a local pastor who’ll work with them.

It was a trip he won’t soon forget, he said.

“I was blown away. I travel all over the world — I’ve done the backpacking thing to Indonesia and Thailand. And this is the first time I’ve been touched emotionally.”

Donations can be mailed to Milton District High School at 396 Williams Ave., Milton, L9T 2G4. As a registered charity, tax receipts will be issued for any financial donations over \$25.

Food, medical and building supplies are also being collected. A list of needed building supplies is included on the group’s Web site at www.mdshelpsgrenada.org.

For more information, call Geoff Orton at (905) 878-2839 or e-mail him at Geoff@mdshelpsgrenada.org.

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Programming Schedule – Tuesday, February 8 - Monday, February 14, 2005

Tuesday, February 8		Wednesday, February 9		Thursday, February 10		Friday, February 11		Saturday, February 12		Sunday, February 13		Monday, February 14	
Midnight - 5:00am	Plugged In! EXTRA	1:00am - 5:00am	Plugged In! EXTRA	1:00am-5:00am	Plugged In! EXTRA	Midnight - 5:00am	Plugged In! EXTRA	Midnight - 5:00am	Plugged In! EXTRA	Midnight - 5:00am	Plugged In! EXTRA	Midnight - 5:00am	Plugged In! EXTRA
8:00am-5:00pm	Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am-11:00am	Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am-Noon	Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am-11:00am	Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am-10:30am	Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am-10:30am	Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am-11:00am	Plugged In! EXTRA
11:00am	Living Healthy: Living with Prostate Cancer	11:00am	Halton Hills Council Feb 7	Noon	Swap Talk (Replay)	11:00am	Halton Region Council Feb 9	10:30am	TVCogeco Sports: Jr. A Hockey - Playoffs Team TBA	10:30am	TVCogeco Sports: Jr. A Hockey - Playoffs Team TBA	11:00am	Plugged In! EXTRA
12:00pm-1:30pm	Plugged In! EXTRA	1:30pm	2005 KIA Cup Curling (Live)	1:00pm	Living Healthy: Living with Prostate Cancer	1:30pm	2005 KIA Cup Curling (Live)	1:30pm	2005 KIA Cup Curling (Live)	1:30pm	2005 KIA Cup Curling (Live)	11:00am	Oster Health Connection
1:30pm	2005 KIA Cup Curling (Live)	5:00pm	Plugged In! EXTRA	1:30pm	2005 KIA Cup Curling (Live)	5:00pm	Plugged In! EXTRA	4:00pm	TVCogeco Sports: Jr. A Hockey - Playoffs Teams TBA	4:00pm	TVCogeco Sports: Jr. A Hockey - Playoffs Teams TBA	11:30am	Plugged In! EXTRA
5:00pm	Plugged In! EXTRA	6:00pm	Simply Halton	5:00pm	Plugged In! EXTRA	6:00pm	Plugged In! EXTRA	7:00pm	2005 KIA Cup Curling (Live)	7:00pm	2005 KIA Cup Curling (Live)	12:30pm	Simply Halton
6:00pm	Oster Health Connection	6:30pm	Plugged In! EXTRA	6:00pm	Simply Halton	6:00pm	Simply Halton	10:00pm-Midnight	Plugged In! EXTRA	10:00pm-Midnight	Plugged In! EXTRA	6:00pm	Plugged In! EXTRA
6:30pm	Optimist TV Bingo (Live)	7:30pm	Swap Talk (Live)	6:30pm	Oster Health Connection	6:30pm	Oster Health Connection	8:00pm	Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00pm	Plugged In! EXTRA	6:00pm	Living Healthy: Living with Prostate Cancer
7:30pm	Simply Halton	8:30pm	Auto Experts	7:00pm	2005 KIA Cup Curling (Live)	7:00pm	2005 KIA Cup Curling (Live)	8:00pm	Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00pm	Plugged In! EXTRA	7:00pm	Plugged In! EXTRA
8:00pm	Halton Hills Council Feb 7	9:00pm	Living Healthy: Living with Prostate Cancer	10:00pm	Halton Region Council Feb 9	10:00pm	Halton Region Council Feb 9	Midnight	Plugged In! EXTRA	Midnight	Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00pm	SportsZone Live
11:00pm-Midnight	Plugged In! EXTRA	10:00pm-Midnight	Plugged In! EXTRA	Midnight	Plugged In! EXTRA	Midnight	Plugged In! EXTRA						

LIVE KIA Cup Curling - Daily 1:30pm & Thur-Sat 7pm. Final Game: Sunday, 1:30pm