



# Community Page

## Coming this spring: new youth drop-in centre

*Local duo starting up The Deck in basement of Milton Bible Church*

By **STEPHANIE THIESSEN**  
*The Champion*

**N**o movie theatre. No bowling alley. Nothing to do.

Although Milton is often praised by parents as a great place to raise a family, teens sometimes have a different take on its trademark 'small town atmosphere' — and two young adults are refusing to turn a blind eye to the fact that boredom can often lead youth down a dangerous path.

In an effort to combat the 'nothing to do' syndrome, Oliver Clarke, 25, and Karen Farquharson, 24, are teaming up with local churches and Youth For Christ, a Christian organization, to open a youth drop-in centre. Dubbed The Deck, the drop-in centre will be for grades six to 12 and will be located in the basement of Main Street's Milton Bible Church. It'll open its doors sometime this spring.

"Teens in Milton have nothing to do," Ms Farquharson said. "I see this as a place for kids to come and hang out in a safe place. It's a place where adults will be there to talk to, but also for them just to be with their friends, goof off and have fun."

With Mr. Clarke as director and Ms Farquharson as a staff member, the centre will initially be open a few nights per week. Renovations to the basement of the church are set to begin any day now. The finished product, Mr. Clarke said, will include a pool table, foos ball, a snack bar and a lounge area.

Mr. Clarke said he hopes teens will feel comfortable talking with the volunteers at The Deck if and when they need to.

"We're there to help out when the kids won't talk to their parents," he said.

Drawing from his experience working at a men's shelter in Toronto, Mr. Clarke said it's a myth that the homeless there are all from big cities.

"There are lots of kids coming from towns like Milton. They're from any category — the rich kids getting the expensive drugs, people who are rebelling (against strict parents), or those who don't have to rebel," he said.

He hopes The Deck will be able to impact kids in a positive way and prevent them from making mistakes that could last the rest of their lives.

To get an idea of what it's like growing up in Milton, Mr. Clarke recently conduct-

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**KAREN FARQUHARSON**

ed an informal survey of 70 teens at the local Pizza Pizza. Not surprisingly, he found there was a significant jump in the level of drug use between 13-year-olds and high schoolers.

"There's a downward spiral in high school," he said. "We're trying to reach them before they get to high school — so we're not playing catch up."

He said he's seen too many ruined lives to sit back and do nothing.

"I see youths in downtown Toronto whose lives are wasted," he said, describing scores of young girls forced into prostitution to support their addictions. "It breaks my heart to see those girls."

Although The Deck will initially be open in the evening, Mr. Clarke said he hopes it'll eventually be open between 3 and 6 p.m. — a time when many teens are often home unsupervised.

For that to happen, more volunteers are needed. The Deck is currently seeking adults who might be interested in helping out with the project.

Ms Farquharson said she knows firsthand the value of having a mentor.

"Growing up, I hated high school. The one thing that helped me get through it was I had a mentor," she said.

She added that although The Deck is sponsored by a Christian organization, and there will be optional Bible studies held on certain nights, it's important that teens know they aren't going to be "preached at."

Numerous local churches are involved in various capacities with The Deck, and it's Ms Farquharson's hope that every church in Milton come on board.

Donations are crucial for the program's success, Mr. Clarke and Ms Farquharson said, noting the Rotary Club has already helped out significantly. But more funds are needed. Those interested in donating can call (905) 876-0368.

Stephanie Thiessen can be reached at [sthiessen@miltoncanadianchampion.com](mailto:sthiessen@miltoncanadianchampion.com).



**Oliver Clarke and Karen Farquharson are planning to open the doors to a new youth drop-in centre at Milton Bible Church.**

Photo by **GRAHAM PAINE**

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NORTH HALTON STUDIO

Laurier Plaza

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**Cogeco Cable Channel 14**

**Programming Schedule — Tuesday, February 15 - Monday, February 21, 2005**

Tuesday, February 15	Wednesday, February 16	Thursday, February 17	Friday, February 18	Saturday, February 19	Sunday, February 20	Monday, February 21
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 - 9:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am - 11:00am Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am - 11:00am Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am - 11:00am Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am - 4:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am - 10:30am Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am - 11:00am Plugged In! EXTRA
11:00am Living Healthy: Cosmetic Surgery	11:00am Osler Health Connection	11:00am Simply Halton	11:00am Simply Halton	4:00pm TVCogeco Sports: Jr A Hockey Milton at Burlington Game 4	10:30am TVCogeco Sports: Jr A Hockey Milton at Burlington Game 4	11:00am TVCogeco Sports: Jr A Hockey Milton at Burlington Game 4
12:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	12:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	12:00pm Swap Talk (Replay)	12:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	12:00pm Living Healthy: Living with Prostate Cancer	1:30pm - 5:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	1:30pm - 5:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA
1:00pm SportsZone (Live)	1:00pm Halton Hills Council Feb 7	1:00pm - 6:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	1:00pm - 6:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	1:00pm Halton Region Council Feb 9	5:00pm Living Healthy: Living with Prostate Cancer	5:00pm Living Healthy: Living with Prostate Cancer
2:00pm - 5:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	4:00pm - 6:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	6:00pm Simply Halton	6:00pm Simply Halton	1:30pm - 5:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	6:00pm Osler Health Connection	6:00pm Osler Health Connection
5:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	6:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	6:30pm Osler Health Connection	6:30pm Osler Health Connection	5:00pm - 9:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	6:30pm Plugged In! EXTRA	6:30pm Plugged In! EXTRA
6:00pm Osler Health Connection	7:30pm Swap Talk (Live)	7:00pm Living Healthy: Living with Prostate Cancer	7:00pm Living Healthy: Living with Prostate Cancer	9:00pm TV Cogeco Sports: Jr A Hockey Milton at Burlington Game 4	7:30pm Simply Halton	7:30pm Simply Halton
6:30pm Optimist TV Bingo (Live)	8:30pm Auto Experts	8:00pm Halton Region Council	8:00pm Halton Region Council	10:00pm - Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA
7:30pm Simply Halton	9:00pm - Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA	9:00pm - Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA	9:00pm - Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA		Midnight	Midnight
8:00pm Halton Hills Council Feb 7					8:00pm SportsZone Live	8:00pm SportsZone Live
11:00pm - Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA						

**Jr. A Hockey Playoffs - Milton at Burlington, Game 4 (Friday, 9pm) & Game 6 (Monday, 9pm)**