## Alcohol poisoning one topic addressed at forum

By MURRAY TOWNSEND

Special to The Champion

Learning how to party isn't normally on the school curriculum but it was the focus of a workshop attended by about 160 Halton high school students at Rattlesnake Point Golf Club last week.

The annual event, Party in the Right Spirit, was organized by the Halton Region Health Department, Halton Regional Police Service and Mothers Against Drunk Driving.

It included guest speakers and presentations, including a talk on alcohol poisoning by Lisa Visser, a public health nurse for Halton Region.

Surprisingly, alcohol poisoning is responsible for more deaths in the United States than drunk driving, she told students.

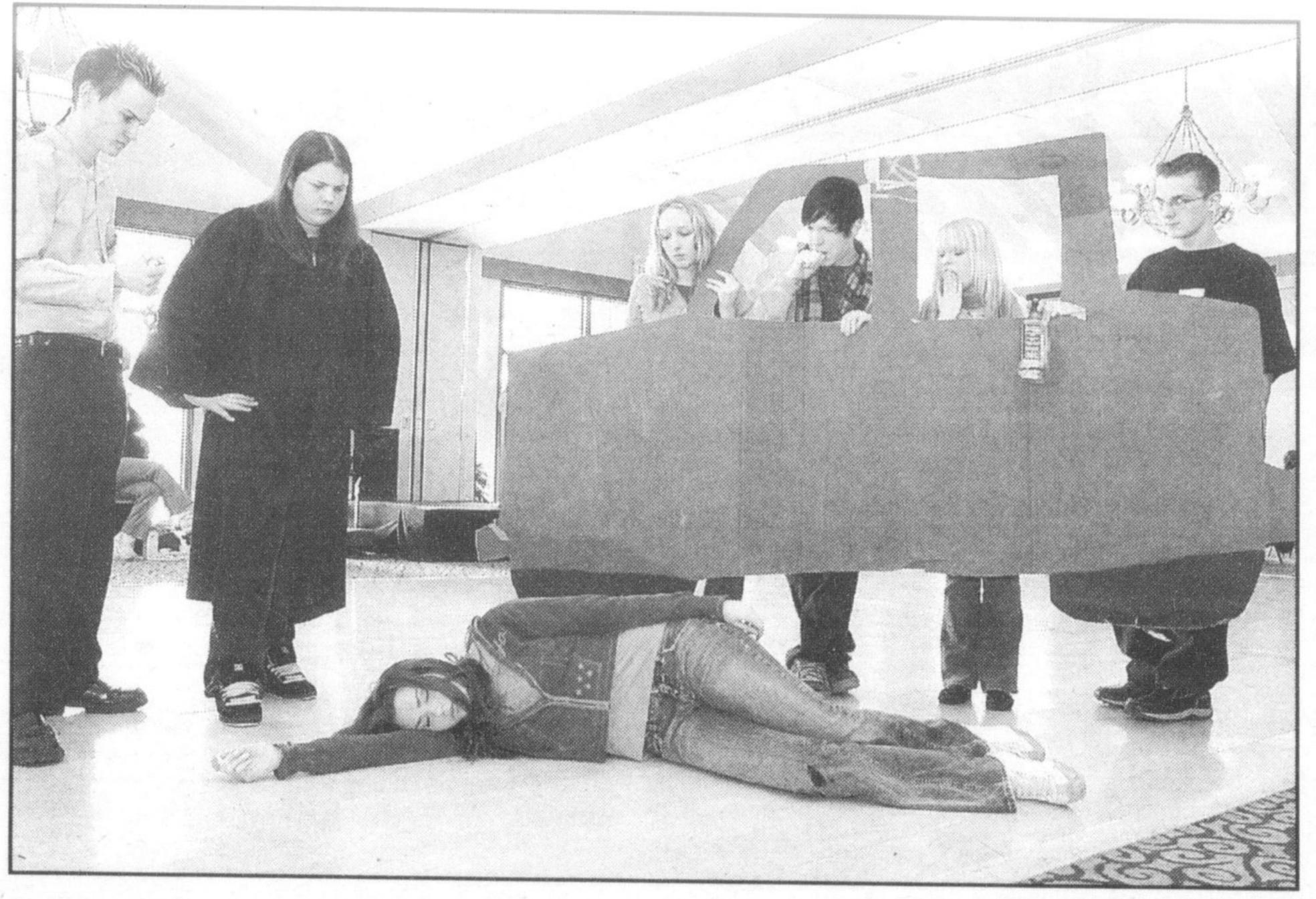
"You don't hear about it as much. You hear about drunk driving deaths because that's something the media can report. The kids just aren't as aware of it and don't realize how serious and easy it is to get."

With alcohol poisoning, in most cases the victim is taken to a hospital from a residence and are then subject to rules of confidentiality, which means fatalities aren't as widely known, she said.

Alcohol poisoning is the severe elevation of a person's blood alcohol concentration, a result of consuming large amounts over a short period of time. Alcohol is a depressant; it slows a person's heart rate and breathing, sometimes to the point where the individual's body no longer can support life. That's why people pass out.

Passing out is one of the symptoms, which also include slow and irregular breathing, blue skin and vomiting. Alcohol affects the gag reflex, which means people can choke on their own vomit.

Ms Visser advised what to do and what not to do in an instance of alcohol poisoning. Coffee isn't a good idea, nor is a cold shower, which



Photos by GRAHAM PAINE

Above and top right, Georgetown high school students perform a short play involving a mock trial and drunk driving incident during the 'Party in the Right Spirit' workshop. Bottom right, a wrecked car placed outside Rattlesnake Point Golf Club says it all.

could send the victim into shock.

What are good ideas, according to Ms Visser, are making sure the person isn't alone, putting them on their side, and calling 911, although sometimes that's a difficult decision to make when it's a party that involves underage drinking. It's a decision, however, that could save someone's life.

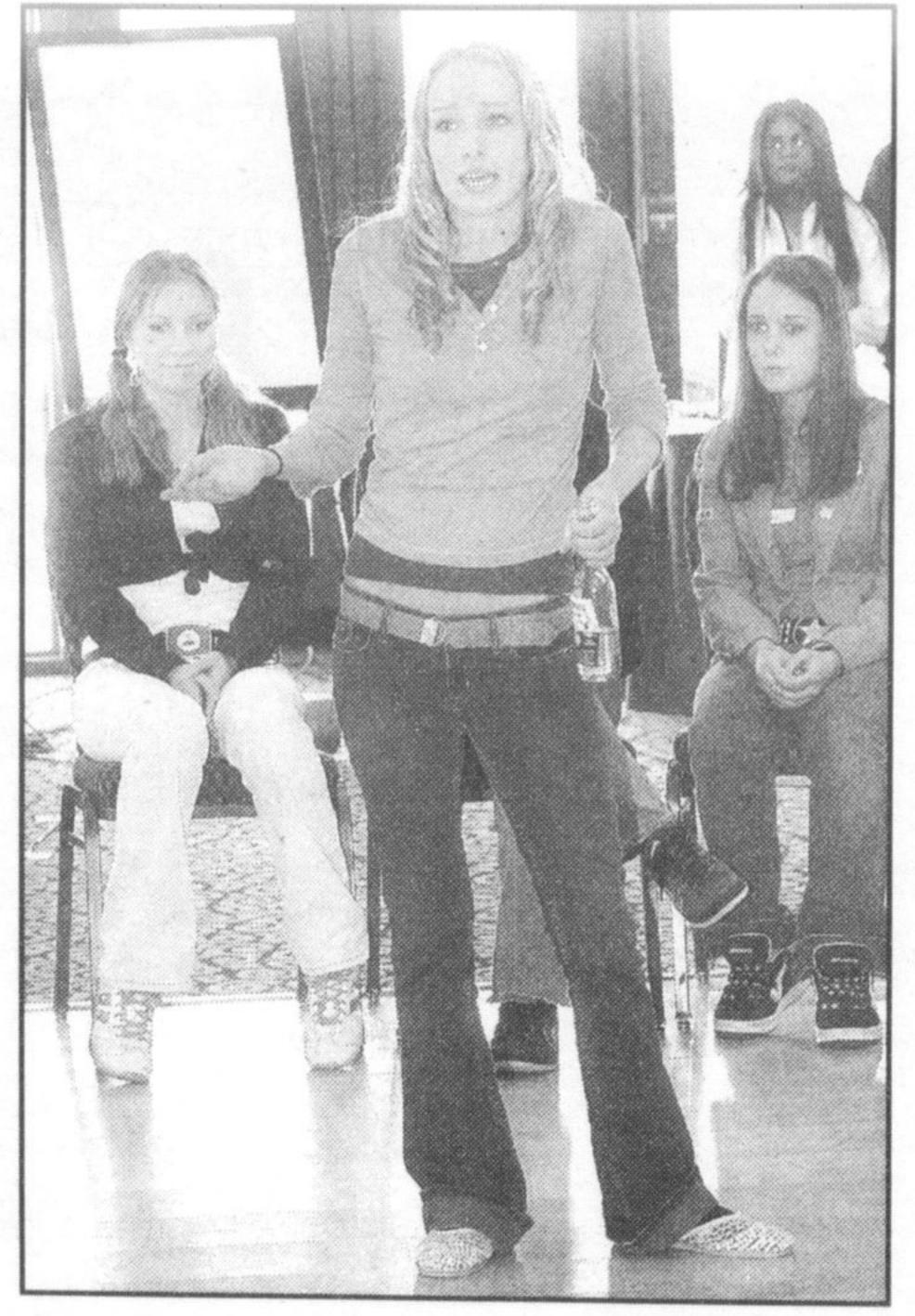
The public health nurse did offer some tips to prevent it from happening. They include eating something first, alternating alcohol drinks with non-alcohol drinks, pacing oneself and avoiding drinking games. And once the party's over, the consequences may still remain, she said.

A person could be sued. Hosts of private parties can be held financially responsible for injuries and damages that involve their intoxicated guests.

She said if a person provides alcohol at a party, it's their responsibility to make sure their guests get home safely, and even if they host a party and don't provide alcohol they're responsible for their guests' safety, even after they leave.

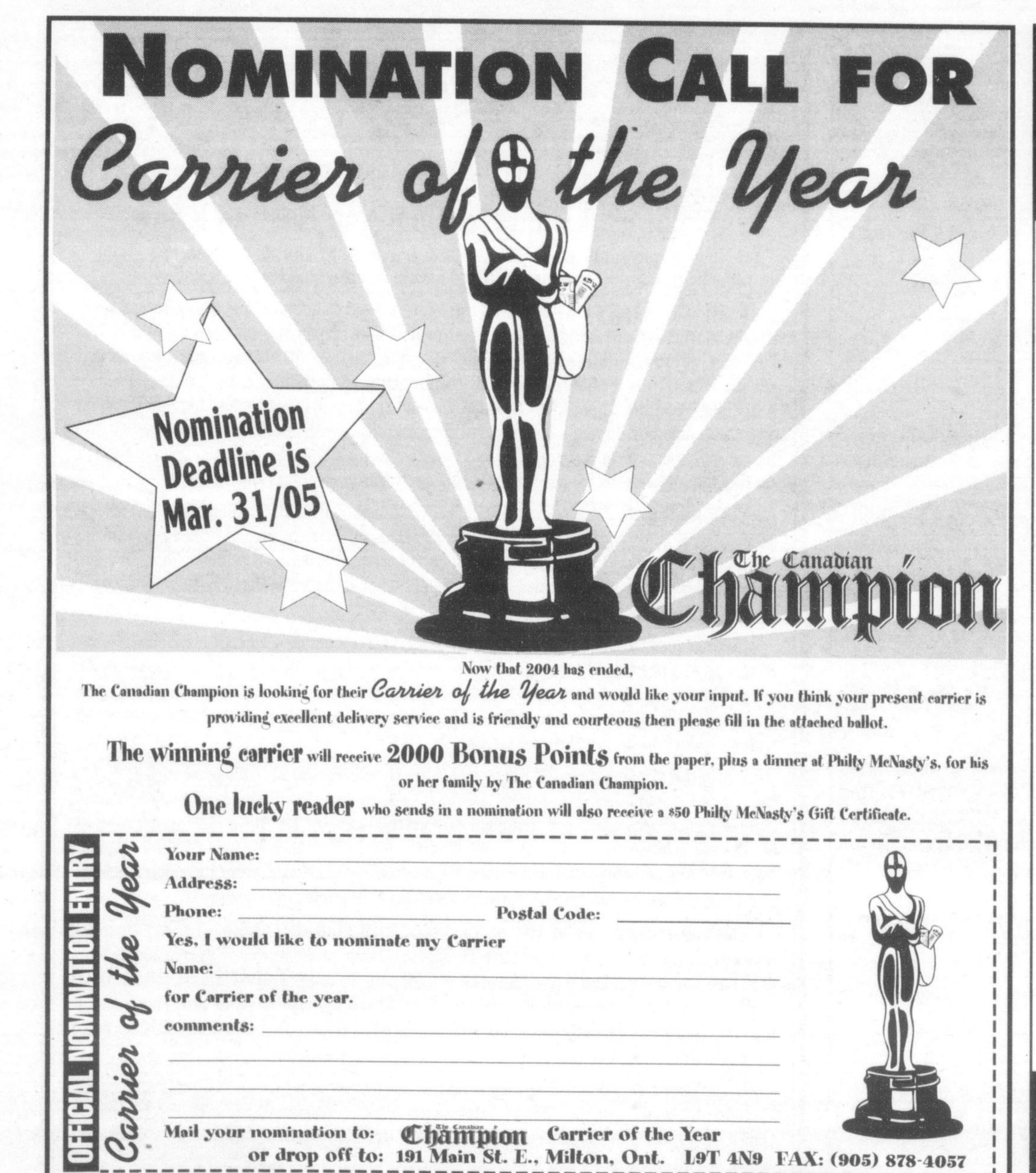
The timing of the workshop is directly related to the time of year when there are lots of formals and grad parties, according to Const. Kate Pulford, community support officer for Milton.

"We grew up in an era in which alcohol was





accepted, but we didn't learn about prevention of alcohol poisoning. We target youth so that they have a better understanding and can make the right decision to keep themselves safe, as well as the kids around them."



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