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Community Page

Couple looks to offer help to troubled teens

By **STEPHANIE THIESSEN**

The Champion

Marg Ridpath and her husband, Ian, have a big heart for teens. As parents of four daughters, they've been through many challenges themselves and now that their children are grown, they're looking to extend a helping hand to the youth of Milton.

So they've devised a plan. Or rather, they've expanded on someone else's idea in efforts to raise money for troubled teens in this town. It's a multi-faceted, double-pronged plan that depends on the generosity of Milton businesses and individuals, called Connections 4 Christians.

The goal, besides raising money for troubled teens, is to bring together churches and the Christian business community, Ms Ridpath explained.

Money would go to help troubled teens from Milton in various ways through a program called Awesome Kids, Ms Ridpath said.

"It's bringing the Christian community together to support and help hurting teens," she said.

The money-raising aspect would centre around several initiatives already in the works — a Christian expo, a Christian business directory, a Web site on which Milton churches could post information, and welcome baskets for newcomers to town.

"My husband and I are keen on helping kids. Outreach is important to us," Ms Ridpath said, adding, "It's an opportunity to help Christians come out of the closet and make themselves known."

For the Shepherd's Guide business directory and the Web site — www.christiancities.ca — a fee would be charged to be included.

Ms Ridpath said families new in town might find the Web site useful when looking for family-oriented events.

"With such growth in the area, people aren't aware of what's available," she said.

Christian expositions aren't a new idea, but one hasn't been held before in Milton, Ms Ridpath said. The expos provide unique networking opportunities for businesses, and bring together the Christian business community while introducing people to the various ministries that exist.

Each participating business or ministry has a booth, and visitors pay a nominal admission fee. It's expected the first would

be held in town next year, Ms Ridpath said.

The welcome baskets are modeled after the Welcome Wagon idea, and are designed to introduce those new in town to Milton's community of churches. Each church pays to have information about it included in the baskets. These are expected to be distributed starting this summer.

"We're trying to bring everyone in the whole area together," Mr. Ridpath said. "We're trying to get everyone to realize the needs out there that are separate from their own church."

He added there are about 22 churches in the Milton area.

"We want to bring churches together to say, 'We in our community are growing at an unbelievable rate. Can we get together to help youth and welcome new people?'"

It was Dundas resident Ken Quiggan who came up with the vision for Connections 4 Christians, and who owns the Shepherd's Guide directory for Hamilton/Halton. He purchased it specifically to raise money for kids in Hamilton and Halton, Ms Ridpath said.

The Ridpaths decided they wanted to take on the task of co-ordinating the Milton branch of his vision.

Mr. Quiggan will play a key role in the programs the money raised will go toward. He owns a property called Our Father's Farm in Dundas, and the vision is to run a day program and then a week program out of the farm for teens facing various struggles.

Though it's located in Dundas, Milton teens would be welcomed. It's important that the money raised locally go toward local kids, Ms Ridpath said.

"We want the events in Milton to service kids in Milton," she said, adding 90 per cent of the funds raised would go directly to helping young people. "We know Ken, we know he's credible and we know he has a heart for teens."

Eventually, the goal is to hold seminars and workshops for both teens and parents.

So far, support from local churches has been very positive, Ms Ridpath said.

"It's exciting that so many (churches) have come on board to help with our services."

She added anyone who thinks Milton has no troubled teens is wrong.

"Although you don't see them on the streets, I believe there are hurting teens."

For more information, call 1-877-232-9252 or (905) 844-2322.

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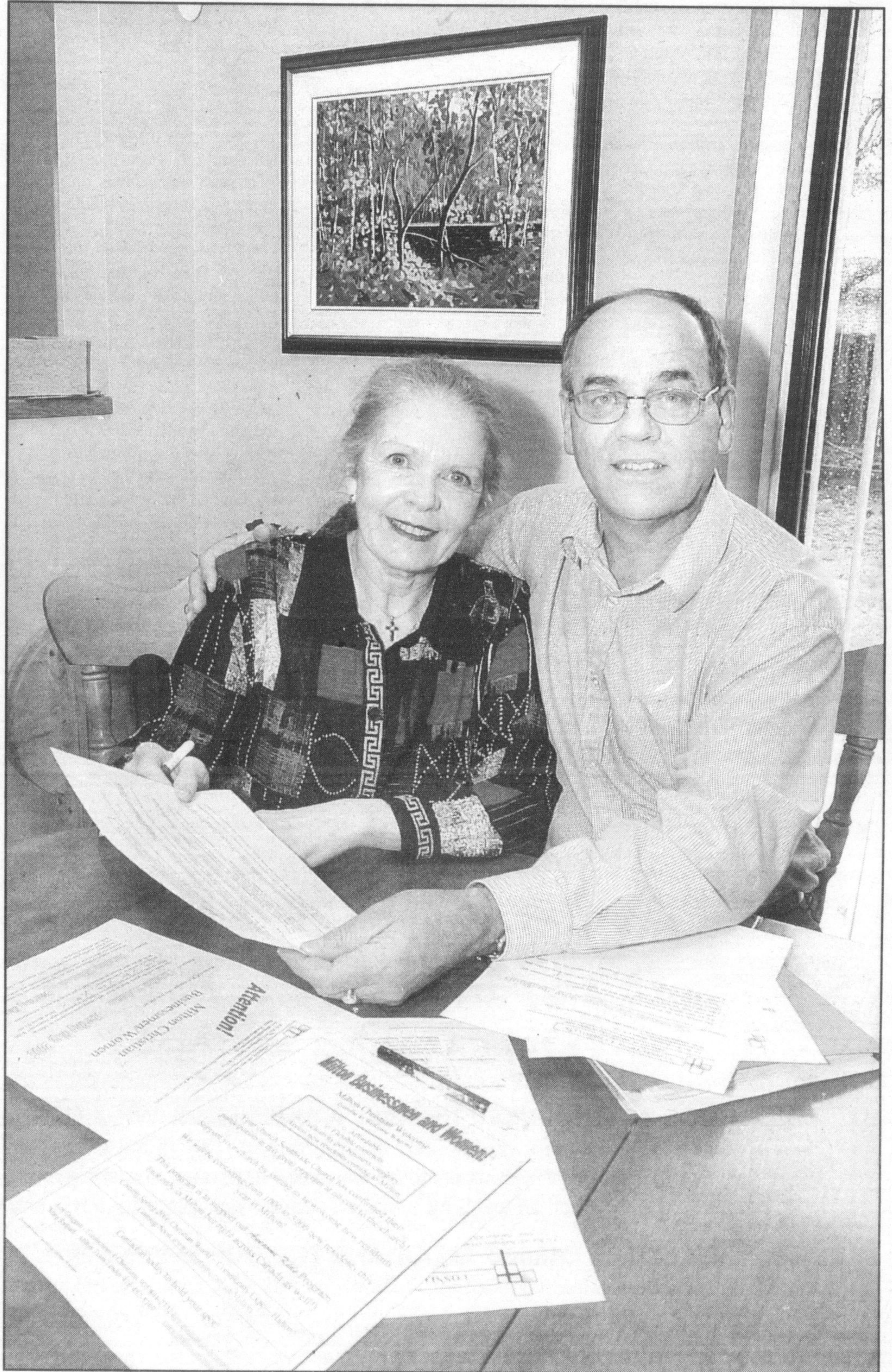


Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Marg and Ian Ridpath are starting several initiatives to raise money for troubled teens.

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Programming Schedule – Tuesday, April 26 - Monday, May 2, 2005

Tuesday, April 26		Wednesday, April 27		Thursday, April 28		Friday, April 29		Saturday, April 30		Sunday, May 1		Monday, May 2	
5:00pm	Plugged In! EXTRA	12:00pm	DH Cup: St. Michael's Buzzers @ Fort William North Stars	12:00pm	DH Cup: North Bay Skyhawks @ St. Michael's Buzzers	4:00pm	DH Cup: North Bay Skyhawks @ Fort William North Stars	4:00pm	DH Cup: Third Place @ Second Place	4:00pm	DH Cup: Semi-Final Winner @ First Place	6:00pm-10:30pm Georgetown Kinsmen TV Auction (Live)	
6:00pm	Oslar Health Connection												
6:30pm	Plugged In! EXTRA	4:00pm	DH Cup: North Bay Skyhawks @ Georgetown Raiders	4:00pm	DH Cup: Fort William North Stars @ Georgetown Raiders	6:30pm-8:00pm	Plugged In! EXTRA	6:30pm-8:00pm	Plugged In! EXTRA	6:30pm-8:00pm	Plugged In! EXTRA		
7:30pm	Simply Halton					8:00pm	DH Cup: Georgetown Raiders @ St. Michael's Buzzers	8:00pm	DH Cup: Third Place @ Second Place	8:00pm	DH Cup: Semi-Final Winner @ First Place		
8:00pm	Tape Delay - DH Cup: St. Michael's Buzzers @ Fort William North Stars	8:00pm	Tape Delay - DH Cup: North Bay Skyhawks @ St. Michael's Buzzers	6:30pm-8:00pm	Plugged In! EXTRA	10:30pm	Tape Delay - DH Cup: Third Place @ Second Place	10:30pm	Tape Delay - DH Cup: Semi-Final Winner @ First Place				
10:30pm	Tape Delay - DH Cup: North Bay Skyhawks @ Georgetown Raiders	10:30pm	Tape Delay - DH Cup: Fort William North Stars @ Georgetown Raiders	10:30pm	Tape Delay - DH Cup: Georgetown Raiders @ St. Michael's Buzzers								

Central Canadian Jr. A Hockey Championship: The Dudley-Hewitt Cup all this week on TVCogeco, with same day Tape delay coverage from Georgetown.