

Local woman starting summer camp for deaf kids



GRAHAM PAINE / CANADIAN CHAMPION

CAMPERS WANTED: Young entrepreneur Candace Sharp sits among some of the sports equipment and crafts she uses in her day camp for deaf kids, which she started up recently. She was able to open the camp thanks to the Summer Company program, run by the Ontario government. Registrations are still being accepted for the camp.

By Stephanie Thiessen
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Summer camp should be a positive experience youngsters remember the rest of their lives.

It was for Candace Sharp, who described it as "life altering."

But growing up with a deaf brother, Sharp, 23, has been aware for a long time of the absence of such a camp in Milton for deaf children. So she has decided to do something about by opening a summer day camp just for them.

"I want to provide children in the deaf community with the same opportunity available to hearing children," said Sharp, who's studying recreation management and business at Acadia University in Nova Scotia.

With the E.C. Drury School for the Deaf, Milton has plenty of deaf children who shouldn't have to leave town to get the summer camp experience, Sharp said.

Several months ago, she saw a way to make her dream a reality through a program offered by the Ontario government. The Summer Company program provides business training and financial grants to help people aged 15 to 29 start

up their own summer businesses.

After creating a lengthy business plan and undergoing an interview process, Sharp was accepted. She has received \$1,500 to start the camp and, on completion, will be awarded another \$1,500.

She's still accepting registrations for the camp, which started Tuesday and will run for eight weeks at E.C. Drury High School. It's open to kids and youths aged four to 12, and costs \$130 per week, except for weeks with holidays, which cost \$120.

Sharp's goal is to have 25 children enrolled each week. Deaf and hearing children who can sign are welcome.

Each week will include a day trip to destinations including the Science Centre, African Lion Safari and Ontario Place. There'll also be swimming days at Rotary Park.

Sharp noted for the most part campers will be divided into appropriate age groups.

Not only does Sharp's camp provide a fun, affordable experience for the attendees, it provides meaningful employment for the deaf staff members — mostly teens — who've been hired.

Sharp said she hopes this summer camp will be a launching pad for bigger projects, like a local recreation facility for the deaf.

"I'm really excited, but I'm nervous at the same time," she said.

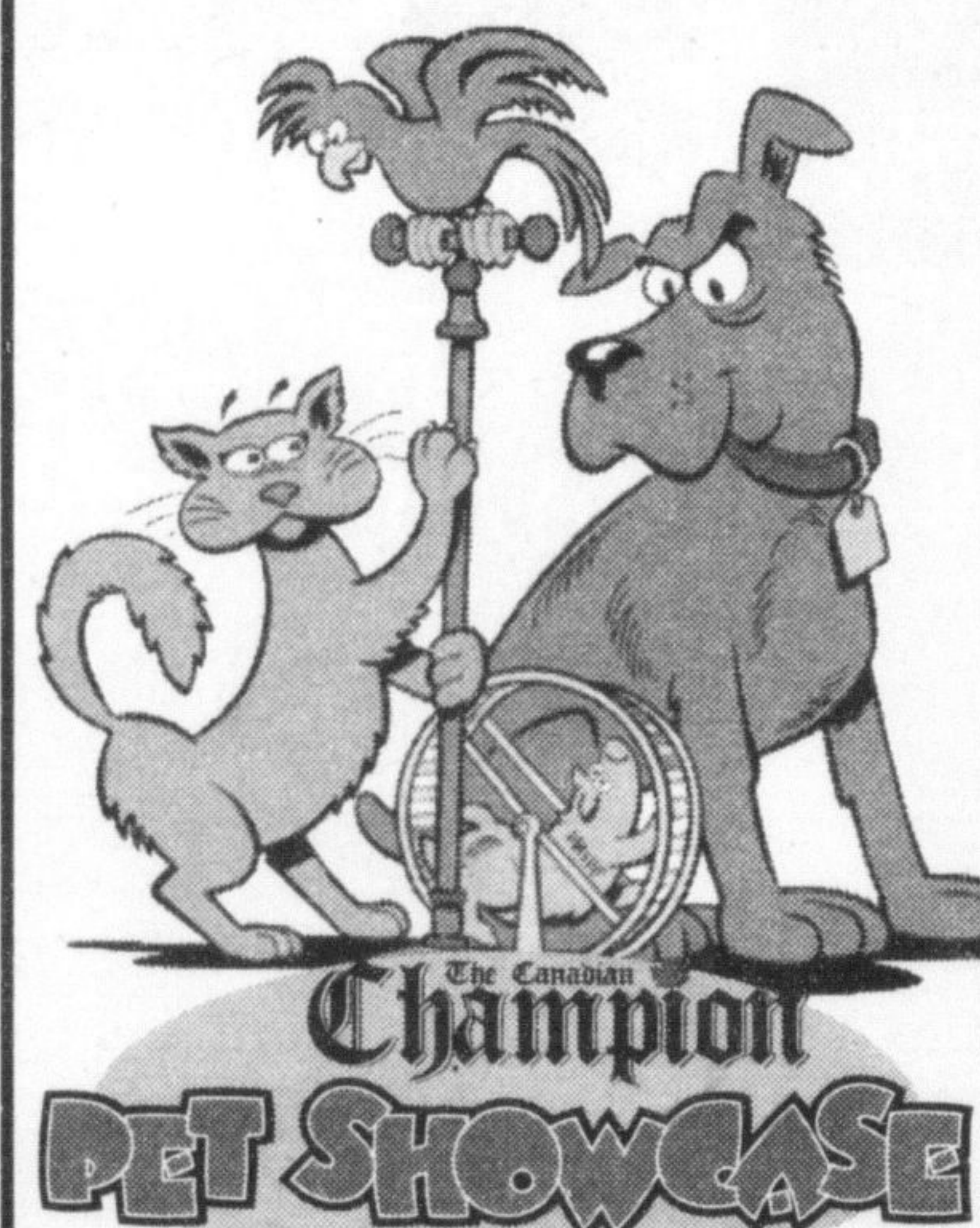
For more information or an application form, e-mail Sharp at candace.sharp@hotmail.com or call her at (905) 691-4601 or TTY (905) 876-1989.

Stephanie Thiessen can be reached at sthiessen@miltoncanadianchampion.com.

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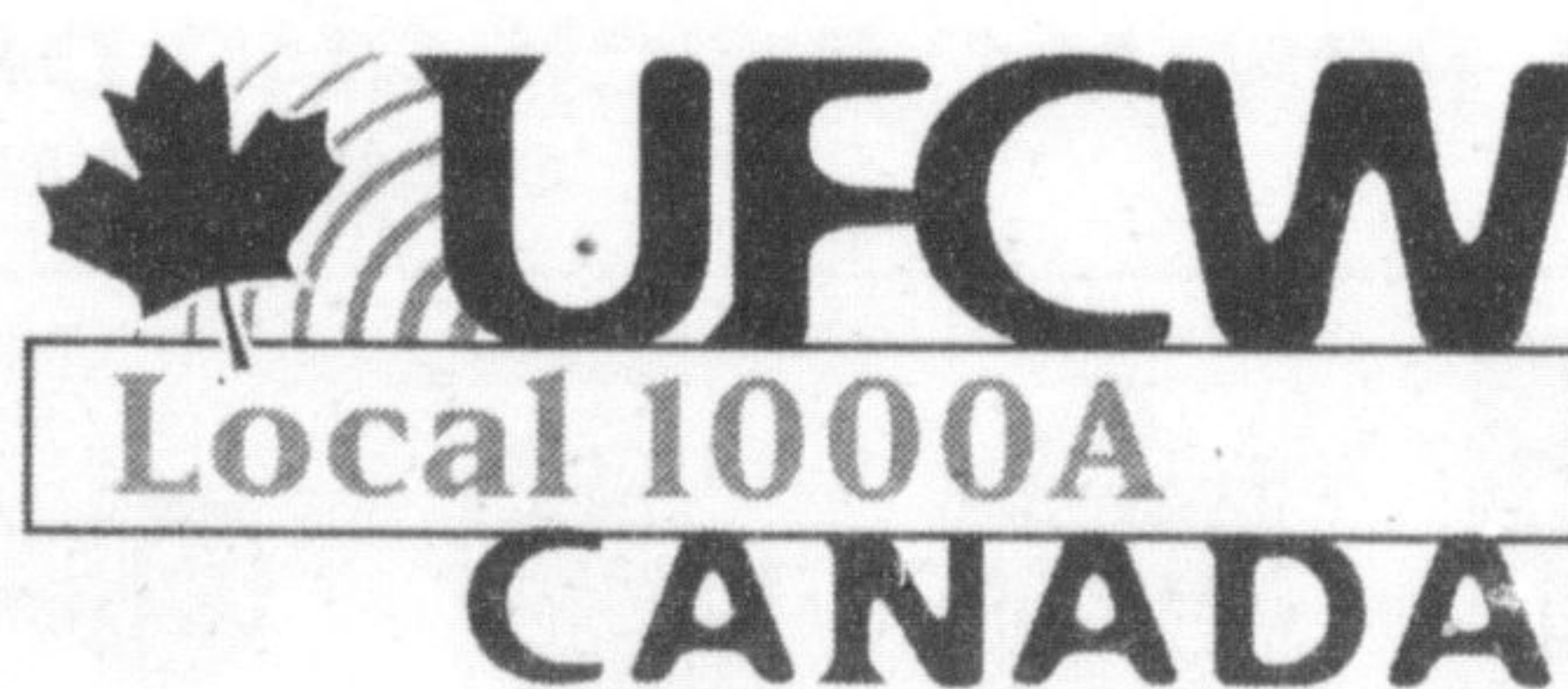
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