

Arctic adventurer brings environmental plea to town

Saving the planet a race against time, says MacInnis at breakfast meeting

By Melanie Hennessey
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

The race is on to save the environment and it's up to us to change things for the better, according to adventurer Jeff MacInnis.

The explorer, who led the first team to sail the Northwest Passage, took the stage at the annual Bell/Chairman's Breakfast on the Environment last Friday to wow the audience with stories of his travels and deliver important environmental messages.

As someone who's competed in World Cup ski events, MacInnis used racing as the theme for his talk before the large crowd of students, business professionals and local council members at Rattlesnake Point Golf Club.

He spoke of the various races he feels society has been a part of, like a race to fly, race to the moon and now a race to save the planet.

"Things are changing (in the environment) and we have some deadlines we need to strive towards," he said. "We have to have those deadlines that force us to make things happen."

He pointed to California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger as a key player in the race to save the planet, since the movie-star-turned-politician brought the Global Warming Solutions Act into effect last year.

"He believes we can have a better future," MacInnis noted.

He also said he believes humans race with six rules, with the first being great goals. "What you're doing here in Halton around the environment is a great goal," he remarked.

He said the other five rules are: vivid visualization, gather greatness, encourage everyone, course-correct and momentum matters. "I think the real endurance race is life itself," he said. "I believe all of us are involved in pushing the human race forward."

He went on to show the audience several pictures taken on his grueling trip through the Northwest Passage — an Arctic sea route spanning thousands of kilometres that connects the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.

He pointed out that the passage has claimed twice as many lives as Mount Everest and early explorers described it as an "ice-choked hell."

"If you fell in the water you'd last about five minutes, and you're just food to a polar bear," he said. "It was so humbling to be in this environment."

But, MacInnis said his biggest problem was the fact he didn't know how to sail or navigate.

"I really believe you don't need to know how to do everything before you begin," he emphasized.

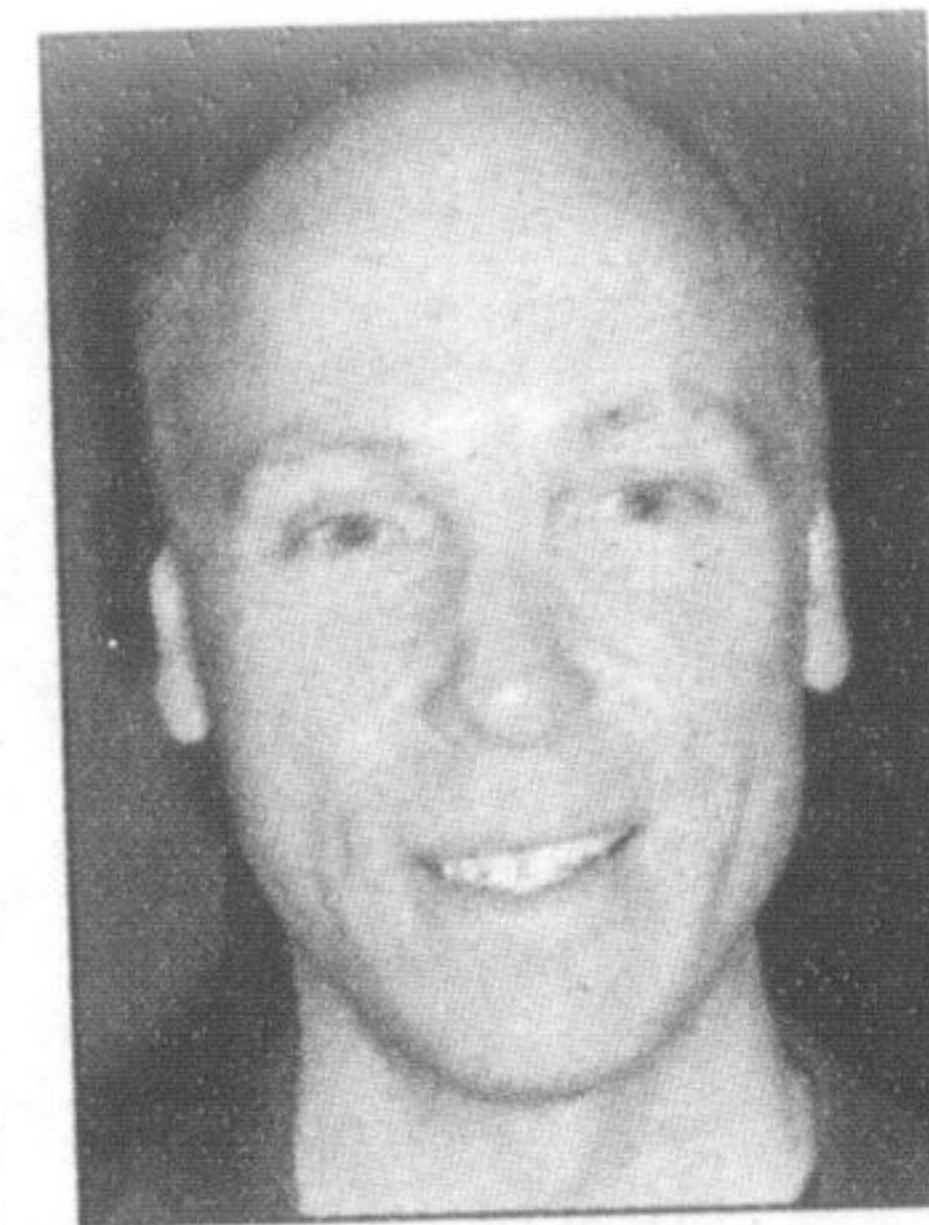
He ended by encouraging all the young people in attendance to "keep dreaming, daring and doing."

Awards presented

The recipients of the 2007 Halton Youth Awards for Environmental Excellence and Halton Environmental Scholarship Awards were also announced at the breakfast.

Abbey Park High School student Stephanie Christensen and Assumption Catholic Secondary School student Shannon Fernandez both received \$1,000 scholarships to pursue post-secondary studies in fields related to the environment.

In addition, six youth awards were presented to:



Jeff MacInnis

- Victoria Arfo of Holy Rosary School, Burlington
 - William Bedard, Devon Fobert, Susanna Huotari, Sammy McCarthy, Devin Rose, Jaci Ruttan, Jessie Wilkinson, Rebecca Bath, Spencer Beaumont, Ellis Gold, Mitchell Lauzon, Macayla MacInnis, Ryan Newman, Lauren Saelzer and Jessie Smith of Robert Little Public School, Acton
 - Natalie Holloway of St. Mark Catholic School, Burlington
 - Kayla McCormack, Jonathan Breton, Samantha Kennedy, Elias Peterson, Sophie Rossini, Camilo Sanchez, Luis De Joya, Juliana Badovinac, Sydney Foster and Claude De Joya of St. Gabriel School, Burlington
 - Samantha Pufek and Jennifer Asselstine of Mother Teresa Catholic School, Oakville
 - Selena Pasion, Josh Fiel, Angelika Jankac, Michael
- see AWARDS on page A19

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