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COMMUNITY

Students speak loud and clear in project

By Robin Downton-Poirier
SPECIAL TO THE CHAMPION

Often teenagers will say adults don't understand them or aren't interested in how they feel or what they think about the world around them.

But what if there was a medium that could help bridge the gap and let adults glimpse at their community through a youth's eyes?

That's the goal of the Photovoice project, spearheaded by the Our Kids Network in cooperation with the Milton Mayor's Youth Advisory Council (MMYAC), said Vanessa Box-Jones, the neighbourhood co-ordinator for the Milton hub of the Our Kids Network.

"Through photography, youths were given the opportunity to voice their views about Milton. In the Photovoice project, you are seeing the kids for whom photography, their town, and their voice is a huge passion," said Box-Jones.

The mission began over a year ago through the Milton hub of the Our Kids Network, a local organization that focuses on kids ages 0 to 18, ensuring 'All kids in Halton thrive.' The neighbourhood co-ordinator at the time, Kevin Black, who has since moved on to another job, was also a member of MMYAC and thought the project was a great way for the voices of Milton's youth to be expressed through photography, said Box-Jones.

Although the opportunity was open to all Milton youth, the eight students that expressed interest in the project were members of MMYAC as well.

The Photovoice project is a 'participatory research action method' to help understand, educate, and take action in a community. Through photography, the goals of the project are to tell people about the participants and where they live; get people talking about the issues that matter to them; send a message to the public about those issues; to add to collective history and knowledge; and build the participants' skills and confidence.

According to Lesley Mansfield, public relations manager for Prosperity One Credit Union in Milton, one of three local businesses that helped to support the project, the goals of Photovoice were attained. The



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WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS: Students Laura Quinlan (front) and Louie Delfin show some of their work in the Photovoice Project entitled 'Life in Milton, Through a Photographer's Eyes.'

selected photos and captions are currently on display in the branch.

"This project was an excellent opportunity for youth to share their stories in a way that no other medium but photography can. The project asked youth from MMYAC a simple question: 'What do you like about Milton and wish there was more of, and what do you dislike and want to see changed?'" she said.

"Photovoice gave the youths an opportunity to learn the skills of photography and tell their story in their own words. Many of

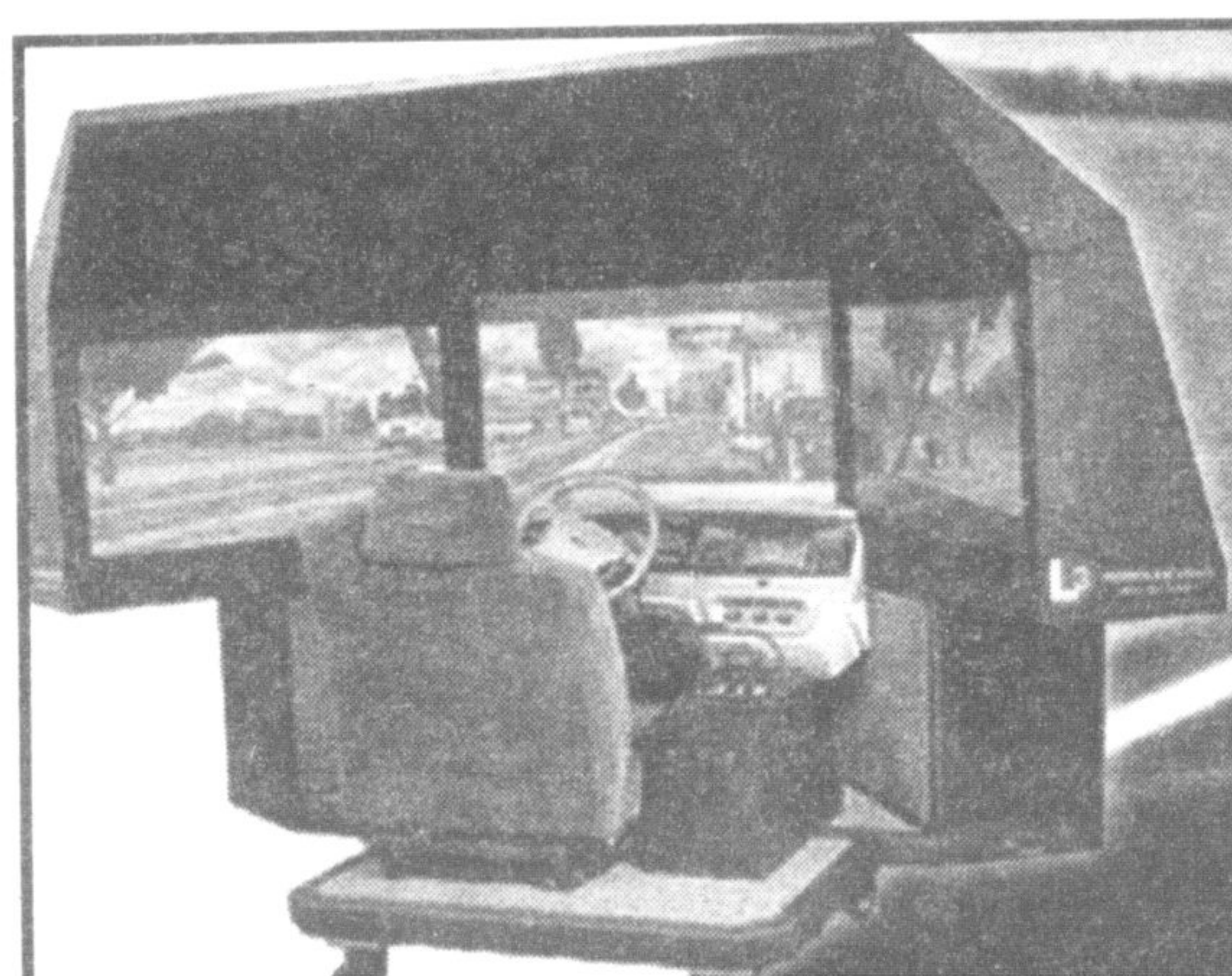
our customers are taking the time to look at the photos and all the comments have been very positive. The project is helping others see Milton as our youth see it."


The project proved to be very time-consuming and challenging and, as a result, only two students completed it in its entirety, said Box-Jones. Louie Delfin and Laura Quinlan were both extremely dedicated to the project and, each for their own personal reasons, were committed to following it through to completion, she said.

Louie Delfin was 17 years old and in

Grade 11 at Bishop Redding High School when he joined the Photovoice project on the recommendation of Black. He had been a member of MMYAC for about a year. Black thought the project would help Delfin build on his hobbies of photography and filming, said Delfin. He's unsure how many pictures he took in total with the 35 mm camera that was provided to him but said he took multiple shots to ensure the planned photo turned out. Given the three topics of 'School Life,' 'Vandalism,' and 'Town Life,' he carried

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