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**MAD HATTERS:** 'Mr. Laird's Crazy Hat Extravaganza' at Casey's Restaurant was part of the E.W. Foster Family Fun Nights held by the school's parent council every Tuesday night in February. The event brought out students and their parents wearing fun hats while enjoying dinner as a fundraiser for the school. Here, from left, Caitlyn Davidson, 7, Megan Haynes, 10, and Heather Davidson, 9, show their hats.

## Design sped up: art centre

By Tim Foran  
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

The Town is pushing ahead to develop a concept plan for the proposed \$40-million arts centre and new central library to make it "construction-ready" and eligible for a portion of the \$12 billion in temporary infrastructure funding announced in the federal budget in late January.

Council voted Monday night to speed up detailed design of the facility after the Town received word two weeks ago that a previous application for \$15 million in combined provincial and federal funding for the project had been rejected.

"Staff were advised by various government officials that, while the project ranked well in terms of qualifying under the "Cultural Infrastructure" category, the time-

• see CENTRE on page A19

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## Beloved daughter left to die in ditch: trial

By Stephanie Hounsell  
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Pretty, blond-haired Lauren Cooper, 18, was known to Rollerblade around her rural subdivision in Nassagaweya.

The night of July 13, 2006, she decided to do just that after putting in a day's work at a daycare centre, and she no doubt enjoyed the warm summer air as it whipped around her ponytail.

Stride by confident stride, she skated around

the area. At about 10 p.m., she was back on Second Line, heading south, almost at her driveway. It had been an unremarkable night.

It wasn't an unusual day for her father, Stuart, either, who was enjoying two weeks off work at home with his family.

In the evening he went to a restaurant in downtown Milton with his wife, Deborah, and they walked their dog through 'old Milton' before driving toward home.

But as he neared his house — just north of No. 15 Sideroad — at about 10:25 p.m., Stuart

noticed Lauren's Rollerblade and flip-flop lying on the road. Deborah noticed a single headlight. They tried to find Lauren inside the house, but couldn't and Stuart went back outside. And there, lying in a ditch metres from the home, he found his youngest daughter.

The sad story of Lauren's death unraveled through the evidence given Wednesday by Stuart at the trial of the man accused of fatally striking Lauren with his pick-up truck and leaving the scene.

• see NEIGHBOURS on page A2

### ASK EMILY



Dear Emily,

My humans are saying that they are longing for Spring. Who isn't! They are also talking about mosquitoes, Heartworm Disease and ME! Worse, they are planning a date to take me to the Veterinarian for my Heartworm Test, and my Annual Physical. How I hate Vets!! I am not going. I refuse. I might look big and brave, but in reality I am just a baby!! signed "Oscar" Great Dane.

Dear Oscar:

Oh poor dear! Be brave young man. The Vets are just there to help you... They are nice people. I'm sure that deep down you know that. I bet your Veterinarian thinks that you are just lovely. Take care, signed "Emily" Hawkins.

"Emily" Hawkins.  
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