

# Risk program reaches out to young people

By David Lea

METROLAND WEST MEDIA GROUP

Halton police are looking for the public's help in shattering the myth of self-invincibility that's prevalent among young people through the introduction of a safety program called SMARTRISK.

The program, which police hope to show to 22,000 high school students in Milton, Oakville and Burlington, is intended to demonstrate the consequences of risky behaviour.

"We're in the public safety business and we've been exposed to a program that we think has value," said Halton police Supt. Signy Pittman.

"This program works through positive messaging and there might be some key to that. They're not saying, 'Don't do this, don't do this.' They're saying when you do this, take these precautions (e.g. wear a helmet when riding an ATV)."

Const. Maureen Andrew, who brought the program to the Halton Hills community in May of 2008, noted that SMARTRISK reaches young people because rather than rely on adult speakers or actors to convey its message, it confronts the audience with a young person like themselves who has been in a terrible accident.

"One of the presenters was 19 and he made a huge impact in Georgetown last year. Sean was 16 when the incident happened. He lived in a small town in Northern Ontario and the train tracks were between his home and the school," said Andrew.

"He and a group of friends were rushing home because there was a party after school and they didn't want to be late. To save time they were hopping over a (slow moving) train. His friends ahead of him made it safely, but Sean's backpack got caught on the side of the train and he went under the wheels. He was almost cut in half. He lost an arm and a leg."

Another presenter in Georgetown spoke about the injuries he received during a party when he attempted to jump into a swimming



DAVID LEA / METROLAND WEST MEDIA GROUP

**REDUCING THE RISK:** Halton Regional Police Supt. Signy Pittman and Const. Maureen Andrew promote SMARTRISK, a unique safety program the two are hoping to bring to 22,000 high school students in Milton, Oakville and Burlington.

pool from the roof of his house. That experience left him a quadriplegic.

Andrew also noted the presentations are tailored to the issues present in each community.

In the Halton Hills area, Sean was chosen to speak because there are more train tracks there than most communities.

For Milton, Oakville and Burlington some of the presenters will most likely focus on the consequences of impaired driving.

"That's not to suggest that we have a lot of youth that are driving impaired," said Pittman. "Quite frankly, we are seeing a cross-section of our community demographic arrested for impaired driving. We're hopeful that SMARTRISK will be able to provide us with a life hero (presenter) who is a survivor

• see FUNDS on page 12

SHOPPERS DRUG MART

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On Wrap for the Shoppers Optimum® MasterCard® credit card of the Shoppers Drug Mart® Flyer in effect from Saturday March 21 until Friday March 27, 2009 on the grid that illustrates the redemption reward levels, the Shoppers Optimum Points® required for \$10 reward value is 7,000 Shoppers Optimum Points not the 7,500 displayed.

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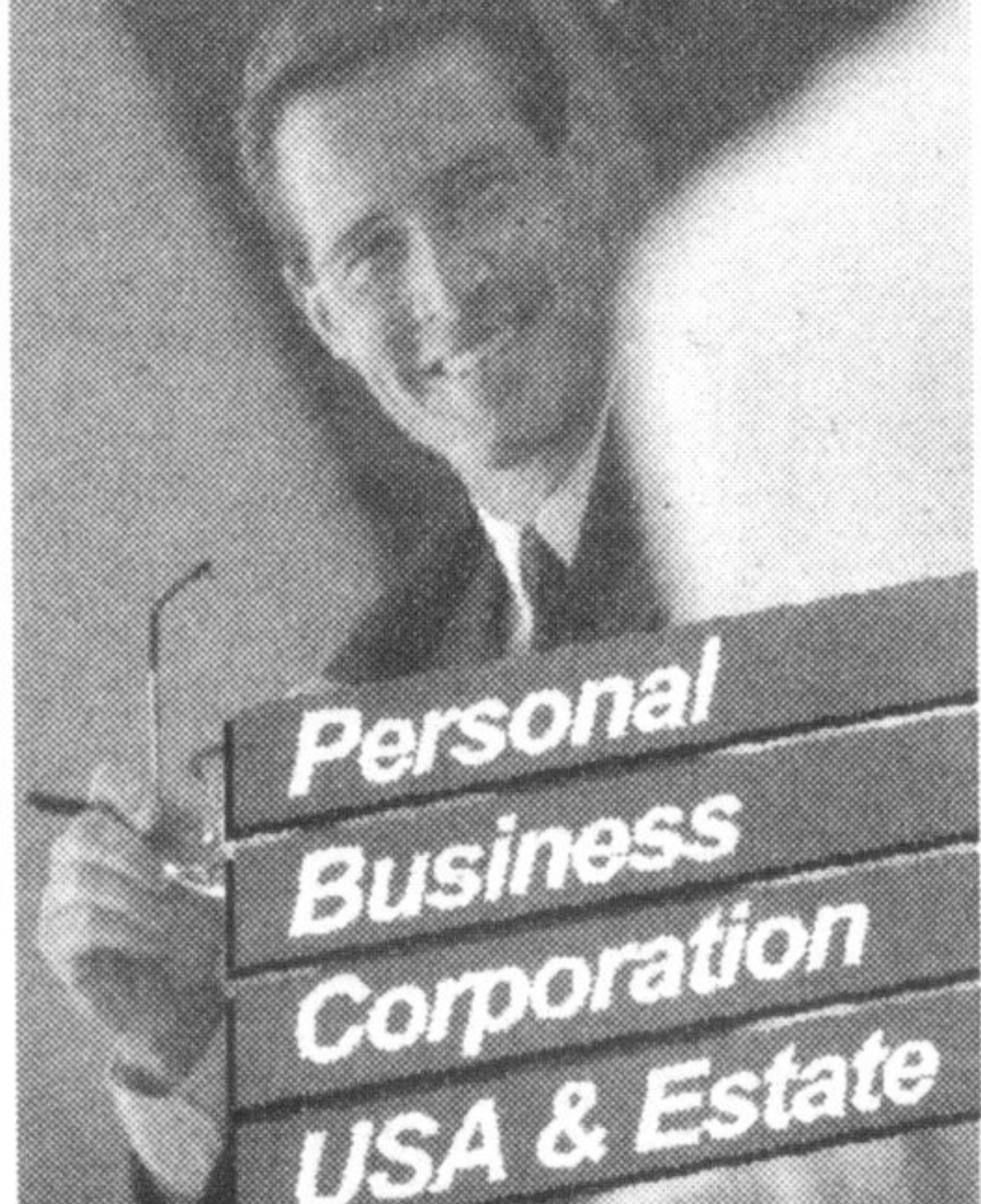
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