

OPINION

Depths of despair

Being a parent awaiting the gruesome discovery of a murdered child's body is an unimaginable horror no one should have to endure.

Knowing that one of those charged in connection with the disappearance and death may hold the key to the recovery of your beloved child must be something far worse than a living hell. It has to be psychological torture of an intensity that even a country at war would condemn.

While most of us are blessed to never come close to suffering this level of agonizing heartbreak, every parent, aunt, uncle or grandparent of a child can sympathize with the nightmare the parents of Victoria Stafford must be facing every moment of each day her remains go undiscovered.

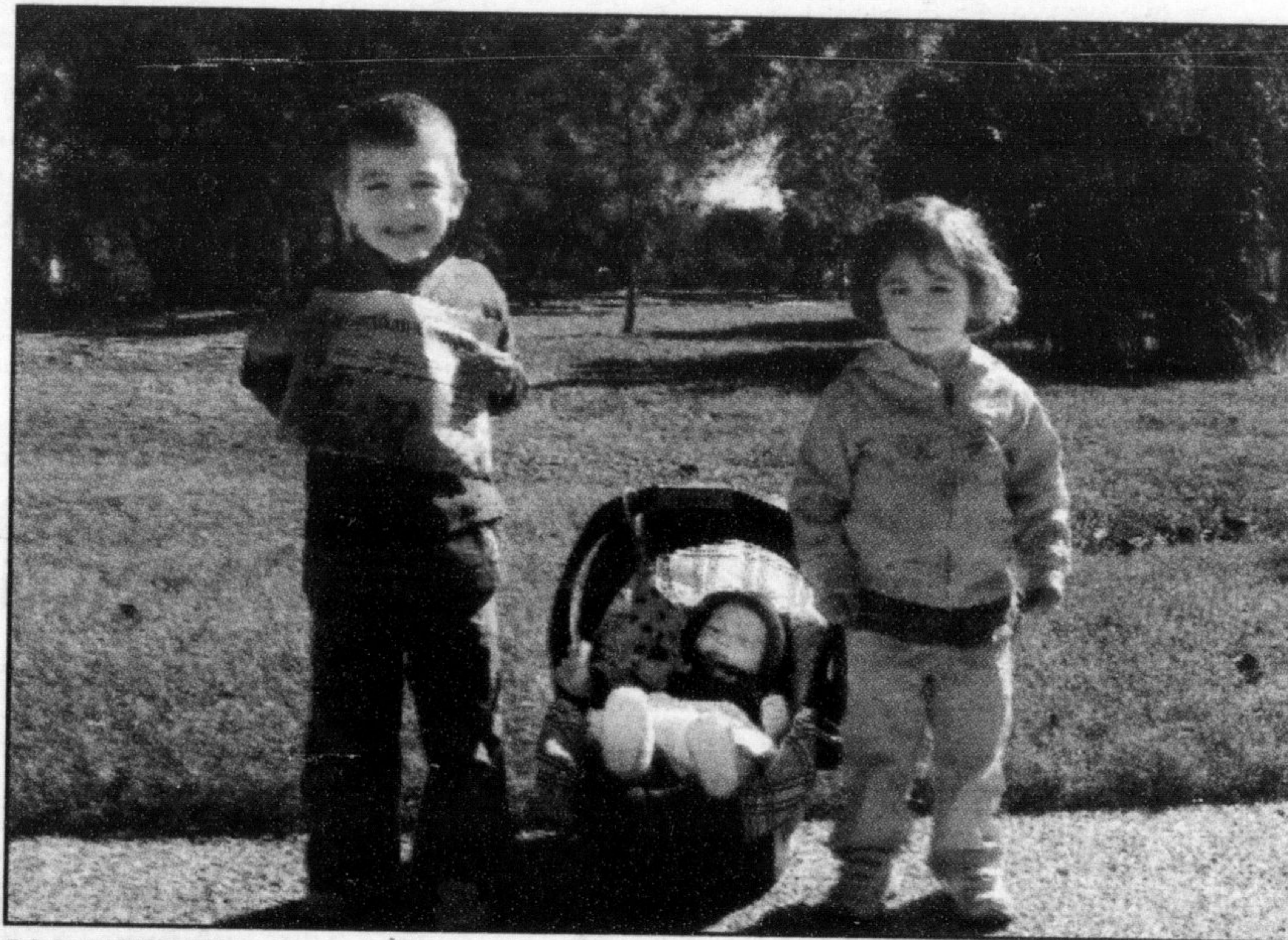
Few could begin to fathom the depths of despair being felt by this little girl's parents seven weeks after their sweet and vulnerable daughter walked away — seemingly voluntarily — from her Woodstock school with a woman in a white coat. There was no chance for this mother and father to say goodbye or to offer one last hug, kiss or an 'I love you.' 'Numb' barely scratches the surface of the attack on body and soul these parents must be suffering.

Whether or not homicide investigators and the Crown attorney feel there's sufficient evidence to obtain convictions in a trial of those believed responsible for Victoria's death is secondary right now. The time to avenge this little girl's murder — through the swift and hopefully forceful application of our country's laws — will, for now, have to wait.

Before Tara McDonald and Rodney Stafford can begin to heal, they need to be reunited with their daughter and say their final goodbyes to her.

We find it extremely difficult to believe that anyone that experiences this amount of emotional torment can ever truly find closure. Our only hope is that the search for Tori's body will soon end and that she will finally be laid to rest and her life celebrated in remembrance by all whose lives she touched. To help make that happen, police late last week appealed to anyone living within a 50-km radius of Guelph to check their property for anything suspicious.

Anyone with any information that might help police locate Victoria Stafford can call Crime Stoppers toll free and anonymously at 1-800-222-TIPS (8477).



MAKING TRACKS: Nathan, baby Ryan and Ashley Mitrovich show a copy of the Champion while visiting Sand Key National Park in Clearwater, Florida. Take your community newspaper on your next vacation and send your 'Champion Tracks' photos to editorial@miltoncanadianchampion.com. Be sure to include destination information and everyone's name.

ReadersWrite

E-mail letters to editorial@miltoncanadianchampion.com. Letters, which may be edited, must include the writer's name, address and phone number.

If assistance is required, simply ask for it

DEAR EDITOR:

This is in response to the letter written by Isabel Skalski entitled 'Lack of help by fellow shoppers was shameful.'

Skalski wrote that she had been shopping with her son when his nose started to bleed profusely.

She complained that none of the other shoppers stopped to ask if her son was okay or offer help. She stated,

"Those people should be ashamed of themselves."

Although a show of concern would have been nice in this situation, I don't believe that people should be ashamed for not stepping in.

Oftentimes, it's hard to tell whether intervention from strangers would be welcome or would just complicate

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Upfront

Addressing concerns about recreational opportunities

A while back a *Champion* letter writer addressed some concerns about recreational opportunities in town that I believe warrant some feedback.

Whether or not this will help is certainly open for debate, but here goes.

First off, the Milton mom is certainly right in stating that Town-run athletic programs are severely limited for seven and eight-year-olds — an age bracket her son now finds himself in.

Of course swimming and kids yoga aren't quite the only options available to these youngsters; there's also recreational skating.

Once kids hit nine, there's an awful lot more to do — and that's clearly because of the numbers game.

Of course that's also a primary reason why

Milton and many communities of comparable size don't offer Town-run programs for sports like say basketball, volleyball and gymnastics.

The Town works in partnership with privately-operated clubs in these and many other sports, but would it be financially feasible to start its own programs and essentially compete against more-established clubs? Highly unlikely in many cases, especially in a still largely affluent community like Milton. The numbers just wouldn't support it — at least not yet.

"The Town works with many community organizations to ensure there's a range of recreation, leisure and sports opportunities

for all ages," said Jennifer Reynolds, Director of Community Services. "The Town does not see itself as the only provider of these programs and services."

Now to be fair, I certainly appreciate that not all Miltonians are well-to-do, and enrolling kids in sports these days is certainly a major financial strain or investment — depending on who you talk to.

With that in mind, it bears noting that there are a number of programs available to offer parents a financial assist (no pun intended) toward their children's athletic endeavours.

Many Miltonians may not be aware of

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Steve LeBlanc

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