

Region's paramedics honoured at special ceremony

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Halton EMS respond to more than 50,000 calls per year

By Kim Arnott
SPECIAL TO THE CHAMPION

Dressed in a sky-blue golf shirt the colour of his eyes, Matthew Laframboise toddled around the Halton Region auditorium completely oblivious to the fact that the room was full of people who were there to celebrate the fact that he could still toddle around the room.

It was only a few months ago that 18-month-old Matthew rode in the back of a speeding ambulance, with paramedic Ian Manson trying frantically to extract a popcorn kernel lodged in the boy's airway and blocking air from entering his tiny lungs.

It's a day that Manson's partner Joe D'Etienne remembers well. The pair was cov-

ering Georgetown when a 911 call reporting a choking 18-month-old sent them to Matthew's house.

As they drove over, they made a plan to bring the equipment into the house to treat the child. But once they pulled up, D'Etienne recalls, "All those plans changed."

He could see Matthew's mother standing in the doorway with the child, now limp and purple, lying in her arms. It was immediately clear to D'Etienne that there was no time to waste, and he ran to the door, grabbed the child and raced him back to the ambulance.

Manson began trying to suction the blockage out of the toddler's throat, and D'Etienne asked Matthew's mother if she was coming to the hospital with them. She said yes, but when she went back into her house

to retrieve her purse and shoes, D'Etienne decided it was time for a four-minute dash to the Georgetown hospital.

On Thursday night, at a celebration honouring the work done by the region's Emergency Medical Services (EMS), the paramedic finally had his chance to apologize for leaving her behind.

"When it's a kid, you're a little more hyper," D'Etienne, himself a father of three, explained later.

Matthew's story was one of seven chosen to illustrate the dedication and skill demonstrated by Halton EMS staff as they respond to more than 50,000 calls each year.

"The paramedics honoured at the celebration of life ceremony represent all of the paramedics here in Halton, who continuously touch the lives of thousands of Halton residents," said Halton regional chair Gary Carr. "The skills and professionalism our paramedics demonstrate are greatly appreciated."

Dramatic stories ranged from the call that brought paramedics to the home of a hemorrhaging pregnant woman who had lost so much blood she was in severe shock, to the quick response to people in cardiac distress.

Halton EMS employee Adam McPetrie was recognized for his role in saving the life of his father, who collapsed while the pair was out on a walk on the Bruce Trail.

A team of paramedics was also recognized for their work saving the life of John Everett, who suffered severe injuries after wandering in a daze into a lane of traffic on the QEW

following an accident that saw his car hit a pole near the Ford plant in Oakville.

Paramedics spent more than 90 minutes at the side of the highway stabilizing the critically injured man so he could be transported by air ambulance to a hospital in Toronto.

Not only did the celebration evening give patients a chance to thank the paramedics who had rushed to their aid, it also gave paramedics a chance to see recovered patients like Matthew.

"Paramedics often don't find out what happens to their patients after they are brought to a hospital, so this is a good opportunity for them to see the positive impact they have had on people and families," said Dr. Bob Nosal, Halton's medical officer of health.

Not all calls involve survivors, and D'Etienne admitted that the losses can weigh heavily on the shoulders of paramedics. For him, the memory of helping to save Matthew's life will help counteract more difficult and tragic memories.

Halton employs 152 paramedics, who work out of 10 stations across the four municipalities. Staff members include advanced-care paramedics, who are trained to provide emergency room care to patients; bicycle paramedics, who provide medical care to patients during community events; and tactical paramedics who provide medical support to the Halton Police Tactical Rescue Unit during high risk calls.

Family luckily escapes tragedy, basement fire caught quickly

By Stephanie Hounsell
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

A minor fire in a new home could have had disastrous consequences had it not been caught quickly.

"This is a very fortunate family that narrowly escaped a tragedy," said Fire Prevention Inspector Steve Ellis of the Milton Fire Department.

Shortly after 7 p.m. Monday, firefighters arrived at a house on Playfair Terrace where a fire in the basement's ceiling had been extinguished by the homeowner just moments before.

Ellis said the occupants were having contractors finish their basement. Pot lights had been installed in the basement ceiling, with the drywall still to be put up.

The new light fixtures had been pushed up into the ceiling and left on, Ellis said, with a 100-watt bulb resting against some particle

board that caught fire.

The couple and their children were getting ready to go for a walk when the woman went into the basement to get something.

She noticed smoke and flames in the ceiling. Though there were working smoke alarms on every floor, the one in the basement hadn't yet been activated, Ellis said.

The homeowners immediately called the fire department and put out the fire.

Fortunately, damage to the home was minimal.

The incident can serve as a lesson to residents everywhere, Ellis said.

"This is another example of how easily fires can start in the home. It's important to always inspect the work of contractors before, during and after the work is completed," he said. "(And) always turn lights off that aren't being used and unplug small appliances."

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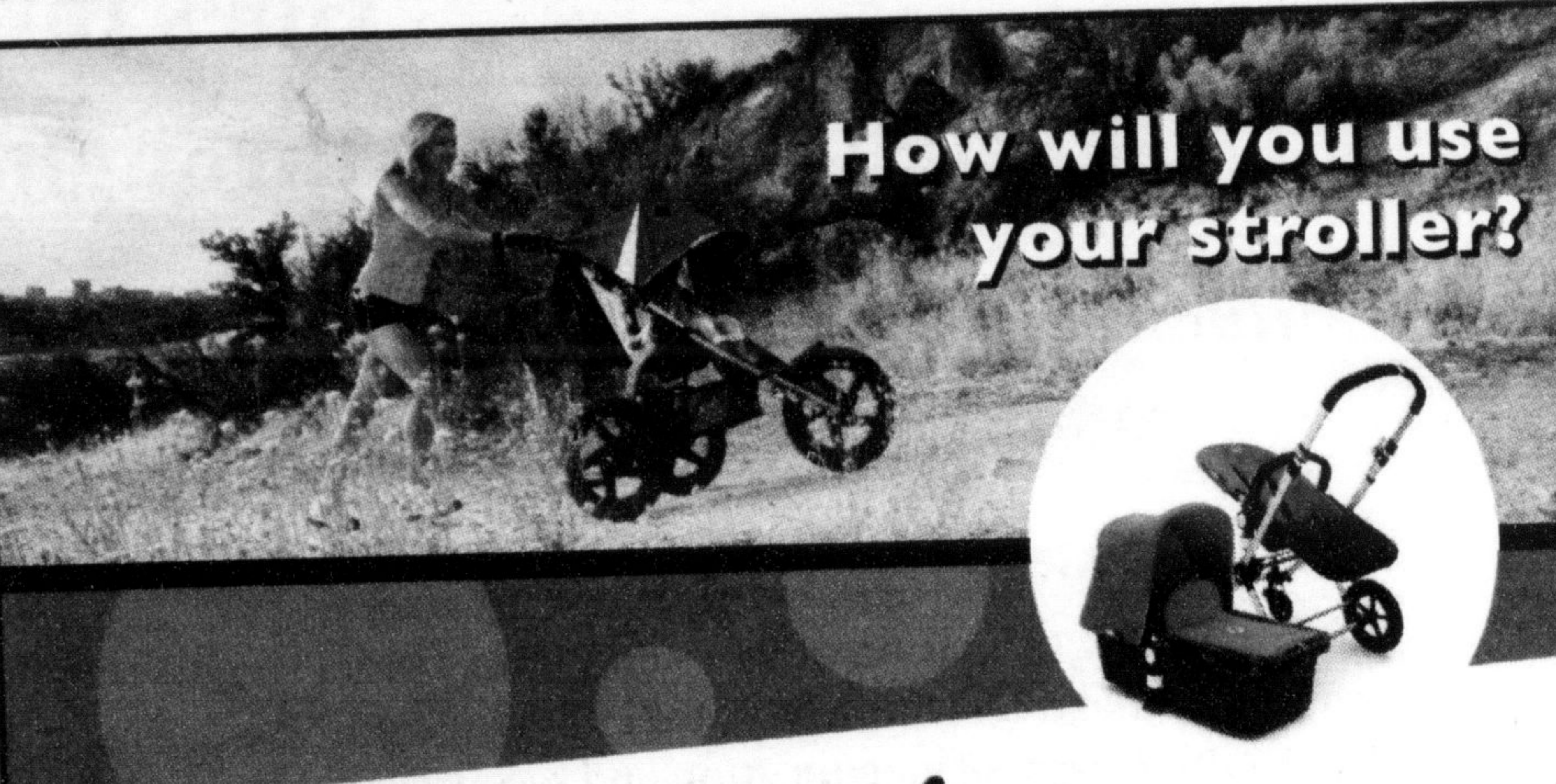
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