

Darling Home wing named after late Lauren Cooper



RIZIERO VERTOLLI / METROLAND WEST MEDIA GROUP

REMEMBERING LAUREN: The new Lauren Beth Cooper Respite Wing of The Darling Home for Kids was dedicated during an emotional ceremony last week thanks to a \$100,000 donation. From left are: Darling Home executive director Kristin Horrell, donor Jennifer Cummings, Lauren's parents Deborah and Stuart Cooper, donor Connie Clerici, Darling Home chair Anita Boyce, capital campaign co-ordinator Anne Pedersen and past board chair David Bowker. Lauren, 18, was killed in 2006 when she was struck by a vehicle while Rollerblading.

Eighteen-year-old struck by car near her rural home

By Stephanie Hounsell
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Eighteen-year-old Lauren Cooper loved kids.

She worked at a daycare in Georgetown when her life was cut tragically short, and was known to spend time drawing with the kids and doing the little girls' hair.

Now, three years after her death, she'd be overjoyed to have her name attached to a place that brings life and happiness to sick children, said her father, Stuart Cooper, standing amidst construction at Milton's Darling Home for Kids and struggling to remain composed.

"She had an unwavering love for children," he said at a recent dedication ceremony, adding, "She'd be so deeply honoured."

The emotional ceremony was held to dedicate the new Lauren Beth Cooper Respite Wing of the Darling Home for Kids, thanks to a \$100,000 donation in her memory from local business partners Connie Clerici and Jennifer Cummings.

Standing beside his wife, Deborah, Stuart said the couple is proud to be part of The Darling Home and added this could be a chance for people who didn't know Lauren to get to know her through one of her passions — children.

The Darling Home for Kids — which is

nested in a wooded area at the top of a winding driveway off No. 15 Sideroad — provides respite and palliative care to kids with life threatening or life limiting illnesses and their families, giving a much needed break to parents caring for a chronically ill child.

The home serves families across Halton and surrounding communities.

The new wing, which is expected to open in September, will house three additional bedrooms with two beds in each to bring the total number of beds from six to 12, which will no doubt help shorten waiting lists.

Clerici, a board member of The Darling Home and a Campbellville resident who lives around the corner from the Cooper family, said she felt honoured to be able to do this with Cummings for the Coopers.

"My children love Lauren and I know every other kid in the community does," she said, choking back tears. "The Coopers have been through so much trauma. It's nice for them to have something substantial to carry on the legacy of their beautiful daughter."

Behind Clerici was propped a framed photo of the pretty, blond-haired Lauren smiling at the camera.

Lauren, a student at Milton District High School, was fatally struck by a vehicle while Rollerblading near her Second Line home in July of 2006.

"I really hope this gives you something to hang onto in memory of your beautiful little daughter," said Clerici, a nurse and founder of Closing the Gap Healthcare Group.

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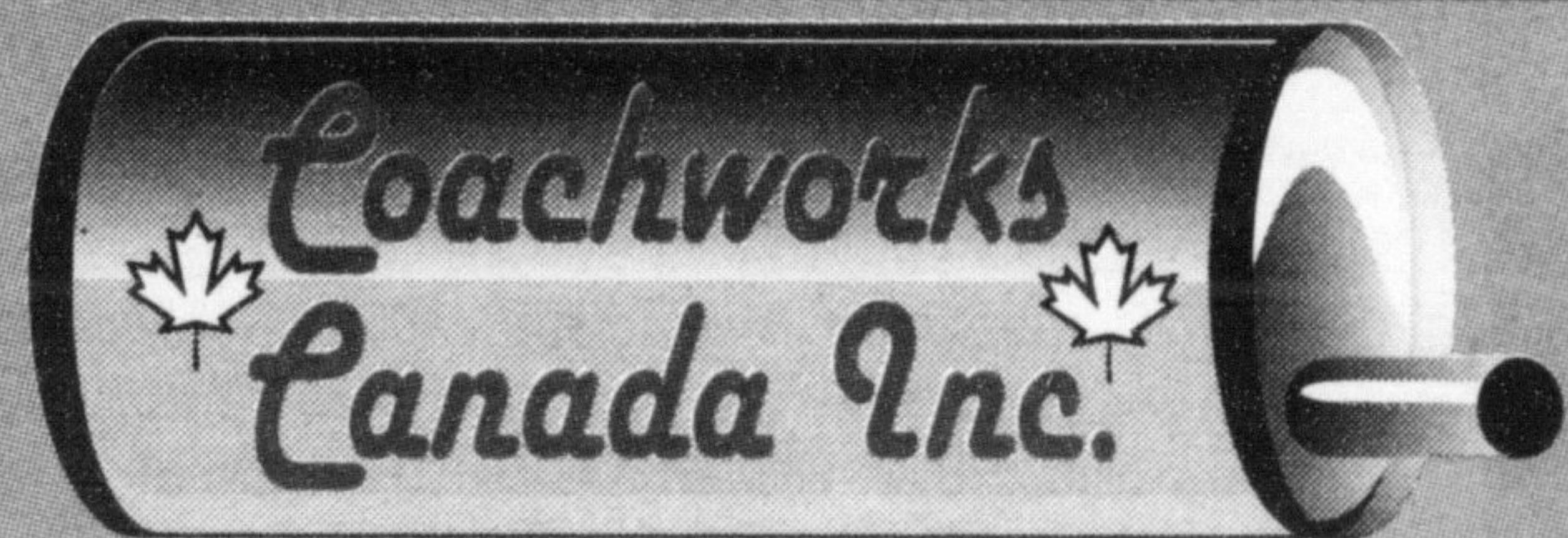
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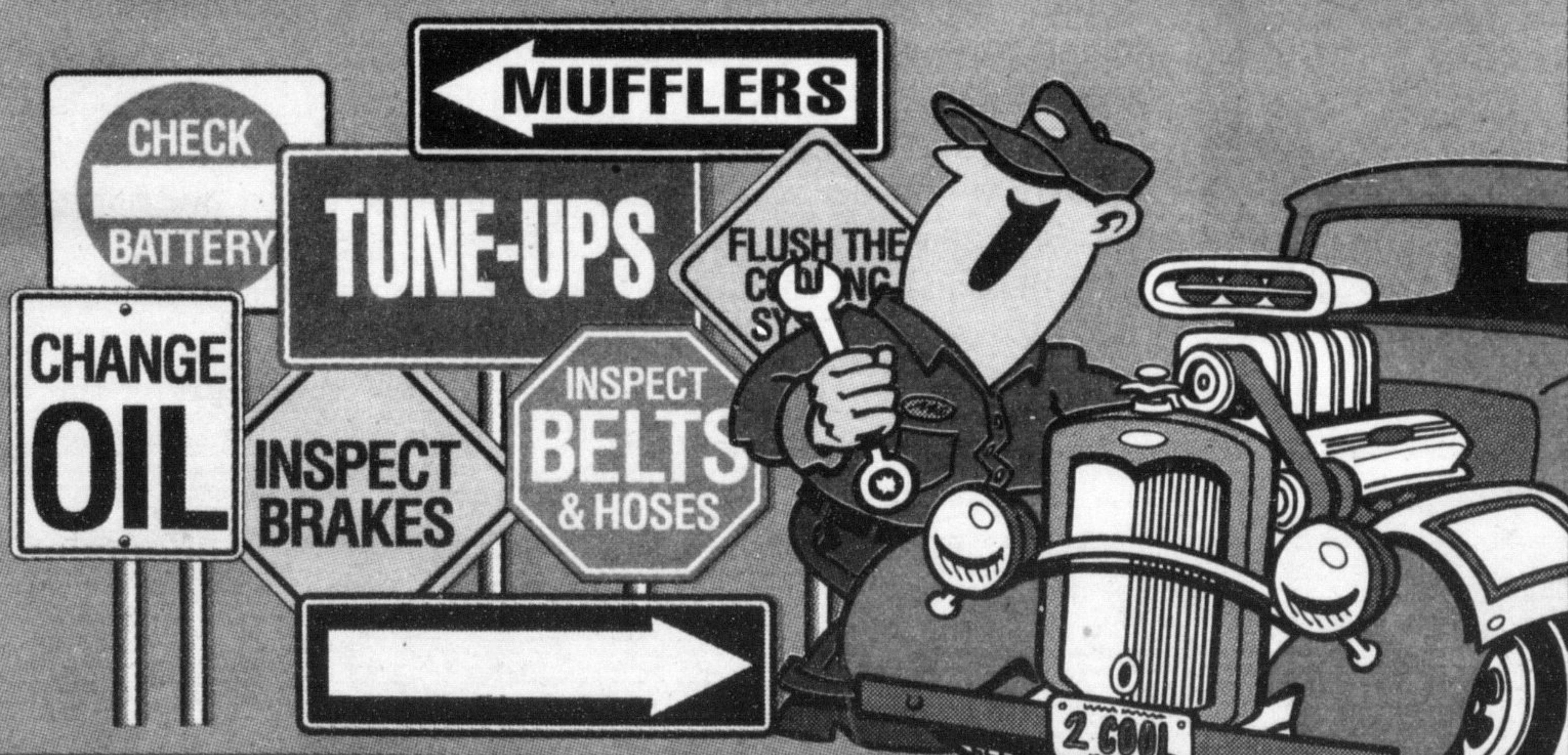
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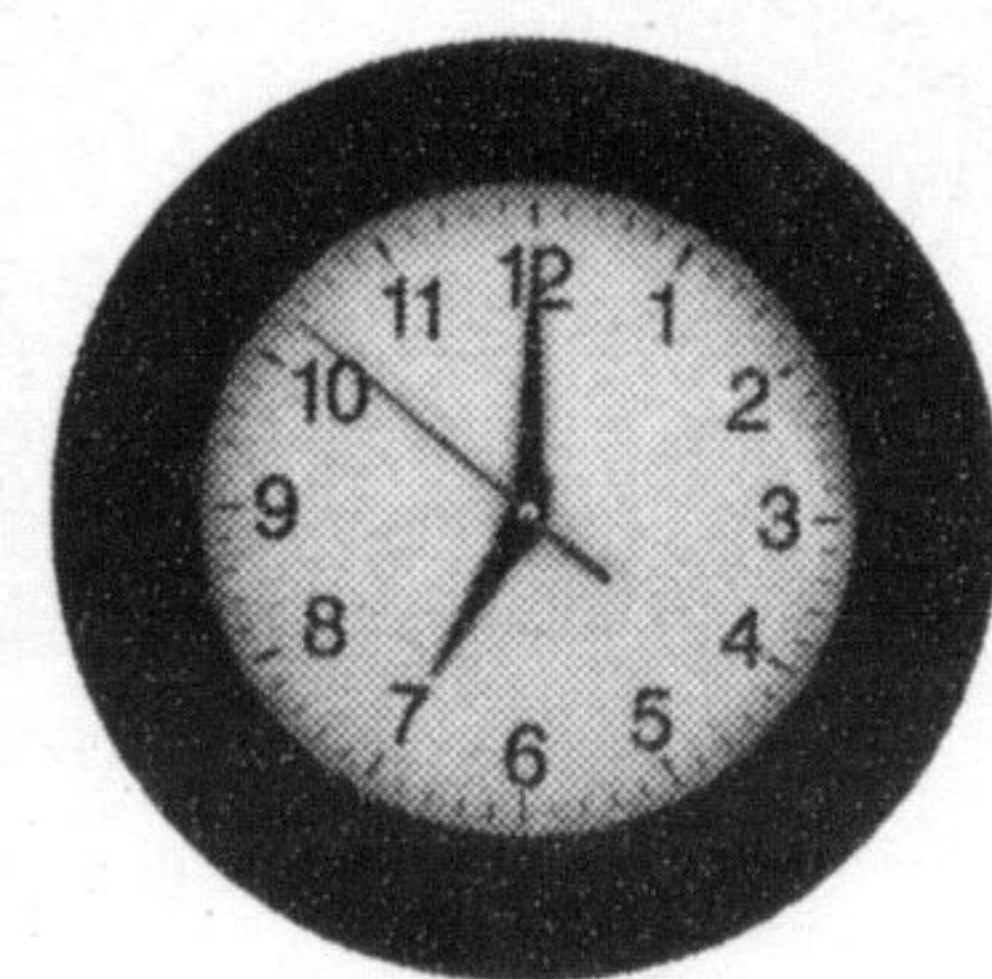
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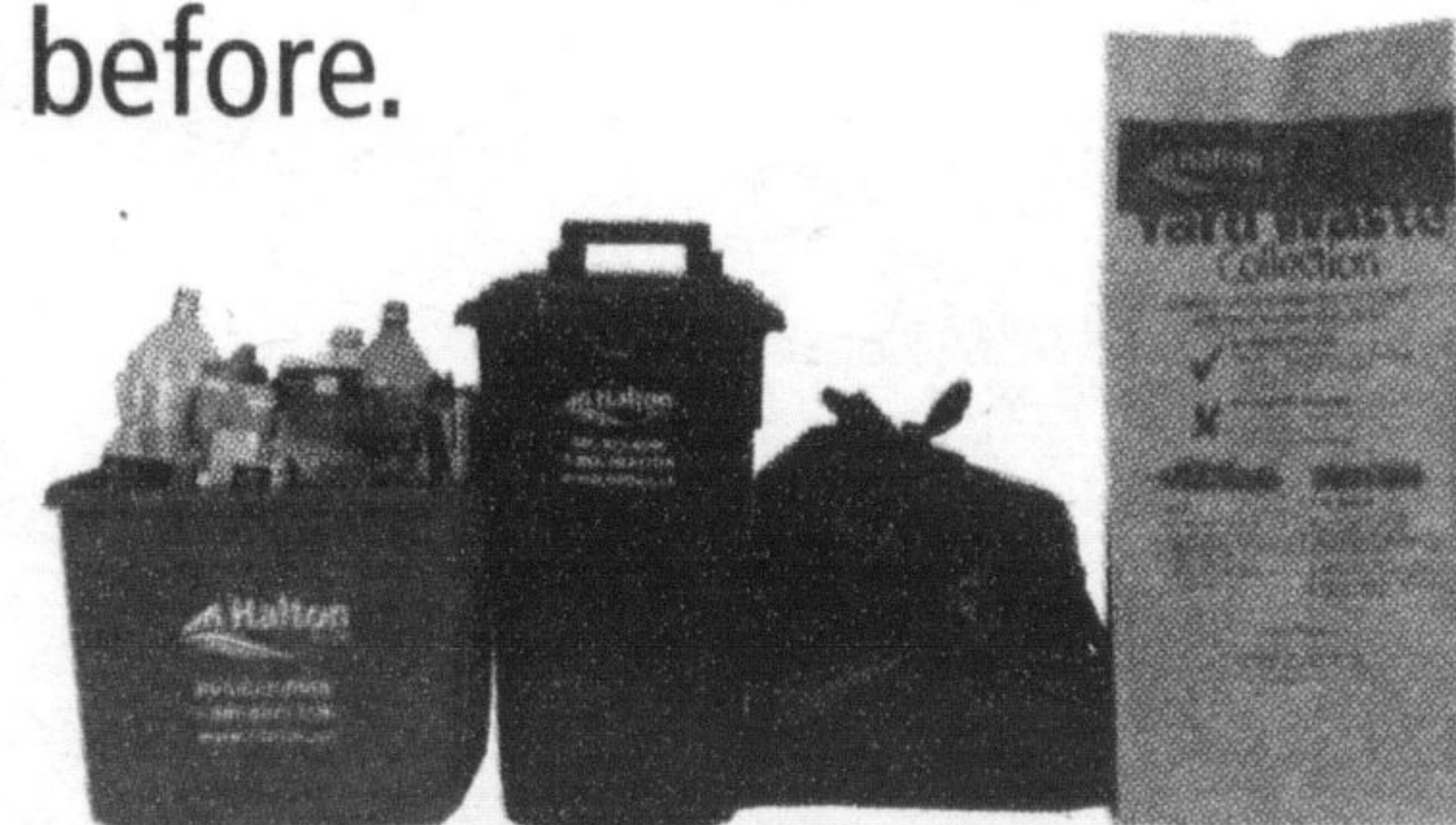
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