

# Teens on board hospital expansion campaign

By **Stephanie Hounsell**  
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

They're not just the leaders of tomorrow. They're the leaders of today.

And that's the way it should be, said Ally Hernandez-Munoz, 14, part of a group of teens who recently stepped up to lend their support to Friends of Milton Hospital to garner support for a hospital expansion.

"It's vital to the community and we need to get everyone involved," Ally said. "I'm willing to put myself out there. This is really important."

Friends of Milton Hospital's 'Help Milton Hospital Grow' campaign is dedicated to getting community support for a hospital expansion and showing that support to the provincial government — from which approval and funding are needed.

Local teens have helped further the cause in several ways. Ally and 18-year-old Killian Hobbs, both part of the Milton Mayor's Youth Advisory Council, were on hand to represent youth at the recent campaign launch.

Ally said she thinks many people take the hospital for granted. "We need to promote this (hospital expansion) as necessary. It's not a desire, it's critical."

Hobbs said it's been encouraging to watch the community join together through the campaign. "People come together when there's a common goal, a common purpose."

MDH is "key to the community," he said.

If he had an audience with the provincial government, he knows the message he'd convey. "I'd tell them they need to put more focus on health care. Talk only gets you so far," he said.

Since the government mandated Halton's growth through its Places to Grow Act, it's only fair that it ensure provincial infrastructure — such as hospitals — keeps pace, Hobbs said.

He has a particular fondness for MDH because it's what first inspired him to become

involved in the community.

As a child, he watched his mother volunteer with the hospital auxiliary, and quickly followed in her footsteps, lending his time and efforts to a variety of local initiatives including the Milton Mayor's Youth Advisory Council, of which he's chair.

Ward 3 councillor Cindy Lunau, who's on the Friends of Milton Hospital committee, said it's encouraging to see teens getting involved.

"The ideas they have are powerful," she said. "They're the leaders of today. They show us what can be done."

One of the ideas the youths have come up with is a Facebook page aimed at other young people. Residents signed up for the popular social networking site can simply enter 'Friends of Milton Hospital' in the Facebook search engine to get to the page.

Jacob Box, 15, and Carter Ebbinge, 14, live in Acton, but that doesn't mean they're not also committed to helping the hospital, which serves their community as well.

Recently, the stepbrothers woke at the crack of dawn to hand out postcards to GO train commuters urging the Province to grant approval for the hospital expansion.

"We were very well received by commuters," Carter said. "Young people should get involved with this."

Carter has even brought postcards to school for his friends to sign.

The boys' mother and stepmother, Angie Ebbinge, works in administration at MDH and was also born there. She said she sees the needs at the hospital on a daily basis.

"We do our best, but definitely the needs are growing," she said.

She's pleased with what the boys are doing to help.

"It makes me proud to see them out there and interacting with the community," she said.

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# Raitt BBQ for animal shelter

Family event tomorrow  
for Oakville humane society

Halton MP Lisa Raitt is inviting families to join her for a summer barbecue tomorrow afternoon.

The burgers will be flipping from noon

to 4 p.m. at Willis Family Fruit Farm, 6063 Fifth Line in Milton.

Entertainment will be provided and there will be a bouncy castle for the kids.

Admission costs \$10 per person or \$25 per family, with all proceeds going to the Oakville and District Humane Society.

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