

School kids face diabetes challenge with character

By KAREN SMITH

For most kids, Halloween and Easter are two of the best times of the year.

But for others, these traditions of sugary treats remind them of the disease that is with them every day of their lives.

About 50 children in Milton, Georgetown and Acton have diabetes, a disease that affects the body's ability to convert sugar from the food they eat into energy required to sustain life.

These children and more than one million other Canadians who have diabetes hope funds raised during November's Diabetes Awareness Month will help find a cure.

But until a cure is found, treatment programs such as meal and exercise plans and medication are being used to control the illness.

Seven local youths recently took advantage of a program for juvenile diabetics offered for the first time by Milton District Hospital last month.

Four classes over a two-week period were held to inform the children about the correct lifestyle for them. Instruction focused on the symptoms and control of diabetes, introduced a healthy diabetic diet and exercise program and reviewed



Karen Laretei, a Milton District Hospital dietician, discusses meal planning with (from left to right) Julie Hayes, 14, Alison Pollard, 14, and Meghan Cherwaiko, 11. The girls have diabetes and recently participated in educational classes on the disease at the hospital.

Photo by JON BLACKER

blood tests and complications.

Meghan Cherwaiko, 11, Julie Hayes, 14, and Alison Pollard, 14, who participated in the classes, are three examples of children who are

handling diabetes intrepidly.

"After the first couple of classes, I knew more about diabetes," says Alison, a Grade 9 E.C. Drury High School student who was diagnosed

with the disease nine years ago. "A lot of stuff surprised me."

All three girls have type one diabetes, which means they require daily insulin injections to stay alive.

Their bodies lack, or are unable to properly use, insulin, a hormone produced by the pancreas. When the body's cells don't get enough insulin, blood sugar and fat levels increase and the body's proteins break down, setting off chemical changes that produce the symptoms of diabetes.

For Meghan, a Grade 6 student at Our Lady of Victory School, the classes told her about dietary information valuable to handling diabetes, which she was diagnosed as having more than a year ago.

Like all diabetics, her diet is controlled and she must watch calorie and carbohydrate intake and test her blood sugar levels.

A Grade 9 Milton District High School student, Julie learned that diabetes doesn't have to be a setback in her life, and it shouldn't stop her from reaching any goal. Julie discovered she had the disease three years ago.

The trio will be fundraising in their schools throughout Diabetes Awareness Month, as well as canvassing Milton homes on blitz night Monday.

Adult diabetic programs are also held at the hospital throughout the year. For more information, call Betty Bell at 878-2383, ext. 2360 or Karen Laretei at ext. 2367.



Photos by JOHN WARREN

Mall dolls

Three-year-old Sarah Young's Miss Piggy costume (photo left) won first prize in a Milton Mall contest Tuesday afternoon. She was judged by Eileen MacKay of CHWO Radio (above left) and Mr. and Mrs. Hal O. Weenie (Pauline Gilray and Leslie Way).

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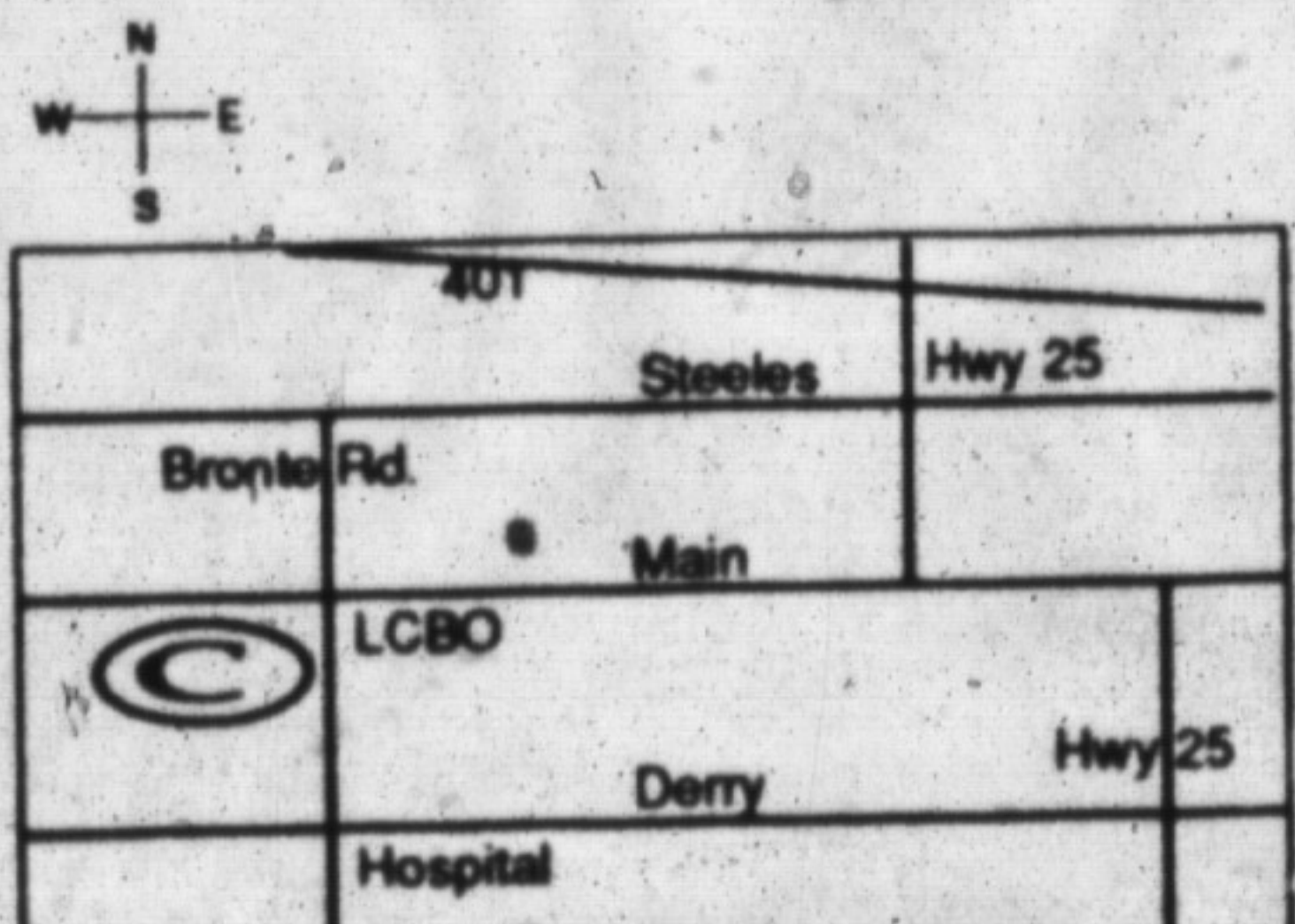
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