

DRUG AWARENESS '92

A SPECIAL REPORT FROM
THE OAKVILLE BEAVER



Halton is at the forefront of Drug Education

By **BARB JOY**
Special to the Champion

As of September 1991, the Ministry of Education required all Ontario school boards to provide drug education in schools, starting in Grade 1.

The Halton Board of Education was well ahead of the game. It satisfied this Ministry mandate five years ago and, over the years, it has expanded and revised its drug education programs.

The Board felt more than factual information about drug use was needed to instill healthy lifestyle behaviors. Students needed to adopt healthy living skills and so the focus has included practice in decision making, assertiveness, resistance, communication and the provision of viable alternatives to drug use. An important part of the program was the teaching of strategies to enhance self-esteem.

All of these components were incorporated in programs suitable for each of four groups — primary grades, junior grades, intermediate grades from 7-10 and senior grades. While primary students were exposed to information about drugs that included caffeine, nicotine and alcohol, senior students were advanced enough to learn about cessation strategies and the dangers of drinking and smoking while pregnant.

The Halton Catholic School Board is updating and revising its



A group of recent DARE graduates at their graduation ceremony.

current tobacco, alcohol and drug program in Grades 4 to 10 to meet Ministry of Education guidelines. It is studying and will institute an age-related program for Grades 1 to 3 this fall.

In developing a drug education policy, the Board included three major components: prevention of alcohol, tobacco and drug problems; identification of and early intervention into problems among students for whom preventive efforts have been unsuccessful; disciplinary action.

For all students from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 13, the use of alcohol, drugs, tobacco and inhalants are prohibited, according to the policy. Subsequent infractions can lead to suspension for a period

of from three to five school days and, in particularly severe cases, expulsion.

The Board adopted this policy four or five months ago and parents will be informed about it this September.

The DARE program is common to both school boards. Once a week for 17 weeks, two specially-trained officers of the Halton Police Services taught 53 classes in most of the Catholic schools and about half of the Halton Board's schools this year.

Since the program began in September, 1989, 3,600 Grade 6 students have completed and graduated from the program in Halton.

Constables Stewart Flaming and Michael Larson will be joined

in September by another officer, Constable Michelle Karcz and, within the next two years, there should be five officers in the program covering all schools in Halton, said Flaming.

The DARE program is applicable only to Grade 6 students who, it is felt, are at that age when they are most likely to meet the challenge of being introduced to drugs. Like the Halton Board's program, it contains much more than a "Say no to drugs" philosophy. It, too, tackles the core of the matter and addresses the reasons for starting drugs in the first place — lack of self esteem and peer pressure, to name only two.

Flaming, who confessed he enjoyed teaching, said that one of the major advantages of the program is the change of attitude toward the police many of these students underwent. They came to recognize their teachers as humans, not "the enemy" and came to look upon them in a far more positive light.

"A lot of the kids had no social lifeskills at home. Just school," said Flaming. "If they had turned off school, they formed some negative attitudes."

The DARE program has many sponsors including the Rotary Club of Oakville and ADAPT (the

Halton Alcoholism and Drug Addiction program).

The Addiction Research Foundation and Halton school boards teamed up to introduce HYPER (High Risk Youth Prevention Program) to students in six Halton public schools and all of its Catholic secondary schools. Four years ago, the program spent a year in its development stage, piloted for two years and is now being tested to determine how it sails without being steered by the ARF.

The ARF designed the program for young people aged 14 to 17 who lack self-esteem and personal skills, the very people who are most likely to turn to drugs and alcohol as an escape. They may have problems with the law or at home. They may display disruptive or non-involved behavior. They may be low achievers at school.

The program consists of 12 weekly sessions, each 75 minutes long. It requires two or three co-leaders and 12 to 14 participants.

HYPER is an activity-based program that helps students build vital self-esteem and personal skills, including self-control, problem-solving and communication. Equipped with these skills, students are in a better position to make informed choices about drugs and alcohol and other high-risk behaviors.



Halton has resources to aid drug abusers

By **BARB JOY**
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Halton has "better resources than most" for abusers caught in Ontario's growing drug and alcohol problem, according to the Addiction Research Foundation.

The Halton Alcoholism and Drug Addiction Program (ADAPT) offers professional out-patient assessment and treatment services for individuals experiencing problems with alcohol or drug abuse. Referrals to ADAPT come from doctors, lawyers, community agencies, schools, health care

facilities, industry. In fact, anyone can make a referral.

Clients are first assessed to determine the extent of the alcohol or drug problem and then treated to resolve it. The few having a severe addiction may go into an in-patient program at addiction centres in Toronto, Hamilton or Guelph. Counselling services include individual, group, family or counselling of children or adult children of alcoholics. All of the ADAPT services are available at no cost to youths, adults and seniors. The program is funded primarily by the Ontario Ministry of Health.

Besides dealing with the drug or alcohol problem itself, ADAPT also provides education and information about alcohol and drug use.

Halton Recovery House in Hornby (for men) and Hope Place in Milton (for women) are two residences for the treatment of alcoholics. As well, many Alcoholics Anonymous self-help groups are available in Halton to lend support to those who, without it, might revert to drinking again.

The Addiction Research Foundation dispenses information about alcohol and drugs. Whatever is not available from its

small library in Burlington it can get from its head office in Toronto. The ARF also refers those seeking help to appropriate agencies and encourages them to try it again if they cannot find satisfactory assistance.

Halton Family Services will offer a program for adult children of alcoholics in the fall if at least eight people show an interest in it.

The Halton health department's mandate is prevention and one of its programs, Ready or Not, is aimed at parents of children 8 to 14, teaching them skills to use in preventing drug addictions in the family.

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