

# They're looking for big-hearted donors

## Heart disease is Canada's No. 1 killer

By **STEVE LEBLANC**  
Special to the Champion

This month — as is the case every year — the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario intensifies its efforts against Canada's number one killer.

The agency's Milton chapter is currently involved in its fourth annual Heart and Stroke Month campaign. Along with people from its Halton regional big brother, local volunteers are conducting a person-to-person donation drive aimed at raising the bulk of their \$30,000 February goal.

"That's what we're hoping to get this month, which represents about one-third of our annual budget," said local chapter president Cheryl Sellors.

According to a 1996 study, Ms Sellors explained, Halton falls among provincial averages for victims of heart disease and stroke. Almost 30,000 Ontario residents and 78,000 across Canada die from these afflictions each year.

"It's still Canada's number one killer. Over the last few years an alarming number of women have been suffering from these diseases, especially from strokes. That's because women are aging faster," she said.

The early warning signs are often less

apparent among the fairer sex. While most men usually experience chest pains, a clear message of potential heart problems, many women suffer from neck and/or back aches.

As a result, women are not as willing to go to a doctor during these initial stages of heart disease.

"Other groups that are at high risk are obviously the smokers and people with fat-laden diets, as well as those with a history of heart disease in their family — particularly before the age of 60," Ms Sellors said.

"There are a couple of very easy ways to increase your odds against heart disease and stroke. First is to track the amount of fat in your diet. Fifteen to 30 per cent of calories from fat is the suggested

'safe zone'. With most food packages listing calories and fat content these days, this isn't hard to do.

"Second is simple exercise. Even a moderate, 15-minute walk each day can greatly reduce your chances of a heart attack or stroke."

While another increase in heart disease is expected over the next decade — with a large component of population aging into higher risk zones — the odds of surviving

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HEART AND STROKE FOUNDATION OF ONTARIO

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