

# Public support keeps Amity working

By JANE MULLER  
Champion Reporter

There is a 45-foot trailer behind Milton which helps keep 350 handicapped people employed.

The key to the function of the trailer is the word Amity which appears in bright red letters on its side. The word stands for a service which will be 50-years-old next year, yet it is relatively new in town.

The trailer is a manned donation centre where Miltonians can donate good used clothing, toys, appliances and small furniture to Amity. These donations are cleaned, repaired and labelled by disabled workers in a huge five-floor facility in Hamilton. Amity operates five stores which carry the refurbished items for sale at discount prices.

Those who work at Amity likely wouldn't be in the labour force if it weren't for this facility. They are people who are emotionally ill, physically or mentally handicapped and who require a sheltered setting. Some will leave Amity for other jobs in the community after their training while others will remain as productive workers in a business designed for them.

There are many facets to Amity. Within the walls of the Hamilton facility the handicapped are rehabilitated and trained in everything from television and radio repair to maintenance work and dry cleaning.

Although the types of jobs available at Amity are diverse, they all rely on the same thing—donations from the public. The donation centre here is one of 12 in and around Hamilton.

According to Amity administrative assistant Sheila Ferris, Milton would have been on the list of trailer locations eventually but it appeared here in May 1982 by request. Mayor Gord Krantz and Councillor Blanche Hinton were responsible for accelerating the timetable.

Mrs. Ferris recalls, "The response was super in the beginning."

Until recently when donation picked up again, Mrs. Ferris was concerned about a lack of awareness about Amity and the big white trailer behind the mall. The fall marks the end of garage sale season and a time when many families move making it a bountiful period suggested Mrs. Ferris.

She is concerned about winter months saying, "Last year we thought we would have to lay people off. We didn't want to do it and appealed to the public."

Contributions poured in and kept the workers busy and the stores stocked. In the not too distant future, Mrs. Ferris said a store will be opened in Oakville. There are already two donation centres in that city and in Stoney Creek and Burlington and one in Grimsby. At Hamilton Mountain, were Amity originated in 1935, there are three.

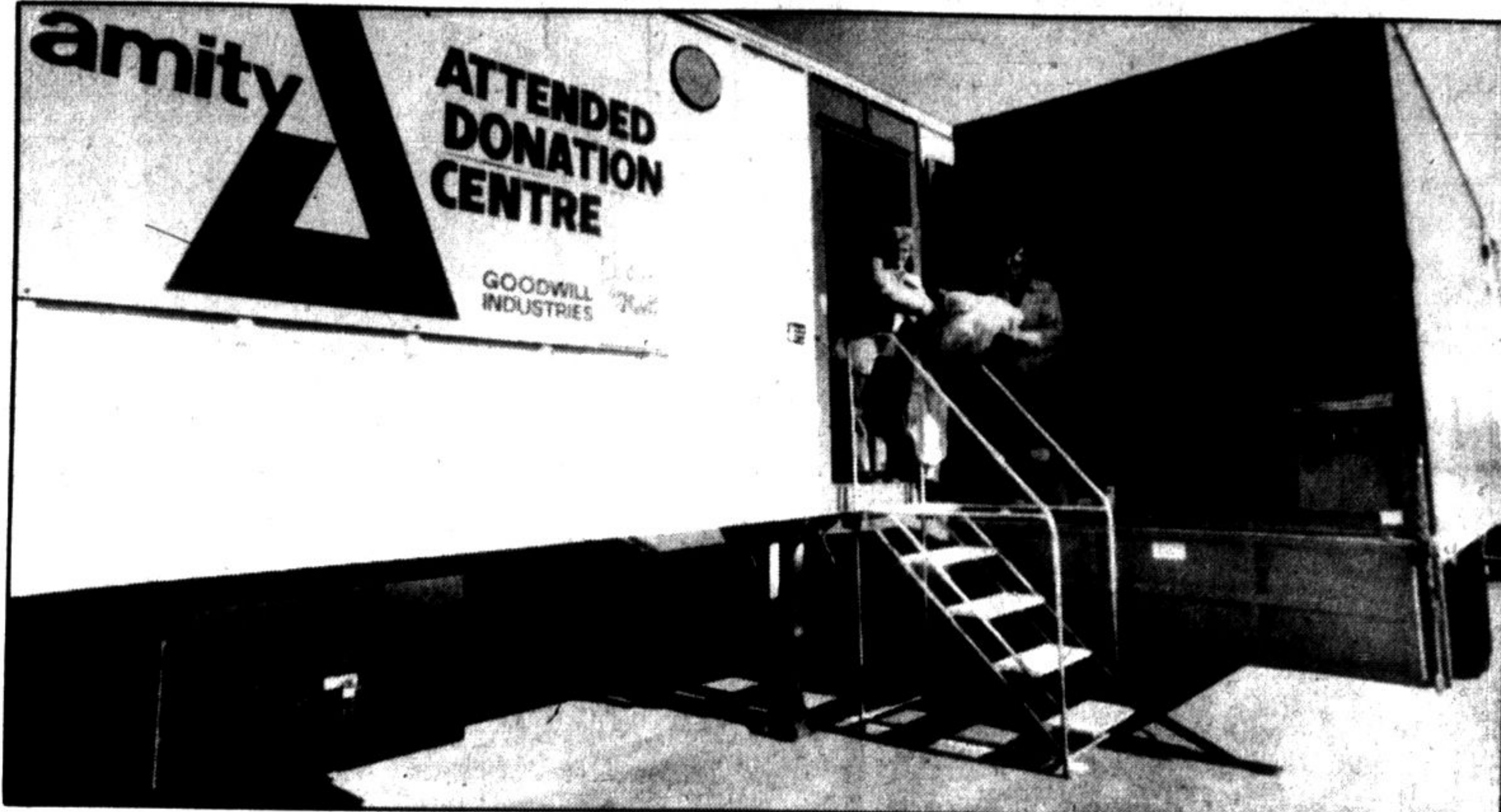
Manned donation centres have replaced unsupervised receptacles. Milton's has been manned by Rachel Roscoe and Andrea Thomson since it was placed here.

"It's rewarding work, especially when you see people who come in and donate," Mrs. Roscoe explained.

She feels local supporters "deserve a lot of credit." Some come with truck loads, according to the woman who's there to help transfer the goods and can explain where they are going and what will become of their contributions.

"Most are curious about where it goes," Mrs. Roscoe said.

While clothing is a popular donation, Mrs. Ferris said there is always a great need for men's and children's clothes. Mattresses, boxsprings and items which should be taken to the dump rather than the donation centre are items Mrs. Roscoe and other attendants don't want to see.



Rachel Roscoe helps Randy Stinson load a truck with local donations bound for Amity Rehabilitation Centre.

"If you wouldn't give these things to a friend, don't give them to us," suggested Mrs. Ferris.

Mrs. Roscoe doesn't know about Amity until she applied for the job of manning the Milton Centre. When she was hired 18 months ago she toured the facility where the donations she helped collect would be processed.

"You get a certain feeling from the people there. You can't help but leave with a smile," Mrs. Roscoe recalled from her visit.

Amity developed during the great depression as a means of employing the many who needed work as well as providing affordable used goods. During World War II workers got into the war effort.

Amity took on a new role after the war, employing disabled veterans.

"They felt they had contributed something and had been able to deal with their disabilities," said Mrs. Ferris.

Amity has continued to grow and today provides work, rehabilitation and support. Physically disabled people are now in the minority and those who are mentally ill outnumber them, according to Mrs. Ferris.

"Our main goal is to assess, train and get people back into the work force. Some will leave and some will stay in a sheltered environment," she said.

Most Amity employees are referred by agencies like Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Worker's Compensation Board, Adult Protection Services, Alienated Youth and Canada Employment Centre.

When they are employed at Amity they have the benefit of a six-member team of rehabilitation specialists and 17 supervisors.

A description of the activities which take place at the facility reveals the many training opportunities there. The first floor houses the main store and is topped on the second by the administrative offices where computer training is offered and a cafeteria where food services can be learned.

The third floor is dedicated to sorting, cleaning and pricing textiles and household items. Training is provided in the repair business on the fourth floor. In addition to working on donated appliances, radios and televisions, trainees are employed through subcontract work from outside industries.

Furniture is refinished, upholstered and repaired on the fifth floor in preparation for Amity stores and customers who have their own pieces refurbished

there. Amity is a registered charitable organization with a volunteer board of directors.

The closest Amity store to Milton, until one is opened in Oakville, is located at 1366 Main St. E. at Tuxedo, Hamilton.

The local trailer is open for donations seven days a week from 9.30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Those who donate will have a chance to tour the Hamilton facility located at 225 King William St., Tuesday, Oct. 23 at 2 p.m. and Thurs. Oct. 25 at 10 a.m. Registrations will be accepted at 526-8481 until Thurs. Oct. 18.



Elizabeth and William Duignan of Milton are pleased to announce the marriage of their daughter Jennifer Elizabeth to Richard Lawrence Forster in Calgary on August 27, 1984. The groom is the son of Joyce and Don Huggins of Port of Spain, Trinidad. The couple will reside in Calgary where the bride is a geotechnical engineer with Gulf Oil and the groom is a free lance journalist.

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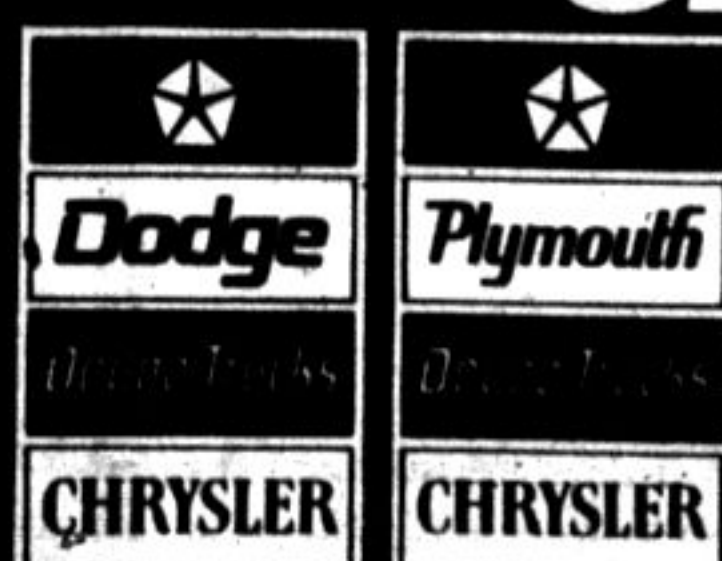
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