

Safety program introduces a new set of rules for kids

Two sides to touches

The lessons taught through traffic safety mascot Elmer the Safety Elephant protect children from obvious hazards.

The lessons taught by Merlana in "Journey from AMU" cover dangers not usually discussed in the classroom. A play designed to make children aware of sexual abuse is part of an educational program which could find its way into Halton schools.

Parents and educators witnessed the little girl's journey to earth from her home planet of AMU last Tuesday night at St. Peter's Separate School. The hour-long performance met with obvious approval as the capacity crowd indicated with a standing ovation.

It was the 75th performance for the three-member cast and their last. A new group of actors will be hired in January when the program will continue in Toronto where it originated. "Journey from AMU" and the follow-up classroom component of the program has reached 30,000 students in Metropolitan Toronto since September.

The program evolved from a committee established two years ago by Metropolitan Chairman Paul Godfrey, to investigate child abuse. Project director of the committee and co-creator of "Journey from AMU", Catherine Stewart introduced the program to the Milton Audience.

If Halton Separate Roman Catholic School Board and Halton Board of Education move to adopt the program as part of curriculum, community preparation will be the initial step. Teachers, school staff and professionals



It was the 75th time these three freelance actors performed "Journey from AMU". Lindsay Cable, (left) Paul Punyi and Maureen Rooney gave parents and educators a preview of the theatrical portion of a program aimed at preventing the sexual abuse of children. Their previous performances have been before audiences of elementary school children in Toronto.

in the community must be aware of the program for it to be successful, according to Ms. Stewart.

Concepts promoted in the play can be practised through classroom follow-up. "Journey from AMU" explores the "touch continuum," Ms. Stewart explained. In covering negative and positive touches a deliberate attempt has been made not to frighten children.

The story line is simple enough, with Merlana, the heroine, being sent from her home planet AMU (All Mixed Up) to investigate "touch". No one on AMU touches and the reason for this is hidden but is responsible for the planet's name.

On earth, Merlana meets a boy and girl who see her through several encounters, both good and bad. Through the magical powers possessed by all residents of AMU, Merlana assumes the identity of a number of children and experiences everything from loving hugs to pillow fights and a too-touchy uncle.

She always returns to her earthling friends who help explain the types of touches and some ground rules. Several songs help put the messages across and let Merlana know her body belongs to her, she has the right to say no to touches she doesn't like and to trust her feelings.

The play does not address sexual abuse until other aspects of touch have been explored. Then the actors define "private parts" and discuss who to tell if they are touched in areas or ways they don't think are right.

Those who attended the local performance and two on Wednesday in Burlington were asked to complete questionnaires. The audience's impressions of the play will be considered by both boards of education in their evaluation of the program. The results of the boards' assessment are expected in January.

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Halton Social Planning Council

Discovering the gaps and how to fill them

If a certain organization has its way, more young people will have jobs, affordable housing will become available and youth services will increase in north Halton.

This is a tall order, but the Halton Social Planning Council's aim is to improve the quality of life here. These are some of the areas which must be satisfied to make Halton better for its residents, according to the group's executive director Susan Goodman.

Fulfilling the organization's mandate means examining and attempting to solve issues involving the elderly, unemployed people, troubled children and adults. It is a relatively new organization brought about through the amalgamation of planning councils in North Halton, Burlington and Oakville.

In regionalizing the planning group, the three existing boards of directors remained and representatives of each make up the regional board. Although some issues effect the entire region, others are specific to certain areas.

"The south has more mature systems because



SUSAN GOODMAN

they've been there longer. In the north they are not as developed and there are some glaring gaps," explained the director.

Filling those gaps will require establishing more services for children and teenagers and developing housing for the elderly and young families.

"The lack of affordable housing is really a very serious problem in Halton. Milton is particularly unique because of the number of young families. Elsewhere the need is with the elderly and single people," Mrs. Goodman said.

The first step will be to get some concrete information and figures to back the needs and that will require working with municipal and regional planners. Mrs. Goodman was disappointed when Halton Region recently cancelled a proposed housing study, a move which will make the planning council's job more difficult.

Non-profit housing, sponsored by service clubs or church groups and co-operative housing built with government assistance are two alternatives she suggests may solve the deficiency.

"There is a real scarcity of emergency shelters in the region," Mrs. Goodman explained.

People who are in trouble and need short term shelter have to leave the area to find it in larger centres. This sometimes compounds problems as they may not have access to support services, according to Mrs. Goodman.

A new problem which has surfaced over the last few years is youth unemployment. The planning council will be looking into the extent of the problem here, working with groups which may be able to curb it or establish a new group to deal with it. The development of a youth employment service is under consideration.

Job opportunities for youth will be among the items included in a community needs assessment currently being carried out by newly appointed community development coordinator, Jane Rickard.

The hiring of a part-time employee to work in the north coincided with the establishment of the planning council's first office in Milton. The north Halton community coordinator will be here one day a week with the rest of her time spent at the Georgetown office.

That office previously served the entire north area and houses an offshoot of the planning council. The North Halton Volunteer Centre, a service which matches volunteers with agencies which require them, also recently expanded its service through a part-time office in Milton.

Milton Human Services Centre provides a home for both organizations as well as more than 10 others. Funds are provided to the planning council by Halton Region and the various United Ways in the region.

In addition to discovering and attempting to satisfy needs in Halton the planning council offers workshops, like a recent series on management for volunteer agencies. It produces a directory of services in the region and keeps a data bank with information about housing and a breakdown of the population in terms of age and employment status.



When Ed Segsworth received the Farmer of the Year award at the annual banquet of the Halton Federation of Agriculture Sat. Nov. 24, his surprise was shared by his father. Ross Segsworth founded the award which is given to a farmer selected by a five-member committee. The result of their choice is not known until the banquet is held.

Agriculture's problems are the farmers' to bear

Farmers have little to be positive about these days and even Halton's farmer of the year has to agree things were better five or ten years ago.

Ed Segsworth admitted being recognized for his achievements in agriculture by his peers recently felt good. It was an inspiration to the man who has been a cash cropper for more than 25 years.

His father, Ross, who sponsors the award shared Ed's surprise when he discovered at the presentation ceremony who had been selected by the committee of the Halton Federation of Agriculture.

Ed was raised on a dairy farm owned by his grandfather. He tried other jobs outside of agriculture but didn't enjoy them.

His involvement in farming goes beyond growing corn, oats and soya beans. Ed is a director of the Halton Federation of Agriculture, the Ontario Federation and Halton Soil and Crop Improvement Association. He also belongs to the Halton Agricultural Advisory Committee.

He considers his participation as community service as well as providing educational opportunities but in some ways it can be frustrating.

"The political process is so slow in reacting," explained the farmer.

He is critical of the government's "cheap food policy." Farmers need a better price for their product in the short term and something to help through the tough times, according to Ed.

"The progressive farmers are suffering and the ones who are just starting up—the ones who will produce the food for our future," he said in a recent interview at his Walkers Line farm.

Even with his many years of experience, Ed and others like him have been having problems in recent years. He is better off than some who have been "forced out of business" however.

Lean economic times have prompted changes in farming practices, the types of crops grown and the way they are marketed.

"You have to do anything to lower your input," Ed said. Prior to the crippling rise in interest rates, in 1978 Ed took on his brother-in-law as a partner and expanded his operation by 500 acres. Only 55 acres are not leased and represent the size of his home farm.

As a leaser of agricultural land, Ed shares a concern of others who use land owned by developers for farming. Operating with one or two-year leases does not give farmers the incentive to invest in the land which is already showing diminished yields.

Conservation tillage is a costly process providing long term benefits. While Ed is using these soil saving techniques on his own land he isn't applying them on the more than 1,100 he and partner Dan Henry lease.

"If we could get 15 or 20-year leases we would invest in the land," he suggested.

"The developers aren't worried about it. The government doesn't seem to be worried or they'd do something about it. It seems the farming community are the only ones who are worried," Ed explained.

He admits the general public is for the most part unaware of the industry itself let alone its problems. With only five per cent of the population involved in food production, agriculture has a small voice on the political scene, according to Ed.

Through the efforts of various agricultural organizations he hopes more are learning about the business.

"As farm land disappears so will food and how many years until we are dependent on other countries for our food, he wonders.

How many years before we become a Third World country?"

Despite his concerns, Ed isn't ready to change his line of work. His 13-year-old son Matthew has a keen interest in farming, although he is too young to help operate the huge machinery of the day. The couple also have a 15-year-old daughter Tera.

Ed's father, now retired, visits the farm regularly helping where he can and offering well-seasoned advice.

Ed's wife Dianne didn't know a thing about farming until they married. She stays away from farm labour and looks after the books instead. Keeping her eyes on the figures has made her keenly aware of these penny pinching times at Agredan Farms.

In addition to his full-time job, Ed is a part-time firefighter with the Burlington department, working out of Station 5 at Kilbride.

Some charitable

decorators



The efforts of members of Eta Phi sorority have resulted in a fresh look for the kitchen and meeting area at The Centre. Among the decorators at the Main St. Facility last Monday were Laraine Hasler, (top) Virginia Cyr (bottom left) and Wolf-Coombes. The large kitchen provides a home for several programs geared to mothers. While they attend programs which cover parenting, life skills and those derived from interests of the participants, their children are cared for by volunteers in the pre-school. A Thursday morning program aimed at serving isolated women in the rural area requires volunteer drivers. Most elements of The Centre rely on the donation of time by caring people.



Molly Maids are Santa's helpers

The women who wear the black and white Molly Maid uniforms could be donning the costumes of Santa's helpers during the next few weeks.

Their costumes will not change however but their roles will as they collect new and nearly new toys from clients and other residents wishing to contribute. The toys will add to the Christmas joy of children at Milton District Hospital, Georgetown Hospital, Halton Woman's Place and Milton "Y".

According to Barb Chilwell, owner of the local Molly Maid franchise said the project was well supported last year.

"The response should be twice as good as last year because we have a lot more clients," she explained.

Molly Maids will pick up toys from homes they do not clean as well as those they visit regularly.

Anyone wishing to contribute to this project should call Mrs. Chilwell at 854-2682.