

Independent living

Another study away?

By JANE MULLER
Staff writer

Disabled people living in north Halton could be enjoying more independent lifestyles if the results of a survey reflect a suspected need here.

A group of four students will be interviewing severely handicapped residents in Milton, Acton and Georgetown this summer as well as evaluating accessibility to various facilities in the area. Headed by project coordinator Dana McDade, the research team is currently searching for disabled residents.

Contact people in Georgetown and Acton, associated with self help agencies, have aided the search for survey subjects. In Milton however, no contact has been made.

Miss McDade has been visiting occupational therapists in hope of finding more disabled people and has had some success with word of mouth references. Those who will be questioned about the type of care they require could be part of a new type of integration.

"People are trying to get away from institutions, group homes and nursing homes. There are no alternatives for independent living," explained Miss McDade.

One alternative is already in operation in Hamilton where several units of an existing apartment building have been made accessible to the disabled. Being able to get around in the units and the building itself is only part of the residential alternative.

The major element of the operation which could be duplicated in this area, is the attendant care available to residents around the clock. Attendants will not offer medical care but will help with toileting and other heavy care duties.

Up to five hours of care a day could be provided and at least one attendant would be on duty through the night. Medical treatment would have to be provided by a professional service like the Victorian Order of Nurses.

"There is no funding for attendant care, that would be coming out of their own pockets," said Miss McDade.

Ideally the government would help sponsor such an independent living project. She doesn't feel it will take much to convince government to provide some funding once the need is documented.

"Integration is necessary. The handicapped are trying to get back into the community. If they are surrounded by people in wheelchairs it will be like an institution," she explained.

A small percentage of apartment units would be dedicated to the disabled and an office for attendants would be required. A new building, constructed with accessibility in mind would be preferable, according to the project coordinator.

Miss McDade expects interviews of about 100 disabled people will be completed by the end of July. She realizes there could be a problem collecting data as handicapped people in general "have been surveyed to death."

"A lot of them will know what an independent project is," Miss McDade said.

The Ontario March of Dimes is overseeing the summer project sponsored by a Summer Canada grant from the federal government. The agency which serves disabled adults

will be using information collected by the students to produce a booklet detailing the accessibility of buildings throughout north Halton. Similar guides are available in many areas and the local version should be in print by the end of the year.

Armed with measuring tapes and a check list, the students will "blitz" the three towns, according to the project coordinator. They will visit places like libraries and hospitals during their tours, measuring doors, checking their weight, looking at stairs, washrooms and commenting on accessibility in general.

"Accessibility touches the elderly, people who may have trouble walking as well as people in wheelchairs," Miss McDade said.

Disabled people who require attendant care and may be interested in an independent living arrangement should contact the Burlington office of the Ontario March of Dimes at 634-5882 or write to the organization located at 460 Brant St., Burlington.



Mr. and Mrs. R.E. Austen are proud to announce the graduation of their daughter, Madeline, with an Honours Bachelor of Science degree, with honours, specialized honours Zoology, from the University of Guelph. Madeline received the College of Biological Science Alma Mater Scholarship and the Biological Science Students' Council Scholarship, both awarded for academic proficiency and involvement and leadership in C.B.S. activities. She is working on the 'Environment 2000' programme at the Royal Botanical Gardens, Hamilton, for the summer.

A NEW PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION

to help Disabled and Seniors live at home.

Why was this new program introduced?

"Many elderly and disabled people want to live with their families. However, in some cases, providing shelter requires extensive home renovations which result in increased property taxes. We must encourage—not penalize—families for their efforts to provide shelter and supportive care."

Accordingly, I am announcing today that homeowners who undertake renovations or additions, specifically to keep an elderly or disabled person at home and in the community, will be exempt from any increase in taxable assessment that would otherwise occur."

Budget Statement—May 15, 1984. The Honourable Larry Grossman, Q.C., Treasurer of Ontario.

Does the program involve direct financial assistance for alterations? No. The savings are in reduced property taxes each year, not in grants or loans for alterations. Under this program, the assessed value of the improvements will not be included when your property tax is calculated, providing the improvements were made to help a disabled or senior live at home.

Who can apply? Any property owner who makes improvements to accommodate people who are 65 or over and those of any age with physical or mental disabilities that would otherwise require them to live in an institution.

Can only the family of a disabled or senior person apply for this exemption? Not necessarily. For example, you may wish to make improvements to accommodate a friend in your home. Moreover, disabled or seniors can apply for the exemption directly, if they make alterations that will enable them to continue living in their own homes.

What about group homes? Non-profit group homes can apply, but only as long as their improved accommodations do not exceed three residential units. Larger institutions operating multiple facilities to care for the disabled or seniors are not included in this program.

Can commercial properties qualify? Yes, in some cases. For example, a family operating a retail store

could apply for the exemption if they make improvements to an apartment upstairs for the accommodation of a family member or friend who would otherwise be compelled to live in an institution.

What types of home improvements qualify? Any addition, improvement or alteration specifically related to the needs of the disabled or senior resident qualifies for this new exemption. These may include such features as special bathroom modifications or additions to an existing home. (Please note: general repairs and maintenance do not increase assessment anyway).

Does the exemption apply to changes underway or completed before the program was announced? Only alterations started after May 15, 1984 when the program was announced will qualify for the property tax exemption once the work has been completed.

How long will the exemption apply? The tax exemption continues as long as the senior or disabled person uses the property as their principal residence.

How do you receive this new property tax exemption? The first step is to call your local Assessment Office at the number listed below. To avoid any possible disappointment, please contact us before finalizing your plans. We look forward to discussing the program in greater detail.

Please talk to your local Assessment Office. We're anxious to help.

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2 Robert Speck Parkway, 4th Floor
MISSISSAUGA, Ontario L4Z 1T3
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