

Teen's strong belief in kindness sparks chain reaction of compassion

After Rachel's death, the 17-year-old's family carefully read the six journals she left behind. It was in those journals that her family learned that Rachel believed in kindness, and that showing compassion could start a chain reaction of the same.

The family formed Rachel's Challenge to honour Rachel and spread the morals found in her journals, with a goal of starting a chain reaction. More than 19 million people around the world have heard Rachel's story and accepted the challenges based on her writings.

Craig Kielburger and Milton District high schools brought the program to their students and the community last Wednesday and Thursday.

Along with footage of CNN's coverage at Columbine and its aftermath, Murray introduced the attentive audience to Rachel and her family through videos and photographs of the pages of her journals.

Between clips she elaborated on Rachel's five challenges.

To get rid of prejudice, don't prejudice and always look for the best in others, Murray said.

"You never know what they are going through," she said. "A smile masks the pain and sorrow that's deep inside."

"A simple smile on your face of an act of kindness can save a life."

Murray noted Rachel, through her

essay, said to give people at least three chances before judging and labeling them.

"Look into their eyes and you will catch a glimpse of their heart," Murray suggested.

"We have such power through our words and actions... our words have the power to hurt, but more than that, our words have the power to heal. Speak with kindness, not cruelty."

She said Rachel had positive influences in her life thanks to a large family and was influenced greatly when she read the Diary of Anne Frank.

"Rachel also intended to have a profound impact on the world, like Anne Frank," said Murray.

In addition to dreaming big, she told students to write down their dreams and keep a journal.

She also said not to put limits on what you can do.

"Rachel didn't. She wrote, 'I won't be labeled as average' on the cover of her last journal," Murray said, noting it was found in the bottom of her backpack following the shooting.

Murray asked the audience in the packed gymnasium if they would accept the final challenge of starting a chain reaction: "Tell the people who mean the very most to you how much they mean to you and how much you care for them."

"Speak from your heart," she continued.

Every hand went into the air, as students anxiously scrambled to embrace their friends.

Grade 11 student Andrew Annis, who's part of Craig Kielburger's social justice committee, said he thought the presentation was incredible.

"This is something our school needs because we've been through a lot and it's just an amazing presentation," he said.

"It's so inspiring to follow up with these goals that she set out for us. It was just absolutely amazing... and to see everyone together and compassionate and so overwhelmed — it was crazy to see."

Julie Slack can be reached at jslack@miltoncanadianchampion.com or on Twitter @miltonmusing.

PEGGY'S
MORNING MADNESS SALE

Saturday Nov. 2nd 2013

8 am — 12 noon Only !!

30% OFF

STOREWIDE

184 main St. E, Downtown 905-878-1414



2013 Passat 3.6L

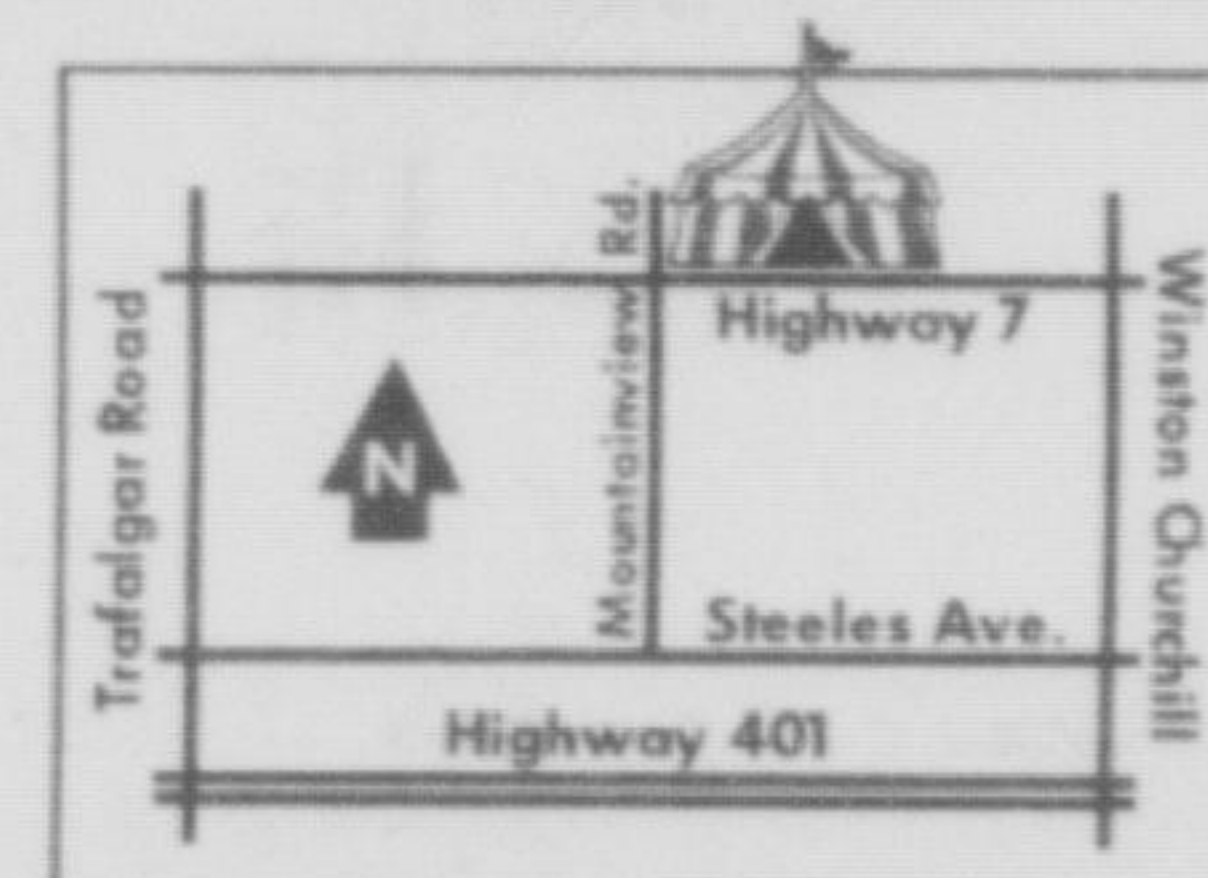
D VOLKSFEST

Up to **\$5,000**

cash discount*

**Georgetown
Volkswagen**

203 Guelph Street (Highway 7)
Georgetown - 905.877.5285



Das Auto.

*Limited time discount available on cash purchase only of a new and unregistered 2013 Passat 3.6L model with 6-speed automatic transmission, to be applied against the final negotiated price. Discount varies by model. Offer ends October 31, 2013, and is subject to change or cancellation without notice. Model shown: Passat 2.5L Highline, \$32,603. Vehicle may not be exactly as shown. Visit Georgetown Volkswagen for full details and tons-a-lun. After all, we're drivers too!