

# Assault the most reported form of elder abuse in region, say Halton police

By David Lea

METROLAND WEST MEDIA GROUP

Many may think elder abuse is something that happens in distant communities, but Halton police emphasize that even in a place as safe as Halton, the crime occurs.

Constable Nadine Clarke, the Halton Police Seniors' Support Officer, said elder abuse takes many forms.

The most commonly reported crime against the elderly in Halton is assault. Clarke cited 42 incidents reported in 2014.

Financial abuse is another top crime Halton's elderly fall victim to, with at least eight incidents taking place last year.

Another disturbing fact about these forms of elder abuse is that police usually do not have

to go too far to find the perpetrators.

"The abusers are often family members and caregivers," said Clarke. "Elder abuse is way under-reported because of the isolation of older people and the shame that it probably is a loved one or a family member that is doing this."

While there is no single cause of elder abuse, police said, some of the factors that can lead to it include: a history of abuse in the family; financial, housing or chronic health problems; alcohol or drug dependency; mental illness; and social or personal attitudes toward the elderly.

Elder abuse could also be the result of a caregiver having difficulty coping with their responsibilities particularly when they have limited support or respite.

In an effort to prevent elder abuse, Clarke holds about 100 presentations a year at seniors centres, retirement homes, churches and other locations on how seniors can avoid becoming the victims of abuse.

"We tell people that if they are picking a power of attorney, to pick someone they trust. That trust can change and if it does and they feel something funny is going on, they need to revoke it and appoint someone else," said Clarke.

Police also make use of anonymous tips to Crime Stoppers of Halton to locate and assist potential victims of elder abuse.

"We've had quite a few Crime Stoppers tips this year where we have gone out and investigated and there would be neglect or something going on," said Clarke.

Police said signs of elder abuse can include: unexplained injuries; fear or uneasiness; depression; withdrawal or passivity; poor hygiene; poor nutrition; missing personal belongings; lack of food, clothing or other necessities; unusual bank withdrawals; and unusual legal activity related to wills or other documents.

Residents with elder abuse concerns can contact Clarke at 905-825-4747 ext. 5345 or Nadine.Clarke@haltonpolice.ca.

They can also contact Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS (8477) or the Elder Abuse Prevention Committee of Halton at 1-866-442-5866.

In the event of an emergency contact the Halton Regional Police Service through 911.

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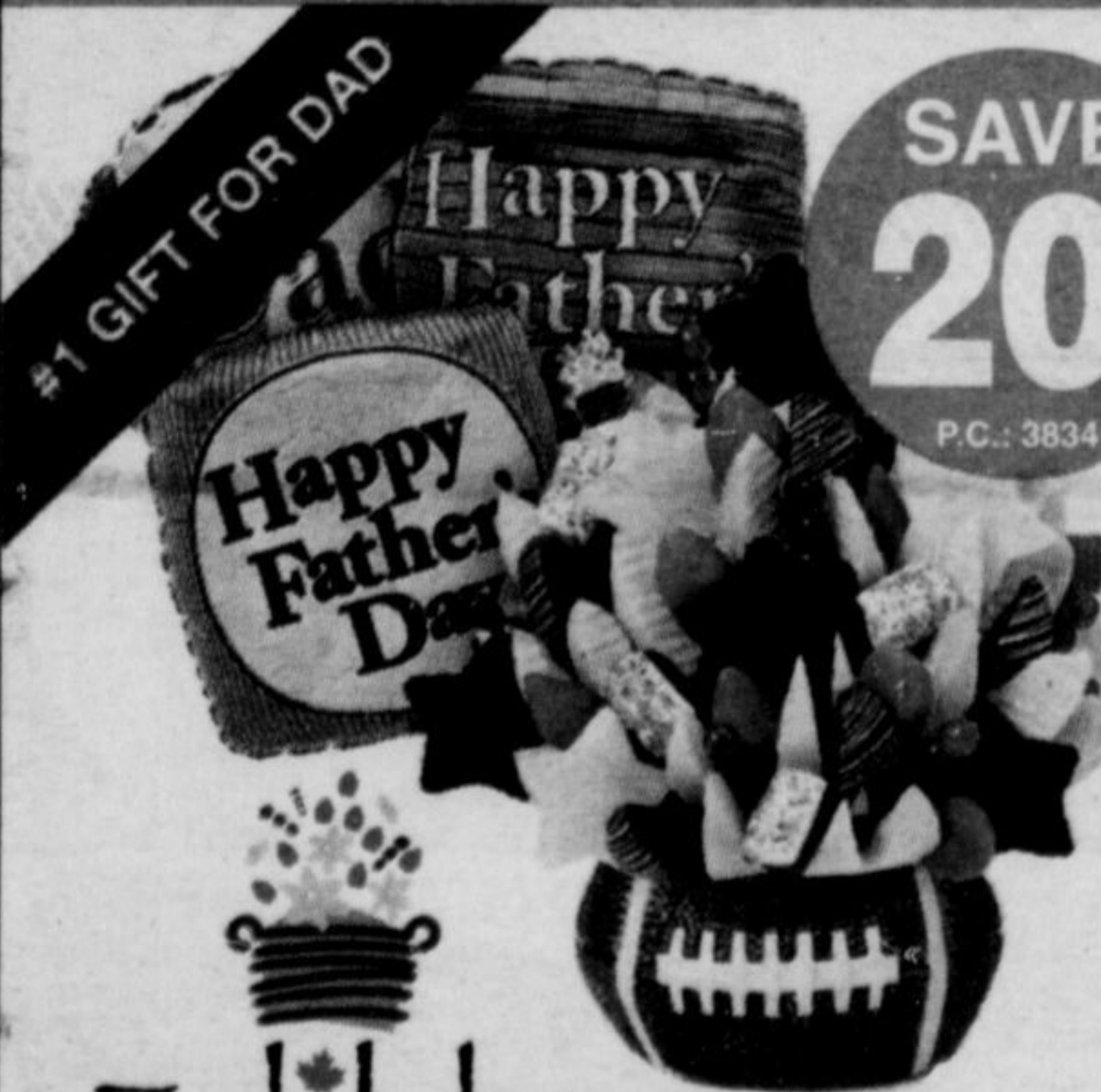
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