

Local organizations help OCU pilot project

The Family Y, a local business and ambulance drivers in Richmond Hill have played a big part in a successful pilot project for Operation Catch-up.

Operation Catch-up (OCU) is a regional organization created to work in conjunction with the elementary and secondary schools to help students who are having difficulty learning in the

traditional classroom setting.

The idea behind this pilot project is to let some of these students who are having difficulties at schools use Family Y facilities to physically "let off steam" as well as take an interest in business and their community.

Dave Porter, Attendance Counsellor for

York County Board of Education, and a director for OCU, said three months ago there were four boys in the OCU program who were above grade level in IQ, but were just not performing well in school.

Mr. Porter said he felt these students had to be "turned on" as people, before they could be "turned on" as students.

"They had to like themselves," he said, "if they were concerned with themselves, their future and the need to get an education, they were bound to succeed as a student."

A program heavy on weight lifting and active sports was arranged with Gwen Galliday, Y program director and Alvin Anson their instructor.

"At the Y they get pressure out of their system," said Mr. Porter. "When they feel better physically it leads to liking themselves and feeling more self-sufficient," said Mr. Porter.

The program was expanded when Ray Griffis from Forward Equipment and Supply on Station Street, expressed a willingness to work with the four students, teaching them furniture refinishing, small engines, and body and fender work one morning each week.

This new aspect of their education, via OCU, took care of their interest in technical things, said Mr. Porter. Mr. Griffis said sometimes working with the boys presented a

hindrance but in the long run he felt it helped the boys and the business.

The Attendance Counsellor then successfully approached ambulance drivers in Richmond Hill to see if they would teach St. John Ambulance training to the boys one day each week.

Mr. Porter feels the "experiment" with the four students being in the

community in the mornings and OCU program in the afternoon to get their academic subjects, has been quite successful.

"It's working well," he said, "the kids come back to school less pressured and less uptight."

There is a need for co-operation between industry and the school, said Mr. Porter, "education takes place both inside and outside

the classroom."

Mr. Porter said he would like to develop this program of working outside the school system as time and money allow.

"There are kids who hate school, but want to learn," he said, "and business can help them develop as human beings."

Mr. Porter issued an invitation to business people in the community

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Separate schools budget finalized

The management committee stamped its approval and the Separate School Board will do the same to this year's budget, which includes a 5.5 per cent mill rate increase or an extra \$14.20 in taxes for houses assessed at \$20,000.

The third budget draft, with some minor changes, gave trustees little trouble endorsing it. Superintendent of Business Administration Ed Joyce made it clear provincial grants per pupil were held to 4.2 per cent but the York Separate Board is getting 4.5 per cent more per student.

He said the rise in the mill is reasonable because the board's assessment is up about 10.5 per cent.

"We've kept all the cuts we've had to make as far away from the classroom as possible - that's the business we're in, education," he said.

"We've exercised a lot of constraint and we could have been in a lot of trouble had we not done so."

Director of Education John Zupancic, whose Thornhill home is assessed at \$38,300 will pay an additional \$27.17 on the school portion of his taxes this year.

Once the public school system approves its budget, it will cost ratepayers slightly more than that for a house assessed at \$20,000.

It is the individual municipalities, not the school boards, who set mill rates, however.

Markham Trustee Dan DiRocco said he couldn't accept part of the budget and questioned Mr. Joyce about an expenditure of \$65,000 for library books and materials.

He claimed he did his own survey of three schools and that principals felt they did not get the dollar amounts they requested.

"I just don't see how the principals could tell me what they needed and then turn around and tell you something different. I'd like to know where you got your figures from," said Mr. Joyce.

Mr. DiRocco later admitted the apparent lack of materials was strictly his own opinion, not information given by the principals. He was told by staff an additional subsidy of \$5,000 is set aside annually for the four schools needing the most attention to their libraries.

The trustee said he still wasn't satisfied the sum was enough but couldn't raise support from any of the others present. Since he is not an appointed member of the committee, he's disqualified from making any recommendations.

"I don't think too much of this committee in that case," said Mr. DiRocco.

In apparent agitation, the committee recommended the budget be sent to the whole board for approval next Tuesday.

Mr. Joyce told The Liberal he received an apology from Mr. DiRocco the following morning.

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