

Merry Christmas

Happy holidays to you and yours. May Christmas fill your hearts and homes now and always, and may the future hold only the very best for you.

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York Region police officer teaches students to be safe

By KATE GILDERDALE
Valuable tips were offered to Grade 9 students at Stouffville District Secondary School recently when Kim Kennedy, an officer with the Community Services Bureau of York Regional Police, conducted an abuse-prevention seminar.

Officer Kennedy stressed the importance of avoiding dangerous situations such as leaving a car parked in dark places.

"And if you live on your own, don't put a woman's name on the mailbox," she advised.

"What to do in an elevator? If you step into an elevator with a stranger, stand near the panel so if anything happens, you can press the emergency button," Constable Kennedy urged.

In case of attack, "scream if you think someone can hear you."

"Calling for help doesn't always work," officer Kennedy said. "People often think you're just fooling. Better to yell 'fire,'" she suggested.

Ms. McCleave told students that sentences for sexual abuse vary widely from conditional discharges to long jail terms.

"In between these extremes, a person can be placed on probation or fined."

Getting treatment

Many factors, including admission of guilt and willingness to ob-

tain treatment, will influence the final decision, she explained.

Consent, she said, is not a defence if the victim is under age 14, unless the accused is less than three years older.

Kim Harper, a co-ordinator with the York Region Abuse Prevention Program, said some figures suggest that one child in 10 suffers sexual abuse while others claim one in every two girls and one in every three boys are abused before they reach age 21.

"Although it's been going on forever," stated Ms. Harper, "sexual abuse wasn't even acknowledged until 10 to 15 years ago."

Victim's choice

"There are two views on fighting," she commented. "One is, don't do it, he or she could kill you. The other is that we as victims, have the responsibility to try and prevent attack from happening. It's a choice only the victim can make. It depends on the circumstances," Kennedy declared.

A woman's purse contains some very useful weapons, the officer said, including hairsprays and combs. A well-placed high-heel can also inflict substantial damage to a would-be attacker, she stated.

"Whatever you do, don't plead, beg or whimper. That's what the assailant wants," she concluded.

Lawyer Karen McCleave, from the office of the Crown Attorney, explained many cases involve

children whose care-giver is the abuser.

When close family members are involved in the abuse, the victim is often persuaded not to tell what really happened, because of the consequences to the whole family.

Harper explained how treatment groups have been established for children, teens and adults who've been sexually abused, as well as for their families. The organization was started in 1984. Before that, she said, victims had to travel into Toronto for counselling.

Protecting children

Students, she said, will call and say their friend's been sexually abused by someone.

"That's why we're here — to give people more resources to call on."

Myra Hurst, of York Region's Family and Children's Services, (better known as the Children's Aid Society), said the organization has a legal mandate to protect children under the Child and Family Services Act.

A child is described as a person under age 16. Everyone has a legal obligation to report suspicions of child abuse to the CAS, stated Ms. Hurst.

"It's a lot of guilt and responsibility to put on a child," McCleave said. "Some cases drag on for up to two years, with the child facing the trauma of testifying at both a preliminary hearing and the trial itself."

"These cases are the toughest

to prosecute," stressed Ms. McCleave.

When a case comes up, she tries to make an appointment to talk to the child and obtain a brief account of the experience he or she's been through.

"I try to establish a rapport with them. I'm often the only friendly face they see in court."

Ms. McCleave agreed that often a defence lawyer can be rough on the victim in trying to protect a client. It's also difficult for a child to testify against a family member who's in the same court room.

"We can now put up a screen between the child and the accused so the child doesn't have to look at the accused during questioning."

The Society, she said, will investigate each report and determine whether the child should remain at home, with relatives or in a foster home.

Lifelong effects

"When we talk about abuse, it's never the child's fault," she asserted. "If children don't receive help, it's going to affect them the rest of their lives."

In response to a student's question, Ms. Hurst said that while abuse cases are higher against females, "there are definitely a high number of abused males too, and that's just as serious."

"Asked what happens if a false accusation is made by a child, she replied: "We don't have many cases where a child is lying. When this does occur, we still have a child who needs help."

Merry Christmas

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THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF MARKHAM NOTICE

PROPOSED BY-LAW TO CHANGE A STREET NAME IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 210 (SUBSECTION 105) OF THE MUNICIPAL ACT

TAKE NOTICE THAT the Council of the Corporation of the Town of Markham intends to pass a by-law to change the street name "Ryeburn Drive" as dedicated on Registered Plan 65M-2326, south side of Highway No. 7 located between Lots 6 and 7 on Registered Plan 65M-2326 to "East Valhalla Drive"

The proposed by-law and a detailed plan showing the lands to be affected may be seen in my office in the Municipal Building at 8911 Woodbine Avenue, Buttonville, Ontario during normal business hours.

The Council of the corporation of the Town of Markham shall hear in person or by his/her counsel, solicitor, or agent, any person who claims that his/her lands will be prejudicially affected by the by-law and applies to be heard at a hearing to be held on January 24th, 1989 in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building at 8911 Woodbine Avenue, Buttonville at the hour of 7:30 p.m. or as soon as possible thereafter.

Christine Palmer, A.M.C.T.
Deputy Clerk
The Corporation of the Town of Markham
8911 Woodbine Avenue
Markham, Ontario
L3R 1A1

DATED at the Town of Markham this 7th day of December, 1988.
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MARKHAM