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### Mayor's Youth Task Force presents the 1st Annual **JOB FAIR**

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# FOCUS ON BUSINESS

## Wee Watch provides a safe home environment for children

For parents, there is nothing more nerve-racking than trying to find suitable day care for their children.

For those who are unable to stay at home, early childhood education has a huge influence on a child's overall development.

Wee Watch offers parents an alternative to large day care environments, says supervisor Julia Stubbs. It provides safe, smoke-free homes that are licensed by the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

Each home has a low ratio of children to caregiver, so the program can be modified to meet the needs of each child, says Stubbs.

Wee Watch presently provides care for children ages two months to 12 years.

**How Wee Watch works**  
Wee Watch screens and interviews interested caregivers - called providers - before they begin to care for children in their homes.

Providers, and all members of the household, must

go through criminal, medical and reference checks, as well as the Wee Watch training program, first aid and CPR. Provider's homes must go through a fire inspection before children are placed.

Provider's are encouraged to attend monthly workshops.

Once providers have gone through the necessary requirements, they are interviewed by parents who are interested in placing their children in the provider's home.

Wee Watch also complies with the regulations of the Day Nurseries Act with respect to the low ratios. Providers can only have two children under two years of age and a

maximum of five children under six years of age. This ratio includes the provider's own children as well.

To make sure the providers are following Wee Watch's guidelines, home visitors with early childhood education training, make unscheduled visits once a month.

During home visits, Annett Holeschek and Patricia Leadbeater, two home visitors for

the Markham Wee Watch area, make sure children are brought outdoors for at least two hours a day, appropriate activities are planned and carried out and two nutritional snacks and a lunch are served.

Home visitors also check to make sure the environment is healthy and safe and answer any questions or concerns a provider may have.

Before becoming a home visitor, Holeschek was a provider for seven years. Being associated with a licensed

agency is beneficial when providing care for children, she says. Provider's do not have to advertise their services and bi-weekly payments are paid to them by Wee Watch and not from the parents directly. Providers are also paid for statutory holidays. Large equipment such as playpens and highchairs are supplied and both the parents and providers benefit from the back-up service. If a provider is ill or needs time off, Wee Watch will find an alternate provider to care for the children.

Overall, both parents and providers are given support in making sure the children are provided with the best nurturing and stimulating environment.

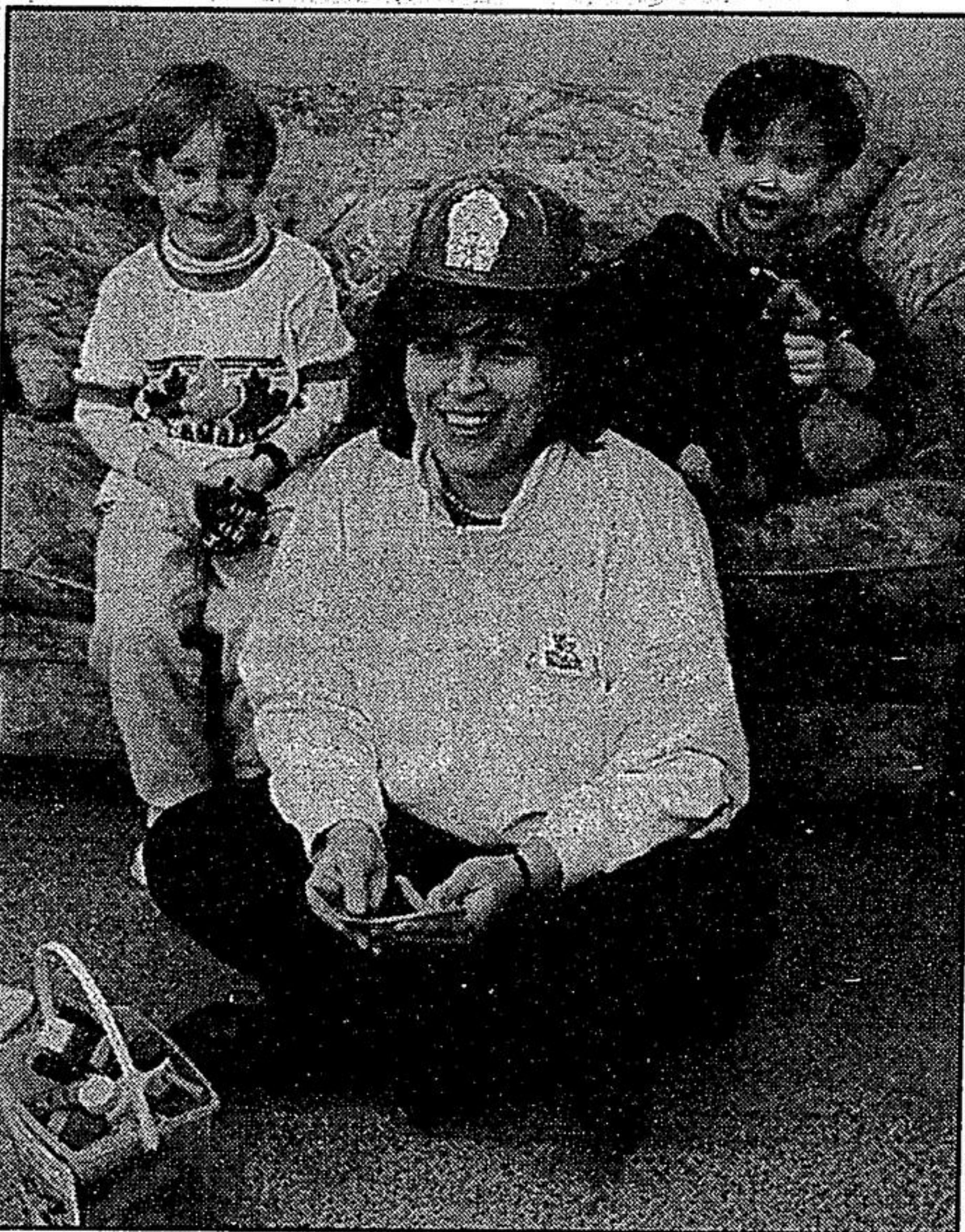
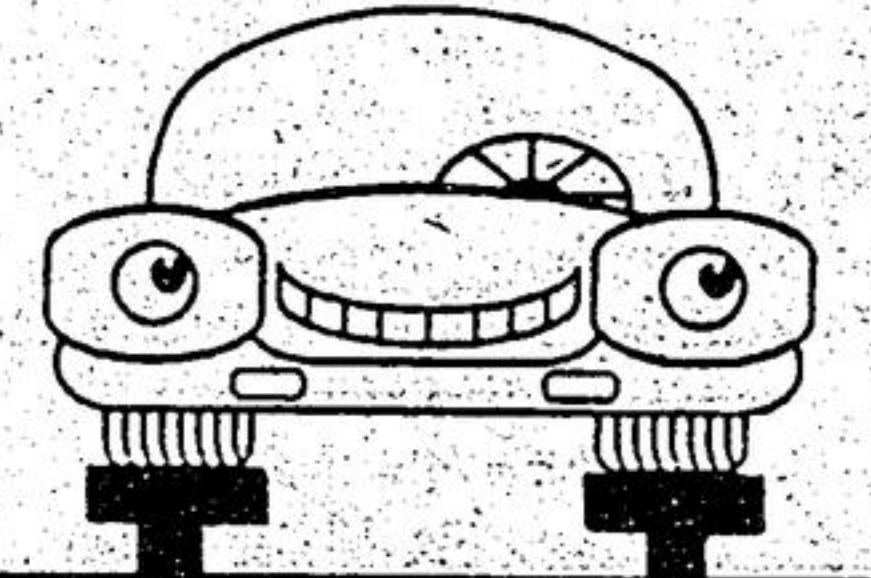


Photo by Steve Somerville

Ryan Roskar (l) and Ben Stubbs take time to play with home visitor Annett Holeschek.



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