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Unionville Block Parents in trouble

BY SHANNON WALTER
Special

Unionville's Block Parent program is so short of volunteers that it could collapse, warns the group's chairperson.

"The bottom line is I get someone to help run this or I will have to fold it," says Marianne MacBride, chairman of the Ontario Block Parent Program.

According to Kathy Crupi, co-chair of the 18-year-old Unionville initiative, "There are 12 elementary schools here, but only six have representatives. Twelve is the bare minimum and that total doesn't even include the chairs."

The problem, Crupi notes, is volunteers generally come from two-parent families and in most situations, both

parents work full-time.

Another possible cause is competition for volunteers with other clubs and organizations.

"Girl Guides, Boy Scouts and Kiwanis need people too, and even they have a shortage."

"Block Parents isn't the only group close to collapse."

In addition to competition for volunteers, Crupi says a lack of public profile has hurt.

"For the last couple of years we've been trying to get media coverage of our situation, but there has been no response."

"We even had big campaigns at Markville Shopping Centre and the Unionville Festival, but there was no

coverage."

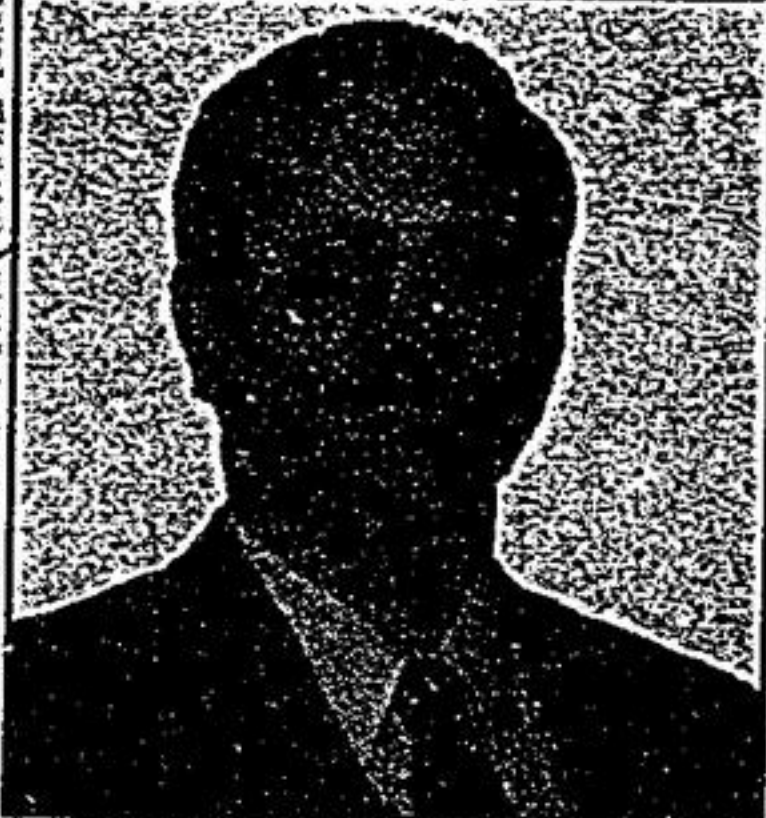
The association's other major concern is public perception of what's required to be a volunteer.

"People think it will take up too much of their time, but the more volunteers we have, the less time it takes."

A volunteer shortage also creates a monitoring challenge, since Block Parents are screened by police and then receive training and regular monitoring by other volunteers.

Said Crupi: "We can't monitor Block Parents when we barely have enough people for the organization to exist."

Anyone interested in becoming a volunteer in Unionville or elsewhere, contact Crupi at (905) 479-6568 or co-chair Julie Stark at (905) 946-0070.



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