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Knock-off golf clubs made to fit

BY MIKE HAYAKAWA
Staff Writer

The irons and woods can have a strong resemblance to golf clubs with more prestigious names like PING, Ben Hogan and Callaway.

They can be custom fitted to match the physical specifications of the individual who swings them on the links.

Just as important, they are priced in a range that most would consider affordable.

Known in golfing circles as knock-offs, these custom-made imitations are considered a viable option for those who set foot on the fairways.

Introduced to the game 15 years ago, the Brother Andre Catholic High School physical education head was like a lot of other golfers who started out with a set of traditional manufactured clubs.

But Mr. Turner felt uncomfortable using them. The biggest problem, he said, was that they didn't conform to his 6-foot-1 inch stature. To remedy the situation, he searched for a set that best suited his height.

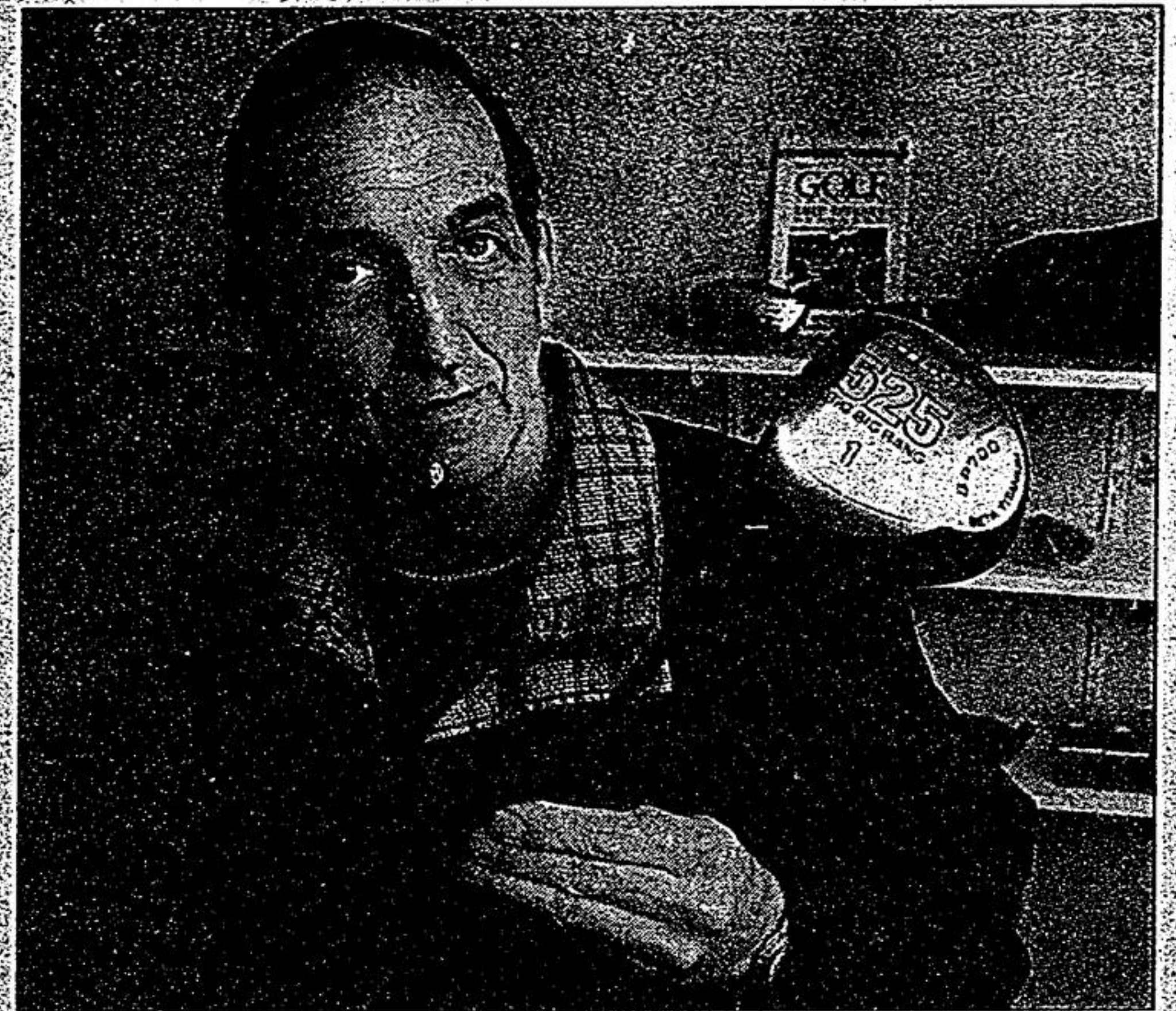
Hearing from friends about custom-made imitations, he found a supplier and had a set made 10 years ago that resembled PINGS. Three years ago, he had another set made up similar to Titleists.

The clubs are built to my height and the grips are based on my hands. The clubs feel comfortable to me," Mr. Turner said. "And they felt easier to hit. They're more forgiving," he added.

His first set of knock-offs cost about one-third less than the manufactured model.

Those who construct knock-offs confirm their prices are lower.

A set of TaylorMades go for around \$1,200 and I can sell (custom-built imitations) for around \$600," said Don Druery, a 56-year-old Queensville resident who builds clubs under the trade name Drutech. "The heads are



STAFF PHOTO/BILL ROBERTS

Don Druery shows off one of his Drutech knock-off drivers at his York Region home business.

the same shape and design but the clubs are sold under a different name."

Beginning his business in 1999 after taking an intensive seven-day CPGA-approved club manufacturing course in Calgary, Mr. Druery said the demand for knock-offs is strong.

Business tends to gather momentum once golfing season begins and continues into September. There's another surge of business in October and November and up until Christmas.

Advertising by word of mouth, Mr. Druery's clientele is comprised of men, women and even young teens. Customers come from as far away as Kitchener, Orillia and Belleville and include those who shoot in the 120 to 130s to those with tiny handicaps.

Sporting a 15 handicap himself, Mr. Turner thinks knock-offs are more suitable for the average golfer or beginner.

Mr. Druery doesn't sell clubs right off a rack.

For starters, he will spend about 90 minutes analyzing an individual's requirements.

Working out of a modified garage, Mr. Druery has a digital

analyser valued at around \$4,000, scales that measure shafts and grips, a machine that measures swing weight, a loft and lie machine valued at around \$900 and a putting adjuster that costs around \$1,200. That's in addition to the basic necessities such as a cutting machine, vice and glue.

While there are some advantages to using knock-offs, risks must also be considered, especially quality control.

"You have to trust the person who puts the components together," Mr. Turner said. "You've got your shaft, head, ferrule and grip. The person putting these things together has to know what they're doing."

For that reason, the manufacturers of brand-name clubs cast a jaundiced eye toward those who produce knock-offs.

"It's an on-going problem," said Keith Campbell, a spokesperson for Concord-based Top Flight Canada.

To contact Mr. Druery, call 905-478-4863 or e-mail drutech@quixnet.net. For more information on club-making, visit www.golfsmith.com.

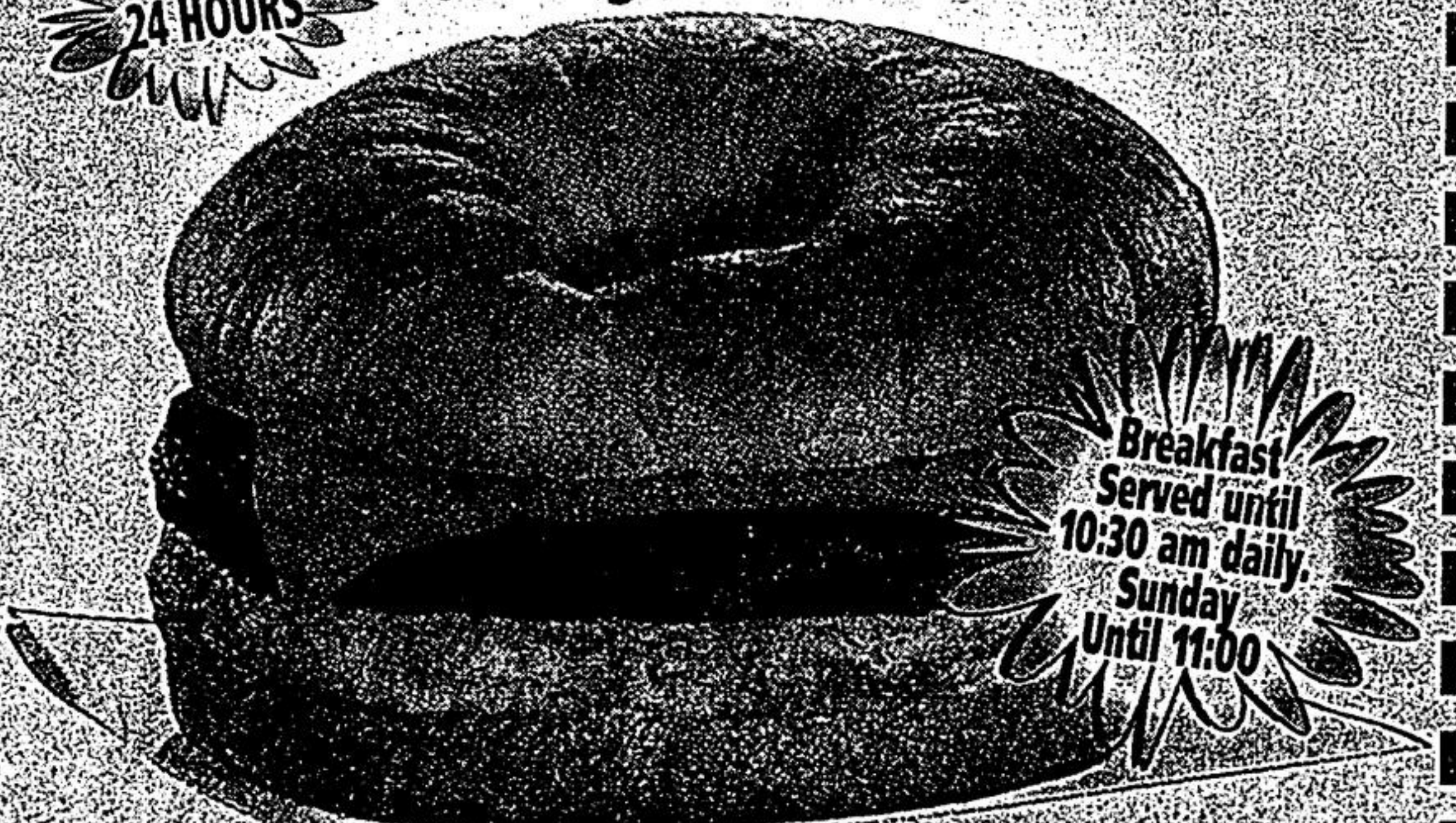
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Play festival comes to Unionville

One of the largest student drama festivals in the world is making a stop in Unionville.

Pierre Elliott Trudeau High School is hosting part of the 58th annual Sears Ontario Drama Festival.

Over the course of two nights (Tuesday and Wednesday), the school will see the performances from five schools in the festival's Toronto District.

Pierre Elliott Trudeau students perform The Calendar Effect Wednesday.

Finalists from the district festivals move on to the regional showcase, which reduces the competitors to 15 for the Ontario showcase in Ottawa.

Admission to all Pierre Elliott Trudeau shows can be had with a \$6 pass.

Curtain time is 7 p.m. The school is at 90 Bur Oak Avenue, off Kennedy Road north of 16th Avenue.

For more information and to purchase tickets, call 905-887-2216 ext. 524.

—Vicky Tam