

Editorial

Citizen Advocacy would be a welcome friend

The next time you hunker down in front of a computer, take a minute to punch the words "Citizen Advocacy" into the Google search engine and take a gander at the results. You'll find a myriad of websites and articles about this organization coming from places as distant and diverse as South Ayrshire, Scotland, Washington, D.C., Prince Edward Island and Melbourne, Australia. It's just possible that, one day soon, you might find Barry's Bay, Killaloe, or perhaps Pembroke among those Google hits.

Thanks to a grant from Ontario's Trillium Foundation, Citizen Advocacy of Ottawa has just completed a feasibility study on possible expansion of its services into Eastern Ontario.

Just what is Citizen Advocacy? Put simply, the worldwide organization is dedicated to pairing volunteer advocates and people with disabilities in relationships that often have a profound and positive effect on both people. It empowers people who may need a voice to encourage and sometimes act on their behalf. It enhances their quality of life and gives them a chance to exer-



Bridget Gutoskie, left, president of the board of directors at the Madawaska Valley Association for Community Living, takes a moment to chat with Lorrain Johnson during a presentation last fall by Citizen Advocacy of Ottawa. In the background is Kathleen Stevenson. The organization, which pairs volunteers with people in need of a friend and advocate, is considering expansion of its services to this area.

Douglas Gloin photo

cise their rights.

The underlying principle of Citizen Advocacy is "a universal concern for individuals who are limited in pursuing their needs, rights and interests," the organization says. "In addition to these limitations, these individuals lack the support systems of family

and friends to assist them."

Last fall, representatives from the organization held a session at the Madawaska Valley Association for Community Living's Activities + Centre. Brian Tardif, the executive director of Citizen Advocacy of Ottawa,

says the group's expansion idea met with "an overwhelmingly positive response" from families, consumers and service providers in communities throughout Eastern Ontario. He was particularly pleased with the enthusiastic response in the Township of Madawaska Valley.

Now that the feasibility study is complete, it must now go before Citizen Advocacy of Ottawa's board of directors for consideration. If the board approves expansion, the organization plans to seek startup funding for the project from the Trillium Foundation. Some

changes to the organization's structure would have to be made to include representation from Eastern Ontario. Citizen Advocacy's study looked at expansion into Renfrew County, Prescott-Russell, Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry, and Leeds-Grenville.

In this world, there are precious few organizations that are both international in scope and local in action. The phrase "think globally, act locally" sprang out of the environmental movement, but the words can — and should — be applied to many other problems facing this great big, complicated planet. Loneliness and powerlessness are two of these universal ills. Citizen advocates do battle with these problems each day, all over the world. The organization is a shining example of the truth that the soul-enriching fruits of volunteerism come to both sides of a relationship.

So keep an eye on this matter. If Citizen Advocacy does come to the Madawaska Valley, you may find an opportunity in it for somebody you know, for yourself, or for someone you have yet to meet.

Letters

Parents need to wrest back control over educational system

To the editor,

If nothing else, 2006 was the beginning of awareness that parents could no longer 'sit on the fence' with social issues in Ontario. As much as the provincial government and the media tried to make all social issues a gray matter, the homosexual aggressiveness forced many parents to stand up and pay attention to issues like abortion, same sex marriage, secular evolution and their effect on our school children.

In Ontario, we are especially burdened with a gay/abortion secular government and an "opposition" PC party that shares the same platform. In addition, we have a gay activist deputy premier who said he wants to remove any religion in schools, an openly lesbian education minister, a gay-friendly attorney general and a teachers union that is using homosexuals to further its cause against organized religion in the school system.

It should be noted that less than one per cent of the 52,754 full-time and 16,137 part-time elementary teach-

ers in the Ont. Teachers Federation reported having a disability, was gay or lesbian or Aboriginal. Where's the voice from the other 99 per cent?

In July/06, the British Columbia Parents and Teachers for Life Association asked three simple questions:

- Is parental consent required, except in case of emergency, for health care for minors?
- Specifically, are minors subjected to abortions without any requirement for parental consent?
- To what extent are students subjected to pro-homosexuality propaganda in the schools, and if they are subjected to such propaganda, is this with the permission or connivance of the government?

In August, 2006 the Renfrew County Family Action Council sent the questions to the public school administration and subsequently to our local MPP. To date, neither has given a definitive answer to these three simple questions. But we can be damn sure they all know their

salary and benefits to the penny.

We really don't know the education system until we test it. We do know that these three matters leave our education system open to health risks, large litigation settlements and abuse by people who clearly have no mandate from the parents.

The Ontario public and separate school system is corrupt in structure where boards kowtow to Toronto for funding, teachers bow to greedy unions and a handful of secular bureaucrats, with a personal agenda, know how to milk the whole system. As long as they could keep interest and information away from the public, they were safe. That time has passed. Parents must take back our education system.

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