



Photo/DAN PELTON

THE LIONS CLUB EFFECTIVE SPEAKING Region 39 'Speakoff' was held Monday night at Maples School. The top three finishers were, left to right, Holly Duncan (third), Emma Middlehurst (first), and James Smith (second). The trio advances to the district speakoff April 14 in Neustadt, Ontario.

CRA challenging Teen Ranch's charity status

Caledon Teen Ranch, which for more than four decades has operated as a Christian charity, has been threatened with loss of its charitable status, which allows donors to claim income tax exemptions.

The threat by the Canadian Revenue Agency is based on a claim that the Ranch, on Highway 10 south of Orangeville, is really a sports facility masquerading as a religious organization.

Described on its website, teenranch.on.ca, as "a not for profit, Christian Organization incorporated in 1967, dedicated to the training of young men and women in the physical, mental, spiritual and social aspects of their lives," Teen Ranch was founded in 1967 by Mel Stevens, who continues to serve on a daily basis.

His son Tim is its current executive director, and the board of directors includes Jerry Bergman, a retired businessman, Don Wingfield, owner of Burlington-based Win Chemicals, and Pastor Ron Stevens, a brother of Mel Stevens who lives in California.

Reached last week, Mel Stevens said the CRA challenge is the third since Teen Ranch was founded in 1967, and the current challenge was launched

three years ago.

Mr. Stevens said negotiations with the federal agency are continuing, and Teen Ranch is currently getting responses from supporters in the form of letters confirming the Christian character of its operations.

Tim Stevens later issued a press release which described Teen Ranch as "defending itself in an audit by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA).

"In short, the CRA has taken the position that Teen Ranch does not really have as its central purpose the advancement of the gospel of Christ. Therefore, the CRA has determined that Teen Ranch is not eligible to be registered as a charity able to issue tax receipts."

The release said the CRA claims Teen Ranch has a collateral purpose of being a sports camp that happens to have a small religious component to it and should never have been given charitable status in the first place.

Specifically, the CRA has alleged that "there is no certainty that campers will gain a greater understanding of the Christian religion," and that "we are unable to conclude that a tangible religious benefit will necessarily occur as a consequence of Teen Ranch's actions".

But Teen Ranch says it exists "primarily to spread the gospel of Christ, by using sports and other activities as a means to attract young people to the ministry, giving the opportunity to share the message of Jesus by all means possible."

The facility says it has "a 40-year history of Christian camping advancing the gospel of Christ, following a well-established pattern used by many Christian camps for over 80 years."

The Ranch says the CRA's view that sports, in the context of Teen Ranch, cannot be a means to an end of advancing the Gospel "will likely affect many other Canadian Christian camps."

Although Teen Ranch is not seeking support from local politicians, it is contacting former campers, guests and their families to seek letters and e-mails that would confirm the Ranch's work as a vital Christian ministry that changes people's lives through its programs, teachings and examples.

"Teen Ranch believes that fairness will prevail and its charity status will be maintained," the release said. "However, whatever the final decision is on this issue, the vision, purpose and programs of Teen Ranch will

continue on, with or without charity status. Teen Ranch will carry on impacting lives by teaching and living Biblical principles to thousands of people through its annual summer camp and other year round activities.

Teen Ranch is being represented locally by the Carters Professional

Corporation law firm.

The website says that through its camp, Teen Ranch shows "our desire to assist you in providing a great adventure experience for your kids, an environment with positive role models and positive peer pressure built on a foundation of Christian faith and morality."

3 accused killers face B & E hearings

All three men charged with murder in the death of Ariel Besley of Brampton in May 2008 are appearing in a Barrie court May 5 for continuation of a preliminary hearing into charges of break and enter at Barrie in the same month.

Meantime, the trio is being held in custody on the first-degree murder charge and is scheduled to be in Orangeville court to be spoken to on April 14.

The three accused in all charges are David Bruce Davidson, 22, and Gregory Alexander Rose, 26, both of Orangeville, and Roy Terrence

Rousseau of Brampton.

The Barrie charges arose from an incident there on May 9, 2008. Mr. Besley's body was found on Old School Road in Caledon on May 15. Then, on May 23, Peel Regional Police arrested Mr. Rousseau and charged him with possession of a smuggled handgun which, they said, had been used in the killing of Mr. Besley.

But it wasn't until last week that Mr. Rousseau was charged in Mr. Besley's death. In the meantime, the Orangeville duo had been charged in the death three weeks earlier.

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The Highland Companies

To our neighbours in north Dufferin:

A recent advertisement used misleading information and fear mongering to attack The Highland Companies. I'd like to set the record straight once again.

We weren't asked to present information or answer questions at the January public meeting. Our representative went there out of respect, offered to provide information and was given five minutes to do so.

The two individuals who made presentations against our Company at the meeting declared that they had a financial interest in the very issues they discussed.

A number of representatives selected at the meeting didn't disclose their own financial interest. They had been in negotiations to sell their land in Melancthon Township to our Company. They failed to reach agreements because they wanted much more money than we paid for similar properties. A number of other representatives live in Mulmur Township, where we're not contemplating any land use other than our current farming operations.

We're studying other land uses in addition to farming, not instead of it. There is a history of different land uses coexisting in Melancthon. Others have studied or pursued agriculture, wind power and aggregates. We're simply doing the same.

The photograph used in the ad was designed to scare people. In many of today's aggregate operations, active extraction areas are smaller than in the past and the land is rehabilitated to other uses more quickly. We are studying rehabilitation to agriculture, which would enable farming to continue on most of the land at all times.

In a public letter I told our critics that there was little new information we could add at a meeting they wanted to hold in March since the previous meeting had only occurred in January.

It is unfortunate that certain individuals support or engage in these attacks. They have dealt with us in the past and they do business with us now.

Our critics seem to oppose any new form of economic activity on our part, even though others are pursuing those activities in the area. We believe that economic growth is essential if our community is to create jobs, fund local government services and amenities for people, and ensure a sustainable future.

Sincerely,

John Lowndes

477476 Third Line, R.R. #2, Shelburne, Ontario, L0N 1S6

ORANGEVILLE & DISTRICT MINISTERIAL ASSOCIATION

GOOD FRIDAY WALK OF THE CROSS



APRIL 10th, 2009 TIME 1:30 p.m.

THE PROCESSION WILL MOVE EAST ALONG BROADWAY TO ALEXANDRA PARK BY THE TOWN HALL FOR A BRIEF SERVICE

MEETING PLACE: THE FORMER SOBEY'S PARKING LOT BROADWAY, ORANGEVILLE

ALL WELCOME

Ontario SPCA Orangeville and District Branch Spring Garden Lunch & Silent Auction



Sunday April 19 • 12:00pm
at Monora Park Pavilion

Lunch is catered by
The White Truffle Restaurant

Sonia Day, gardening writer and humour columnist will give an entertaining presentation.

Tickets are \$25 and available at:

BookLore, 212 First St. 519-942-3830

Ontario SPCA Orangeville & District Branch
650 Riddell Road 519-942-3140

www.orangevilleSPCA.ca

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