

*10 juillet 2010 | Le Droit | JUSTINE MERCIER jmercier@ledroit.com JUSTINE MERCIER
jmercier@ledroit.com*

Courte accalmie de chaleur intense

La pluie et les orages prennent le relais

Avis d'humidex, alerte d'orages violents et avertissement de pluie. Tel était le portrait de la situation, hier en début d'après-midi, quand on consultait les prévisions météorologiques d'Environnement Canada pour la région d'Ottawa.



MARTIN ROY, LeDroit

Après quatre jours de chaleur extrême, un front froid en provenance du nord de l'Ontario a généré de fortes averses et de puissants orages.

Il n'y a décidément pas de répit côté météo, cette semaine. Après quatre jours de chaleur extrême, un front froid en provenance du nord de l'Ontario a généré de fortes averses et de puissants orages, avec des rafales de vent allant jusqu'à 90 km/h, hier, dans la région de la capitale nationale.

L'alerte émise par Environnement Canada précisait qu'il devait tomber de 40 à 60 millimètres de pluie dans la région d'Ottawa. L'avertissement soulignait aussi que « certains orages violents produisent des tornades » et suggérait donc aux citoyens de se mettre à l'abri à l'approche du temps menaçant.

Hydro-Québec dénombrait, à 15 h, quelque 3500 abonnés privés de courant en Outaouais. La situation a fluctué tout au cours de la journée. Près de 5000 clients manquaient d'électricité en matinée, alors qu'ils n'étaient plus que 225, vers 13 h. « On a des équipes qui vont rester mobilisées jusqu'en soirée pour pouvoir répondre aux conditions climatiques changeantes », a assuré hier Pierre Dupuis, porte-parole d'Hydro-Québec.

À Ottawa, 3400 clients ont été privés d'électricité, en après-midi. En fin de journée, il n'y en avait plus que 1000. Hydro-Ottawa estimait que la situation allait revenir à la normale autour de 18 h.

L'accalmie de chaleur intense risque d'être de courte durée. Tout en n'étant pas en mesure de dire si une autre canicule historique comme celle qui vient de sévir pourrait survenir cet été, le météorologue d'Environnement Canada André Cantin a indiqué que d'autres « journées collantes » sont prévues pour la semaine qui vient.

« On voit un retour de conditions chaudes et humides, surtout vers la fin de la semaine, mais ce ne sera probablement pas aussi intense que ce qu'on a vu cette semaine », a-t-il mentionné. Les températures pourraient tout de même atteindre 30 ou 31 degrés Celsius, jeudi et vendredi, avec un facteur humidex donnant une température ressentie de près de 40 degrés.

Retour à la normale

La Ville de Gatineau a mis fin, hier, aux mesures spéciales mises en place pendant la canicule. C'est donc dire que les piscines, pataugeoires, jeux d'eau et plages sont dorénavant ouverts selon leur horaire régulier, et que les quatre centres de rafraîchissement ont été fermés. La Direction de santé publique de l'Outaouais a elle aussi mis fin à la phase de « mobilisation » qui avait été décrétée en raison de la canicule.

Même si la chaleur extrême ne sévit plus, la population gatinoise est tout de même invitée à faire une utilisation raisonnable de l'eau potable, en respectant notamment le règlement sur l'arrosage.

La Police d'Ottawa a pour sa part voulu rappeler aux citoyens d'être vigilants lors des vagues de chaleur après avoir observé, dans le sud de la ville, une hausse du nombre d'introductions par effraction dans des résidences où des portes ou fenêtres avaient été laissées ouvertes. Les infractions ont principalement eu lieu dans un corridor longeant la rue Bank, au sud du pont Billings, jusqu'au chemin Hunt Club, et à l'est jusqu'au chemin Hawthorne.

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7-year-old donates \$400 to help soldiers overseas

By RAY SPITERI, QMI AGENCY

Last Updated: July 9, 2010 6:11pm

FORT ERIE, Ont. — Dean Smith donated the proceeds from his seventh birthday to Canada's soldiers overseas.

Smith comes from a long line of soldiers and made the donation to his local regiment, currently serving in Afghanistan.

"(Dean) recently donated all of his birthday money, about \$400, in the form of Tim Hortons gift cards for our soldiers overseas," said 2nd Lieut. Bryan Paget, the adjutant for the Lincoln and Welland Regiment.

The regiment has 10 soldiers currently serving in Afghanistan.

Dean's father, Frank Smith, was part of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, and Dean's great grandparents served in the Second World War.

"I just want to support them because they support us and give us our freedoms," Dean said. "I want to grow up to be army guys like them."

Dean's mother, Dawn Smith, was proud of her son's considerate birthday request.

"Usually for his birthday, we rent out the (Leisureplex) arena and he is able to invite all of his friends and family," she said. "This year, he asked me if instead of gifts can we send something to the soldiers. So, we asked everyone to bring \$10 gift cards to the party."

Dean also wrote a letter to send to the troops.

"Our troops deployed over there love seeing this stuff," said Paget. "It makes them feel good to know people back home are thinking about them and supporting them."

Dawn Smith said the gesture is not unusual for Dean.

"He's so kindhearted and very caring," she said. "He really knows there are soldiers in Afghanistan and he has an interest in them."

Paget said the regiment plans to present Dean with a Support Our Troops flag, an appreciation certificate and a letter of appreciation.

rspiteri@nfreview.com

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Body of boy, 15, recovered from river

Police have recovered the body of a 15-year-old boy who was swept into a river north of Quebec City on Saturday. The boy, who has not yet been identified, and his friend had gone to the Gouffre River in the town of Baie St. Paul around 3 p.m. to go swimming. Police say the river was swollen from heavy rainfall. An autopsy is planned to determine if the boy was injured before he slipped under the water.

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Counting days until school

Like some 530,000 Ontario children, Jordan Pinard has struggled with serious mental disorders for much of his short life. A study in determination, the Grade 6 graduate has found his way back to the mainstream, writes PAULINE TAM.

Up to one in four Ontario children under the age of 18 — have difficulties that are diagnosed as serious mental disorders. Yet Ontario schools don't recognize mental illness as a condition that entitles students to extra supports and services.

Jordan Pinard was six when he was diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactive disorder. He was prescribed Ritalin, a stimulant that led to severe mood swings and violent outbursts.



BRUNO SCHLUMBERGER, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

Twelve-year-old Jordan Pinard is eager to transition to Grade 7 classes with other students his age. 'I just like it better,' he said of his new school. 'You can stay in class all day. You make a lot more friends.'

He attacked his mother and lashed out at other children. School suspensions came frequently. By Grade 1, he was in a modified learning program.

As Jordan got older, his symptoms got worse. He became anxiety-ridden and bound by routine, irrationally frightened of anything new and perpetually afraid he would be abandoned by his mother. His moods switched from excitedly chatty to inconsolably distraught.

Unable to sleep at night, he would clean the kitchen and bathroom obsessively. His insomnia left him too exhausted for school.

Psychologists diagnosed Jordan with oppositional defiant disorder in addition to ADHD. Psychiatrists prescribed an ever-changing list of stimulants, anti-anxiety and antipsychotic drugs.

Jordan's mother, Kris Winter, pushed to have him withdrawn from school and placed in a psychiatric treatment program. The specialized class, run by Ontario's Ministry of Children and Youth Services, has teachers, social workers and a psychiatrist working side by side to offer therapy and schooling to children whose medical conditions make it difficult for them to socialize.

Winter wondered if her son would ever return to a regular school.

Last month, looking poised and handsome in a grey pinstriped suit and red graduation cap, Jordan accepted his diploma from the treatment program. In the front row, with a camera, were Jordan's beaming mother and Alexandre, 10, who had permission to skip school to watch his 12-year-old brother graduate from sixth grade.

To stand proudly — in front of his family, classmates, teachers and social workers — was a major accomplishment for Jordan. His teachers choked back tears as they spoke about his courage and determination.

Come August, when the new school year starts, Jordan will finally be allowed to attend the same Grade 7 classes as other students his age — the goal of Ontario's "mainstreaming" policy to give children with special needs as normal an education as possible.

Jordan is matter-of-fact about his desire to leave "the mental system" for the school he has been attending part-time, in anticipation of his full integration in the fall.

"I just like it better," he said of his new school. "You can stay in class all day. You make a lot more friends."

At the luncheon after the graduation ceremony, one of Jordan's teachers marvelled at how far her pupil had come — in controlling his temper, in listening, following instructions and being aware of how his behaviour affects others.

"You must be so proud," the teacher told Winter.

As they chatted, Jordan buzzed around the room, handing out farewell gifts he had painstakingly crafted for each of his nine teachers and social workers: a framed photo of a teacher's favourite flower; a T-shirt that read "Hands down U R De best"; a handpainted coffee mug that said "Think positive, be positive, Miss Positive Pants" — his nickname for the program's clinical director. "That's his sense of humour," his mother remarked.

In preparing Jordan for the transition from treatment to regular school, there have been as many setbacks as victories. "This year has been real up and down," said Winter. "It's been a real growing experience for everybody."

From age two, when Jordan's outbursts began to surface at daycare, it was clear he "was not fitting in socially," said Winter. In kindergarten, Jordan's teacher described his behaviour as aggressive and controlling. He was unable to focus on a task and constantly sought to be the centre of attention.

Winter found a psychologist who diagnosed Jordan with ADHD. By the time he turned seven and new symptoms emerged, Jordan was admitted to the mental-health unit at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario — a three-week stay that traumatized Jordan, but allowed psychiatrists to observe him and adjust his medications.

For Winter, a single parent, life with Jordan became a turbulent stream of symptoms, diagnoses, medications and waiting lists. She became frustrated by the shortage of services in the children's mental-health system.

And because of imprecise methods in diagnosing most mental illnesses, exactly what was wrong puzzled Jordan's medical team. In recent years, he has also been diagnosed with obsessive-compulsive disorder and generalized anxiety disorder.

Even now, "he falls into a world of symptoms," Winter said. "You just have to say, 'I'm going to let the right people make the right diagnosis.'"

At least 530,000 Ontario children — up to one in four under the age of 18 — have difficulties that are diagnosed as serious mental disorders. Nearly half of those diagnosed have more than one problem.

Yet Ontario schools don't recognize mental illness as a condition that entitles students to extra supports and services.

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No help for suicidal teen

Canada lacks resources

By **CHRIS DOUCETTE**, QMI AGENCY

Last Updated: July 12, 2010 7:08am



Cassandra Genovy, 17, has tried to kill herself numerous times recently and her parents are terrified she will eventually succeed if she doesn't get the help she needs. But that's easier said than done. Her mom, Joanne Genovy, feels her daughter's cries for help are being ignored. (Chris Doucette/QMI Agency)

OAKVILLE, Ont. – Joanne Genovy's youngest child was just 15 the first time she tried to end her life.

It's a memory etched in her mind -- receiving a call from a friend's mom alerting her Cassandra had "swallowed a bunch of pills," racing home frantically, not knowing if her daughter would be alive or dead when she got there.

That was 14 months ago and fortunately her daughter survived.

But Joanne has lived in fear every day since, wondering when her daughter will try to end her life again.

"We never thought she was capable of something like that," Joanne told QMI Agency recently.

Teen suicides have doubled in Canada since 1961 and rates here remain among the highest in industrialized nations. In Ontario, more than 50 teens commit suicide annually.

There are various and conflicting explanations -- including our long winters -- but universal agreement among experts that there are woefully inadequate funding, treatment facilities and trained child psychiatrists in Canada.

For desperate parents, the harsh reality is there are few places to turn to for help.

While Joanne admits there was some dysfunction in her home in the past, not unlike most families, she has tried to give her youngest of four girls all the attention and love she can muster hoping to help her overcome depression and a severe eating disorder.

She's even been off work for the last year trying to care for Cassandra, a decision that's caused major financial strain for her family.

But despite her efforts, her now 17-year-old daughter's mental health has only worsened. In fact, she has now attempted suicide, or come dangerously close, five times in just over a year -- three times in the last few months.

"Each time it gets scarier," Joanne said. "I'm terrified that the next time she goes to the hospital will be in a body bag."

In spite of multiple stays in the psychiatric ward at Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital, where Cassandra was last checked in on June 11, finding the right help to save her child's life has been next to impossible.

Joanne pointed out that getting immediate help for someone who is suicidal is easy enough, you can simply call 911 or visit the emergency department at any hospital.

But a hospital stay is only a temporary fix, something she has learned the hard way.

Cassandra's most recent admission to Oakville-Trafalgar lasted two weeks, but only because her mom pleaded repeatedly with staff not to release her.

As is often the case, drugs and alcohol are part of Cassandra's problem, exasperated by an eating disorder.

Joanne has looked into an assortment of aftercare programs, for both inpatients and outpatients. But they are few and far between and it can take six months to a year, or even longer, to get into such programs.

Her biggest fear is that her bulimic daughter will end up like Sara Carlin, another 17-year-old Oakville girl, who hung herself in her parents' basement in 2007. Carlin's death was recently at the centre of an inquiry into the use of Paxil, a prescription drug used to treat depression and anxiety.

After her initial suicide attempt, Cassandra was prescribed anti-depressants and began attending an eating disorder program in Halton Region. But Joanne claims she was dubbed "too risky" and was "kicked out."

Upset she was no longer allowed to attend the group counselling sessions, Cassandra stopped taking her medication.

A few days later she tried to kill herself for the second time.

The troubled teen was then admitted into a program at North York General Hospital. Her mom drove her into Toronto every day and she was "doing good" for a while.

But Cassandra managed to convince her counsellors and doctors that she was "fine" and they sent her on her way, the girl's mom claims.

"We told everybody she wasn't ready, but nobody would listen," Joanne said, adding her daughter soon fell back into her old habits.

Twice this year, in May following a break-up with a boyfriend, and on her 17th Birthday, the troubled teen again tried to kill herself.

Cassandra's illness has been tearing her family apart.

"My daughter wants help. And I can't be with her every minute of every day," said Joanne, who is now faced with either returning to work and leaving her daughter completely unattended or selling her home.

She believes her daughter needs to be admitted as an inpatient to a program with round-the-clock care. But that's easier said than done.

So far, Joanne claims she's been told her daughter is too old, too young, too sick or not sick enough, among other things.

"It shouldn't be so hard," said Joanne. She is currently trying desperately to get her daughter into Homewood, a private facility in Guelph.

Homewood has only one OHIP-covered bed and the wait for that spot is more than a year.

"All I want to do is save my child and I'll do whatever it takes to keep her alive and get her well, even if that means she ends up hating me."

'I FELT SO ALONE'

The countless scars wrapped around her wrist like bracelets indicate there's a darkness lurking beneath her beautiful facade.

Feint marks left from razor blade slashes are a constant reminder of the 17-year-old's struggles with depression, an eating disorder and periodic desires to end it all.

"I never really fit in," Cassandra Genovy told QMI Agency, while home on a weekend pass from Oakville-Trafalgar Memorial about a month ago.

She was admitted to hospital after her latest attempt at suicide, her fifth in just over a year.

Cassandra had few friends in her final years of elementary school and believes that's when her mental health issues first surfaced.

"I felt so alone ... unwanted ... and that's when I started scratching myself," she said, explaining she would claw at her forearm until it bled.

She attributes many of her woes to a lack of friends, boy troubles and clashes with her dad -- issues that may not seem like much to an adult but can be earth-shattering for a young girl, especially one who is suffering from depression.

"I started not liking school," Cassandra explained. "Then one day I just woke up and felt I didn't deserve to eat."

She became "obsessed" with exercising and began "restricting" herself to 500 calories a day -- about 1,700 calories less than is recommended for a teenage girl.

"When everything in your life is spiralling out of control, food is the one thing you can control," Cassandra said.

She then began "bingeing and purging," eating until she felt sick and then throwing up.

To control her weight, she started swallowing over-the-counter medications by the handful. And she became a master at hiding her illness.

When her mom put locks on the kitchen cupboards, she stole food from the grocery store. When she got in trouble for clogging up the toilet with vomit, she threw up into a garbage bag and hid it in her bedroom closet.

But eventually it all caught up with her.

Cassandra dropped out of school early this year, then her boyfriend dumped her in May on their one-year anniversary. She started sleeping all day, going out all night, drinking heavily and using street drugs, mainly marijuana.

"Things just became overwhelming and I had a meltdown," Cassandra admitted.

Doctors recently told her she has caused lasting damage to her body, which includes weakening her heart.

It seems unimaginable that such a sweet girl could be battling such demons.

But it becomes crystal clear in a second interview a few weeks later, after her release from hospital, that there are two starkly different Cassandras.

This one is sprawled on the couch of her parent's home, still too drunk and high from the night before to even sit up.

She's covered from head to toe with unexplained bruises and scratches, and her speech is so slurred that she's barely able to string together a sentence.

She looks more like someone who should be curled up on a grate in downtown Toronto than a teenager who has grown up in upscale Oakville.

Her mom, Joanne, and two of her sisters, Emily and Vicky, hover around Cassandra, obviously concerned for her well-being and for good reason.

She has just admitted to using cocaine for the first time, after learning a brother-in-law faces a potentially life-threatening medical issue.

"She has no coping skills, so this is how she deals with things like this," Vicky said. "But we truly believe the real Cassy is inside screaming for help."

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Boy dies in freak accident with wind turbine

By JANE SIMS, QMI AGENCY

Last Updated: July 11, 2010 1:47pm

LONDON, Ont. -- A three-year-old boy was killed in accident north of London, Ont., Saturday evening when the pole of a small wind turbine fell on him.

Huron OPP said Logan Hallahan died at Wingham hospital before he could be transported to the Children's Hospital of Western Ontario in London.

The boy had been playing with a group of children on Marnoch Line west of Belgrave near a 34-metre residential wind turbine structure that was under repair.

The nine-metre generator pole was anchored to a cement pad by a strap.

The children were playing on the pole, causing the strap to loosen and the turbine to lift the pole off the ground.

The boy was sitting on the generator pole closest to the turbine. Police said he slid down the pole and landed on it. A second pole fell on top of him, pinning him between the two poles.

Several parents ran and stopped the generator pole from lifting and pulled the boy out.

He was taken to Wingham hospital immediately but died two hours after he was pinned.

The OPP are still investigating.

Belgrave is located about 100 kilometres north of London.

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British docs demand 'fat tax' on junk food

By QMI AGENCY

Last Updated: July 11, 2010 6:13pm

LONDON — Leading British doctors will urge the UK government Monday to impose a "fat tax" on junk food and introduce cigarette-style warnings to children about the dangers of poor diets and products high in fat, salt or sugar.

Dr. Terence Stephenson, president of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, said Sunday the consumption of unhealthy food should be seen to be just as damaging as smoking or binge drinking.

"Thirty years ago, it would have been inconceivable to have imagined a ban on smoking in the workplace or in pubs, and yet that is what we have now," the Guardian newspaper quoted Stephenson as saying. "Are we willing to be just as courageous in respect of obesity? I would suggest that we should be."

The doctors are also demanding a tough government action plan to stop fast-food chains opening outlets near schools, restrict the advertising of products high in fat, salt or sugar, and limit sponsorship of sports events by fast-food companies such as McDonald's.

Professor Dinesh Bhugra, president of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, said: "Some types of processed foods are harmful to the physical, and consequently mental, health of individuals.

"There ought to be serious consideration given to banning advertising of certain foods and certain processed foods and to levying tax on fatty, unhealthy foods."

He said students need to be told more about the effects of bad diet and he urged municipal councils to impose "fast-food free zones" around schools and hospitals.

The doctors' push for more stringent government controls over the food industry flies in the face of current Conservative government policy.

British Health Secretary Andrew Lansley last week said: "No Government campaign or programme can force people to make healthy choices. We want to free business from the burden of regulation, but we don't want, in doing that, to sacrifice public health outcomes."

Lansley is expected to announce Monday the abolition of Britain's Food Standards Agency, which has been fighting a running battle with the country's food industry over product labelling and health warnings.

The agency's duties will be split between the department of the environment, food and rural affairs and the department of health.

Labour government set up the FSA four years ago to respond to public fears and protect consumers after the mad cow disease crisis.

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UAE forces fat teens to lose weight

By QMI AGENCY

Last Updated: July 11, 2010 6:08pm

Teenagers in the United Arab Emirates who weigh more than 90 kg have been asked by the government to attend special anti-obesity camps where they are expected to lose at least 1 kg a week during the one-month program.

The National newspaper in Abu Dhabi reported Sunday that the UAE ministry of health selected 20 students aged 15-18 and weighing 90-145 kg to participate in the first session, which began July 3.

The students are sequestered in a special sports facility in Al Dhaid, put on a strict calorie-controlled diet and exercise program for more than 13 hours a day and given lectures every four days about obesity, the newspaper said.

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Labrador boy, 9, drowns in pond

By QMI AGENCY

Last Updated: July 10, 2010 7:08pm

A nine-year-old boy drowned Saturday while swimming in a pond in northern Labrador, say police.

The boy was swimming with a nine-year-old relative Friday in a pond that was used to store the water supply of Nain, a small town with a population of about 1,230, reports The Telegram in St. John's. Police say the boy swam too far from shore and drowned under 12 feet of water. He was later found by a local man 25 feet from the shore but attempts to save him were unsuccessful and the boy was pronounced dead at hospital.

The boy's family requested that his identity not be released and town officials say the pond is not meant for swimming.

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Man, 49, convicted in sex attack on teen

By MEGAN GILLIS, COURTS BUREAU

Last Updated: July 9, 2010 5:59pm

A judge convicted a 49-year-old civil servant Friday of sexually assaulting a girl at her birthday party after plying her with alcohol until she could barely walk.

Judge Colin McKinnon called James Houston's testimony that all he did was comfort her and "rub her tummy" to keep her from vomiting "incredible."

"Were he seriously concerned about her state of intoxication," Houston would have asked others to help or informed the girl's mother, McKinnon said.

"Instead, he took advantage of a drunk young girl on the very night she was turning 15."

Houston's judgement was likely blurred by alcohol but "he knew exactly what he was doing and pursued his goal with relentless willfulness," McKinnon said.

The judge believed the testimony of the girl that Houston kept asking her to have sex, then digitally penetrated her and forced her into oral sex against her will, scratching her face. She said she wanted to scream but couldn't breathe.

One witness reported seeing Houston lying with the victim. Another saw the girl appear to rise from his crotch area. A third saw him kneeling over her and said Houston was shocked and red-faced when onlookers arrived.

That's consistent with "an individual caught in the midst of a criminal act, rather than innocent, empathetic ministrations to an ill young girl," McKinnon said.

Houston's lawyer argued the girl was too drunk to remember what had happened that night, which was more than two years ago.

A sentencing hearing is set for Nov. 15.

megan.gillis@sunmedia.ca

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