

# Teachers lauded for anti-violence project

BY KATE DUBINSKI  
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Three local high school teachers were honoured yesterday for taking part in a national violence-prevention curriculum begun in London.

The Fourth R program, which teaches Grade 9 students about relationships to help them deal with peer pressure, bullying, sex and drugs, began as a Thames Valley District school board pilot project five years ago.

"There will always be conflict, but now the students are thinking twice and making an effort to deal with it constructively," said Darlene Montgomery, a Westminster secondary school physical education teacher.

"(Students) say the best part of the program is letting them practise what we're teaching. It's practical. They can role-

play and, when push comes to shove, they think about what they're doing or saying."

They practise active listening, saying "no" to drugs or sex, and other ways to assert themselves that they can use later in life.

Montgomery and Mike Bates, head of Westminster's physical education department, both agreed to be videotaped with their students while delivering the program. Those videos are now used to train other teachers and to show educators in Canada and the U.S. how the program works.

Also honoured was North Middlesex District high school teacher Debbie Townsley, who helped psychologists develop some of the program for the classroom. "It's not lecture-style — it's very student-centred," she said in a video about the program.

Also yesterday, the Fourth R program received a \$1-million donation from Albertan Mary Jane Crooks, whose daughter, Claire, helped develop the program.

Crooks said she and her husband were moved by a school shooting in small-town Taber several years ago, and wanted to help. Their donation will help spread the program in the Prairie provinces.

Alberta, Saskatchewan and B.C. already teach the Fourth R in some of their schools.

"It's not just about helping (students) get through being a teenager. We want to help them be successful, happy people in the world," Crooks said. "You don't just finish the program and go out to the world — there's bullying in the workplace, and this can teach them . . . to deal with it later in life, too."

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**THANKS A MILLION:** Million-dollar donor Mary Jane Crooks, left, her daughter Claire Crooks, University of Western Ontario's Peter Jaffe, Ray Hughes and David Wolfe were at Windermere Manor yesterday to announce a major gift to the Fourth R program, a skills-based curriculum that promotes healthy relationships and targets violence among adolescents.