



PETER LEE, RECORD STAFF

(From left to right) Ian Scott, Mark Clare, Steve Halicki, Beth Clare, Deb Lenzi, Sue McLelland, Sharon Brown and Ann Clare pose under the restored sign at the Preston Lawn Bowling Club in Cambridge.

## Rolling again

### Neighbours pitch in to revive historic club

By Mirko Potricevic

RECORD STAFF

Weed choked grass on the bowling green across the road from Bill Blake's Cambridge home has sprung back to life.

For the past few years, the president of the Preston Lawn Bowling Club watched the grass wither along with the club's aging membership.

"The club just slowly went downhill," said the 79-year-old Blake. "It was heartbreaking."

Two years ago, the club existed in name only, with Blake as its only remaining member.

Musings about what would happen to the acre-sized lot, if the club on Queenston Rd. folded, grew louder among residents who strolled the

shaded street. Visions of an asphalt blanket covering the formerly lush lawn had the community worried.

"We realized the only people going to (revive the club) were the people talking about it," said Mark Clare, the club's vice-president, while sitting in the clubhouse's sprawling screened-in porch.

"(It was) a truly neighbourhood tradition."

In early 1998, a group of residents met with city hall staff, persuading the city to spend about \$10,000 on building materials, grass seed and a sprinkler system to keep the green alive.

● See Lawn bowling ... Page B2

B2 THE RECORD, Kitchener, Ont.

## Lawn bowling club revived by neighbours

● Continued from Page B1

A public meeting was held and a new club executive was elected from the group of about a dozen residents. Most group members are in their mid-40s, and none were lawn bowlers before taking on the project.

Lawn bowling is as much a social as recreational pastime, and the club's revival was seen as a way to get residents to know and care about each other, Clare said.

"That's what makes a neighbourhood a neighbourhood," he said.

Lawn bowling resembles curling on a giant golfing green, but is played with slightly flattened bowls. A weight in one side of the bowl makes it curl toward its target.

Preston residents have bowled at the site since 1915, and the clubhouse was built about 20 years later. Bowlers donned formal white uniforms for about 10 tournaments a year.

While neglecting their own lawns last summer, the new club members and their children yanked weeds from the fallow patch of land.

Depressions in the ground were lev-

eled and members criss-crossed the playing field, scraping the surface flat with a hand-pulled board.

"It's the Habitat for Humanity idea," said Ian Scott, the club's site manager. "We supplied the sweat equity and (the city) provided the support."

Grass seed was planted in August, and a spongy green carpet emerged in May.

"We have the same satisfaction that farmers have in the spring," Scott said.

The club currently has about 15 core members. It is hoping to attract about 20 more members to help cover about \$7,000 in annual operating expenses.

The club is also encouraging families with children to join.

"We're refuting the idea it's exclusively a game for seniors," said Scott, 46.

"It's quite a valuable cultural icon," Scott said of the newly restored club. "It was here long before I came around. Hopefully it will be here long after I'm gone."

The club is holding an open house on Sunday from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. A lawn bowling coach will be on hand to give free lessons.