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Community justice fund accepting proposals

Even after 19 years, it is a little known secret that Community Justice Fund will distribute funds to organizations that help victims of crime or that work to prevent crime. This year, there is $8,000 to distribute in June.

The Ontario Court of Justice gets this money from offenders, as part of restitution for their crimes. A committee of volunteers reviews the applications to receive funding and decides which most closely serve the mandate to prevent crime and assist victims of crime in North Hastings.

Proposals may be a new program such as the girls' after-school club at the Switchyard. Or it could be a project to bring a motivational speaker to our high school to speak about the devastation illegal drugs cause. An organization may also get funds for training and evaluation, such as first aid training to therapeutic riding volunteers, who help kids traumatized and disabled by a crime.

Judge Hunter founded this program in his Bancroft court. The Community Justice Fund committee was incorporated in 1997 and involves volunteers only.

In the early days, Maggie's Resource Centre for Women was the only recipient of funds because it fits the mandate so well ? it helps victims of domestic violence, and works to prevent it.

Other organizations who have received funds include Jump Start, the local hospital, the OPP bicycle program, North Hastings Children's Services, the North Hastings Community Trust Fund, and EQUALL (horse riding for children with disabilities). The North Hastings Community Integration Association were supported to help the intellectually disabled recognize situations where they could be victimized.

Qualified applicants need to provide financial statements and proof of liability insurance. The Community Justice Fund does not fund services that are primarily cultural, religious or political in nature.

Questions about the procedure to get some of these funds should be emailed to communityjusticefund@yahoo.ca. Deadline for proposals to be submitted is May 13. See Facebook for more details: www.facebook.com/communityjusticefundha

And why not serve justice yourself? You can volunteer to be on the selection committee ? it only takes about eight hours a month. Email communityjusticefund@yahoo.ca.

Submitted by Mary Freeman, Community Justice Fund Committee member