

From Me to We



By Nate Smelle

SPEAKING WITH YOUTH-IN-ACTION'S program coordinator Rebecca Malloy outside of the Club 580 in Bancroft over the weekend she explained to me how the Me to We youth workshop underway inside was about the change the world. The goal of the program was to empower youth to become more communally-minded and engaged citizens. Describing her own path while growing up in Bancroft, Malloy said she didn't fully understand how much she valued the community until she moved away to volunteer in Ghana with Me to We.

Working with youth so far away from home she said she began to understand the value of her experiences as a youth growing up in Bancroft. Through her work, Malloy aims to help youth discover a similar sense of value in the community. The program is also intended to help youth develop a sense of place, which will in turn inspire them to see Bancroft as home. The group also looked at the pros and cons of living in North Hastings and then discussed what they can do to help transform their community into a better place to live for everyone who calls it home. Malloy said she remembers taking part in similar enlightening discussions with her family after watching the evening news together. I also share fond memories of working through the news one story at a time with my parents around the dinner table.

By sharing our thoughts and feelings on things happening in our community and the world our understanding of things would grow with every conversation. Sure on occasion arguments would arise as our opinions often varied, but we always worked, and still work through them and moved on.

By the sound of the cheers coming from the youth gathered inside the Club 580 there was no lack of enthusiasm to bring about change on this day. Keeping this energy and its momentum growing is the task Malloy now must tackle moving forward. After defining their vision of an ideal Bancroft the group next came up with an action plan to help them achieve their goals.

The plan she said is to re-engage the youth at every opportunity she can to help them actualize their dreams. As with any social change it is always necessary to have an informed and engaged public participating in the community's transformation. Such change will require a greater level of cooperation between local not-for-profit groups, businesses and all levels of government if it is to be realized.

It will take all of us working together, all of us shifting our approach to how we live and do business in our community and the world from Me to We. If we want youth to feel as if this is a place they want to come back to... a place they can call home, then we

need to empower them by creating the opportunities they desire.