

Home share off to good start

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By Chris Drost

The volunteers coordinating the new 'home share' program in Bancroft with the assistance of North Hastings Community Trust, are off to a good start with an 'in-take' and ongoing support process developed and in place. Already one person is ready to open her home to an individual in need of housing and a list of others looking for a home, has been compiled.

Jane Kali, executive director at NHCT, says, 'we had a great meeting with the principal, vice-principal and social worker at the North Hastings High School where we learned that almost 70 per cent of the students are affected by poverty, although numbers for the homeless are not currently available.'

The home share group has engaged two youth from the high school to act as advisors on behalf of the young people. Kali says it is important to have input from the younger generation who are often affected by homelessness.

Kali is excited that 'we now have a team of individuals to support the home share process. Individuals stepping forward with rooms to spare and those seeking a place to live, can be confident that there is a process in place for ensuring the very best matches of individuals needing a home to those offering to provide a space.'

The home share group has spent considerable time investigating the experiences of other organizations in other places who have developed similar programs, including that of North Hastings Community Integration Association with its own 'match program.' Research shows that communication in home sharing, is paramount. It is important to have a 'meet and greet' where prospective renters and individuals looking for a place to live can first connect in a casual setting. The program will also include a trial period where the individuals involved can assess whether it is a 'good fit' for them or not, without the pressure of the arrangement being long-term at the outset.

Another important element of the program is having a team in place to address situations when problems arise. This is a 'community grass-roots initiative,' says Kali. 'People are not left alone once in the program. There is a team there to help along the way, and that cannot be stressed enough.'

The more people get involved in the project, the better, according to Kali. Individuals who have a room to spare and those who are in need of housing, are encouraged to call NHCT at 613-332-3657, email nhcommunitytrust@gmail.com or stop by the office on Bridge St. W. in Bancroft Tuesday through Friday.