

PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Renfrew County Safe Shelter for Youth Receives \$25,000 from Renfrew County United Way



In the photo are (left to right): Front row - Gail Logan-McMeekin, Executive Director, Renfrew County United Way and Megan Rousselle, Youth Outreach Worker/Safe Shelter for Youth Coordinator, Family and Children's Services of Renfrew County. Back row - Arijana Tomicic, Executive Director, Family and Children's Services of Renfrew County, Greg Lubimiv, Executive Director, The Phoenix Centre for Children and Families, and Tina Belanger, Executive Director, Columbus House (Pembroke) Inc.

The Renfrew County Safe Shelter for Youth recently received \$25,000 for its initiative to provide a safe and caring environment for youth ages 16 to 21 in need of a safe bed where their immediate basic needs can be met. Columbus House (Pembroke) Inc., Family and Children's Services of Renfrew County, The Phoenix Centre for Children and Families, and the Renfrew County United Way formed a collaborative to collectively address the issue of youth homelessness in Renfrew County. "We believe that collective impact approach will produce profound and long-term results" says Arijana Tomicic, Executive Director with Family and Children's Services.

The collaborative recognizes that there are numerous youth, aged 16 to 21, who are living unsafely in situations of homelessness (including couch surfing), in situations where food and shelter are offered in exchange for sexual activity, in situations where they must participate in criminal activity in order to be fed or have access to shelter, and in situations where any of the aforementioned is preferable to their own home life. These youth congregate on the streets, may ask people for money and their ability to trust in their community is low. They do what it takes to survive and protect themselves. The goal of the Renfrew County Safe Shelter for Youth is to deliver short-term support for youth between the ages of 16 to 21. They can call and be provided with a comfortable and secure place to stay.

"Our ultimate goal is healthy and independent youth within a supportive family and a caring community" says Tina Belanger, Executive Director of Columbus House (Pembroke) Inc., "and the funding that we received from the Renfrew County United Way will help us develop a model and establish a range of shelter options for Renfrew County youth."

If you have any questions regarding the shelter, please contact Family and Children's Services of Renfrew County at 613-735-6866.