

AWRC Sets Open House

by Dawn Currie

On open house to celebrate National Women's Resource Center Day will take place at the Antigonish Women's Resource Center, Suite 204, 219 Main Street, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. this Friday, September 22.

The general public is invited to drop in during those hours to learn more about women's centers and to enjoy a social gathering.

The Antigonish Women's Resource Center is one of seven women's centers in Nova Scotia observing this special day. Other centers are located in Pictou, Sydney, Sheet Harbour, Bridgewater, Lawrencetown and Port Hawkesbury.

These centers provide (within their financial and volunteer means) information, counselling, self-help and support groups, referrals, training, workshops and a lending resource library. They are members of CONNECT, which serves as a collective voice of women's centers in Nova Scotia. It provides coordination and information to women's centers and strives to articulate their activities, needs and concerns.

The Antigonish Women's Resource Center was started in 1982 by the Antigonish Women's Association, a group of approximately 20 women who identified the need for more resources for women in the community.

"The center provides women with a way to work together with each other on common interests and needs, sharing knowledge, experience, working for change, helping each other, celebrating

and learning about our lives," staff member Barbara Hayes explains.

Pointing out the various efforts made by the center over the past several years, she mentions, "the housing survey which examined housing needs of women in the community. Last year, the center sponsored a study of community economic development. From that work came the Antigonish Business Women's Network, a directory of women-owned-and-operated businesses in Antigonish."

Another project supported by the center is the sexual assault project which is coming to a close this fall. A model for a coordinated community response to sexual violence in Antigonish County has been developed as one outcome of this project.

"As a result of this project, the women's center now has a Sexual Assault Crisis Line. The weekday telephone number is 863-6221 and on weekends, 863-2830, extension 229," she adds.

"We hope that citizens will accept the invitation and drop by the Antigonish Women's Resource Center this Friday to find out more about the work we do, our various projects, or any other information about women's centers in general," Hayes says.

She adds, "Women's centers are agencies for social change primarily working on equality issues for women. We welcome questions, enquiries and hope that the general public will join us at our open house."