Casket Article submitted June 19, 2003:

RURAL YOUTH EDUCATION PROJECT

The Rural Youth Education Project (RYEP) has just completed it's first year delivering the "Developing Healthy & Respectful Relationships" curriculum to 320 students in grades 7,8, & 9. The two school sites participating in the project are Chedabucto Place and East Antigonish Academy. The 12 session curriculum was delivered to each 7,8, & 9 class ans were integrated with PDR class time. This provided a very good fit with existing curriculum and school scheduling. The Rural Youth Education Project will be continuing in both schools for the next two school years, with the addition of Grade 11 students also receiving the curriculum.

We would like to share some of the feedback we have received about the Rural Youth Education Project;

- *"The RYEP has supported our work in mental health by providing much needed community based education and peer mentoring in the important area of developing healthy relationships." (Staff - Department of Mental Health Services)*

- *It is "good to be proactive....planning now what the strategy is to deal with certain situations"(Advisory Committee Member)*

- *"When the students who are involved in the program get to grade 10, 11, 12, they'll be good role-models. The younger kids will look at them and say "this is the way to do it'. " (Teacher)*

- *"The relaxed atmosphere in the classroom allows students to explore their own experiences and the context of their lives in a way that empowers them." (Teacher)*

- *"Youth are concerned about the people around them, how people should be treated, and how they should treat others in return." (Teacher)*

- *"The thing I like best, is the fact that I am a role model for some students. They look up to me for advice and solid information..I feel like I am making a difference in their life right now. Only if it just a little one, it still means a lot to me."(Youth Facilitator)*

- *"Everything in the program interests me" (Youth Facilitator)*

- *"The RYEP shows realistic situations and talks about relationship issues that are important to the classes we facilitate."(Youth Facilitator)*

- *"This program will help girls and guys in all the grades solve problems. It gives facts and knowledge about dealing with certain situations...It also tells you strategies and warning signs. More importantly, the program gives the students confidence to handle the*

situations ahead...They will know when to say no, and when they are being peer-pressured. They will know how to handle bullying. They will know when they are in an unhealthy relationship." (Youth Facilitator)

- *"My sister uses (Healthy Relationship strategies) all the time at home and with her friends." (Youth Facilitator)*
- *"The fact that students like myself are in the sessions (as Youth Facilitators) makes the program a lot different from other teacher/student situations." (Student)*
- *"Both the boys and girls really enjoy our separate gender sessions and have expressed the desire that we do them more often." (Adult Facilitator)*
- *"Feedback from the teachers and school administration is very positive and encouraging. A number of the teachers have expressed to us how they think this project is needed and are glad of our presence in the school." (Adult Facilitator)*

For more information about the Rural Youth Education Project please contact:
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