Women's Resource Centre:

Rural Youth Project a success

The Antigonish Women's Resource Centre (AWRC) offers a safe environment while providing information, advocacy and problem-solving support to women and adolescent girls.

Staff are trained in crisis intervention and are knowledgeable about community resources. Women come to the centre with a wide range of concerns. Some of the concerns include poverty, affordable housing, relationships, separation and divorce, maintenance, custody and access, sexual assault and sexual abuse, anxiety and stress, physical and mental health, eating disorders, education, employment and social assistance.

The centre also offers a range of workshops, programs and presentations in response to requests from women who use the centre as well as in response to requests from the general public.

The Rural Youth Education Project (RYEP) has completed the first year delivering the 'Developing Healthy and Respectful Relationships' curriculum to 320 students in Grades 7,8, & 9 at Chedabucto Place and East Antigonish Academy. The 12-session curriculum was delivered to each class. The program was a good fit with existing curriculum and school scheduling. The project will continue at both schools the next wto years and Grade 11 students will also be taking part.

Some of the feedback received on the program includes:

"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.)

"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.)

"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.)

"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 and 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.)

"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 contact: Jean Crosby, project co-ordinator at 863-3624, or by e-mail at ruralyouthawrc@ns.sympatico.ca.

The Rural Youth Education Project is sponsored by the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and funded through the National Crime Prevention Strategy of Justice Canada.

The AWRC is located at 219 Main Street, Suite 204 Antigonish B, in the Kirk Place). The office is open to the public Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. To schedule appointments or register for programs phone 863-6221, or visit the web for details: www.canadiansocialresearch.net/women.htm.