

Students speak out

*To the Editor,
An open letter from St. Mary's Academy to Strait Regional School Board Superintendent Phonse Gillis in support of the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre.*

As young adults of St. Mary's Academy, we are writing in support of the services provided by the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre.

Access to these resources is advantageous to the well-being and development of students.

Through personal experience and observation, the success of these services is prominent in both the educational environment and with the improvement of self-image and self-esteem. These benefits can be seen in the social, academic and emotional health of scholars. These services help countless youth and provide peer counseling and information on subjects not always available in the classroom.

Students are given the opportunity to speak to a representative with assurance that there will be complete confidentiality. In addition to students being happier and having better grades, they are more assertive and involved.

Healthy Relationships for Youth is one of the many programs widely used by the students. It is a peer-run organization with resources and information available for personal or group use. A Grade 10 Peer Mentor student explains, "By getting rid of the program, you would be making a mistake! It's a great program, and helps you form healthy relationships with other people." When asked what she would miss most if the program were terminated, she said, "The teaching and the wonderful individuals who run the program".

The Healthy Relationships for Youth program teaches Grade 9 girls

the facts on diversity, homosexuality and homophobia. It has many benefits; the participants are given the opportunity to share opinions and interact with people they would not have met otherwise.

Over the past number of years, the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre has been instrumental in its efforts to support St. Mary's Academy's Anti-Bullying Campaign, Drugs and Alcohol Presentation, and our current Drinking and Driving Prevention Program. Without their assistance these awareness programs would not have been possible.

The Antigonish Women's Resource Centre is irreplaceable in helping students make informed decisions, and to cope with any obstacles and issues in the future which may need to be addressed. A good example involves bullying. Bullying does not solely occur in the educational environment. There are multiple cases in which the abuse does not come into contact with the school; however, it continues to affect the wellbeing and self-image of every student, whether it be themselves, their family, or their peers. Bullying comes in many forms as well: physical, emotional, sexual. Through sessions with the AWRC, students have learned strategies from trained individuals which will help them better deal with bullying.

These are life strategies.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. In writing to you, we hope the Strait Regional School Board will continue to support the very valuable services offered by the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre.

Sincerely,
Healthy Active Lifestyle Team
(HALT)

Concerned Young Adults
St. Mary's Academy

Grysborough Journal Wed., May 15, 2008