

Making our community a positive space

by Connor MacEachern
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The Antigonish Women's Resource Centre will sponsor an anti-homophobia event May 22 at St. James United Church.

"We just wanted to do something to recognize the International Day Against Homophobia [May 17]," event organizer Nelda Armour said.

The event, entitled "Making our Community a Positive Space," will feature a keynote address by Andrew Murray, workshops, a panel discussion and a sharing circle focused on the theme "homosexuality knows no bounds."

"We wanted to build on the great Saturday afternoon event that Fortunate Families had put on April 18," Armour said.

Fortunate Families – a support group for family members of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans-sexual and queer (LGBTQ) people – held a roundtable discussion April 18 that allowed LGBTQ students to discuss challenges facing them in Antigonish. The success of the roundtable discussion led to this event, which expands its focus to all of Antigonish, Armour said.

The event will target service providers and community leaders with a presentation on the Halifax Youth Project in Halifax by Cloh  MacDonald, a presentation on X-Pride by St. F.X. professor Chris Frazer and a presentation on parenting LGBTQ children by Peter MacDonald.

All the presentations have the goal of making Antigonish a Positive Space.

The Casket
May 20, 2009.

"That means making our community a place that people of diversity can all feel respected, safe, free and not face discrimination because of their differences," Armour said. "Perceived or real."

St. F.X. human rights and equity advisor Maureen Shebib will lead a panel discussion on community support for LGBTQ people.

"Diversity is not in the closet anymore," Armour said. "This is not something you have to feel horribly ashamed of."

Attendees will break into groups to discuss issues such as human rights, understanding LGBTQ experiences, preferred language with respect to the LGBTQ community and building positive spaces throughout Antigonish town and county.

"People will have a choice of which one they'll want to sit in on," Armour said.

The event is open to anyone who supports the LGBTQ community, Armour said.

"It's a gay-positive and trans-positive space," she said. "That will be set down at the very beginning."

The event runs from 2 to 5 p.m., and will be followed-up by Friday Night Live, a youth cabaret performance at the Bauer Theatre from 8 to 10 p.m.