

Research examines a space for youth

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A StFX University sociology undergraduate student is giving youth the opportunity to let their voices be heard.

Dayna Barnes is completing a research project as part of her honours thesis to examine whether youth programs that employ social community entrepreneur programs could be successful in rural communities, and if they are desirable to youth.

To determine this, Barnes will be holding two sessions for youth ages 16 to 21 at the People's Place Library.

Discussions at the sessions will focus on where rural youth in Antigonish and the surrounding area identify as their place in the community, what they would like to see in a potential youth centre and which kinds of community-based social entrepreneur projects would be of interest to them.

"We know that youth are starting to uptake the library a bit more and use that space, but when the library is closed on weekends and (some) evenings, what is that space? What does it look like?" Barnes said.

"From there, that conversation is going to lead to, if we were to create a youth space in Antigonish or in Guysborough County, what that would look like, what kind of space they would want and what kind of services they would want," Barnes said, noting the session will be shaped like an open discussion.

Barnes has received funding from the Nova Scotia Health Research Foundation as well as grants from the National Coalition for the Centre of Determinants of Health to aid in her research.

Barnes said similar entrepreneur programs have been in-

troduced in other communities across Canada, mostly in urban centres, for youth at risk.

"Our risk is more around mental health, but our risk is still there it's just framed differently," Barnes said, noting the programs have shown positive models of reintegrating youth into community and projects and establishing self-worth and empowerment.

"We want to know if the kids are interested in that kind of programming and if so, what they would need to start up," she said.

The second part of the project will allow the youth who were involved in the focus groups to get involved in a PhotoVoice online photo project.

The PhotoVoice will invite youth to go out in the community and take pictures of their spaces.

"That could be a park, at home on a computer or an office space," Barnes said. "Wherever they identify as their space where they hang out with friends or spend time."

They will also be asked to give a short explanation on what the space means to them. Barnes said the project aims to give imagery of what Antigonish looks like to the youth in Antigonish.

Barnes said the long-term goal with the research is to look into applying for non-profit status because then they would be able to apply for provincial, federal and private funding and eventually community partners.

The sessions for youth will take place July 30 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. and Aug. 6 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. both at the People's Place Library. A free lunch will be provided.

For more information on the sessions visit www.ruralityouth-communityphotovoiceproject.wordpress.com or the Facebook page Rural Youth Advocating for Youth Centres.