

Men's programs also offered by Sexual Assault Centre



Sexual Assault Centre counsellor Stacey Trubridge, part of an award winning team, provides supports for people dealing with sexual assault in North Hastings. She sees clients on day a week in Bancroft. JIM EADIE Special to This Week

By Jim Eadie

For more than 25 years now, the Sexual Assault Centre for Quinte and District has been quietly helping local residents deal with the devastating effects of sexual assault in their lives. Not being an organization to sit still, the local centre was the first in the province to undertake programs for men.

Then, as a result of the groundbreaking, cutting edge, award-winning residential program development, has been receiving international attention for its work.

Working one day a week in Bancroft, counsellor Stacey Trubridge meets with people in the North Hastings Community seeking support.

"I do love the work that I do, to see the changes in people, and to help them in that way," she said. "It is really beautiful to see that kind of transformation take place."

In January, men's groups are being organized.

According to Trubridge, it is surprising how quickly a group of men does become comfortable, relaxed and open to talking.

Although the current groups are being held in Belleville, there may be community based transportation options available.

Executive director Kim Charlebois and her staff not only envisioned and then developed the centre's residential healing program, but with only volunteer help also raised more than \$1 million from the community to purchase a retreat property.

"People told us they needed something more," said Charlebois.

"They would leave a counselling session, and go out the door into the day to day world, life, job and stress."

Many times the person returning for counselling felt that they could not get to work on their plan, being overwhelmed with everything else. If they could only get away for a period of time to just focus on themselves.

"We researched, to see what else exists," said Charlebois, "but we could not find anything. Our group pondered and thought about this - there are thousands of residential programs that exist for people struggling with addictions or eating disorders, women's shelters, but no where could we find a model of a program for sexual assault." With a bit of financial support from the province of Ontario, the women at the centre put together a program, and conducted a number of pilot programs, many of which were held in the Bancroft area. The feedback from the pilot programs was so overwhelmingly positive that further programs were held, including retreats for men. It was apparent that a permanent location for retreats was necessary, and through the efforts of the board of directors, staff and volunteers over two and a half years, a facility was purchased, and completely paid for. The Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) has agreed to pay for the cost of providing the programming. The Paths of Courage Healing and Retreat Centre dream was born.

"We have had a lot of people from around Bancroft come," said Charlebois. "We also have people come from every corner of the

province. It really is a wonderful opportunity for men as well.?

Recently, the centre won the Attorney General's Victim Service Award of Distinction, noting that this centre was a ?field practitioner that developed and implemented innovative and victim service programs and projects.?

Charlebois is very proud of her staff, volunteers, and the community, but especially the people who come in for support, who are working so hard.

?We stay true to our grassroots. Everything we do here has grown from what our clients have told us,? she said. ?We are always looking for new ideas, and the sky is the limit. Different people offer new things, and I know change is sometimes resisted, but change has been great for us!?

Supports and services offered by the centre are provided free of charge.

They can be reached by calling 1-613-967-6300, or www.sacqd.com.