

NHHS students make donation to warming room

By Mike Riley

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The Town of Bancroft put out a media release on Feb. 14 informing the community that students at North Hastings High School had recently made a donation of winter clothing items and hygiene products to the homeless people that use the warming room that began operating on Feb. 1 at 6 Cleak Avenue. Acting clerk Jennifer Peplinski and NHHS Principal Duane Wiltshire comment on the NHHS students' donation to the warming room. According to the media release, the NHHS students made their donation of winter clothing items and hygiene products at the warming room at 6 Cleak Avenue on Feb. 9. Over the course of two weeks in January, students from the school's student council and their LSP class worked to gather these items for donation. They also had special support from the Shades of Love program at YourSpace, a North Hastings Children's Services program that is open and inclusive to all 2SLGBTQ+ youth. While Peplinski didn't have the exact number of items donated, she says there were several backpacks, warm winter clothing and hygiene supplies. Wiltshire told Bancroft This Week he was very proud of the students involved for organizing and making this donation to the warming room. While Wiltshire passed along Bancroft This Week's request for comment to the student in charge of the initiative, we did not hear back by press time. The warming room was transported by Hastings County from Belleville up to Bancroft and began operating on Feb. 1. It is open from 9 p.m. to 8 a.m. each day. It is a mobile medical unit purchased in 2020 to facilitate an emergency isolation centre for unsheltered individuals was retrofitted and moved up here to shelter the homeless from the cold overnight temperatures. The unit is supervised by security inside, and includes a staff office, four sleeping units to be converted into open space for the purposes of the warming centre and two washrooms. It can move locations and has hydro hookup services and holding tanks for water and sewer if required. It will remain at the site through 2024 until it is needed next winter. Peplinski told The Bancroft Times on Feb. 14 that it's wonderful to see the kids here in Bancroft get involved as often we see people shy away from uncomfortable or difficult topics like homelessness and food insecurity. "Instead, they have met the challenge head on with enthusiasm and positivity. Personally, I feel that almost everyone deeply wants to help, but because the idea of 'fixing' homelessness or food insecurity is so intimidating, it stops folks in their tracks. It's these acts that make the difference," she says. "Picking something you know you can do to help and then getting out there to do it."