

Youth in Action partner with Me to We



By Nate Smelle

Growing up in Bancroft Rebecca Malloy knows firsthand how difficult it can be for youth living in North Hastings to connect with one another outside of school. After graduating with a degree in International Development Studies from Trent University Malloy moved to Ghana to work with the not-for-profit organization Me to We. Now with more than years of experience working with youth and families in West Africa, Malloy has returned to Bancroft to help create opportunities for youth in her hometown. Similar to her work with Me to We, she is now working with the North Hastings Youth In Action (NHYA) as their program coordinator. In this position she engages young people, adult leaders and community partners encouraging them to collaborate in creating social, recreational, educational, employment and volunteer opportunities. One of her first projects Malloy has taken on since joining the team the NHYA is linking these two organizations through the community leadership training program. The program is designed to help youth learn how to get involved in their communities by teaching them about leadership and social justice.

"I was really looking for something like that and I often felt alone in that quest to find service, and to find ways to feel passionate about issues in the world," said Malloy. "I think there has definitely been a shift in the last seven years--at least since I've been a teenager. It's becoming a bigger thing to be more involved in your community, to be more environmentally conscious and to be more active. I think there are a lot of kids out there in Bancroft that are feeling that way, who don't really know how to get involved. There are Kids out there who want to be engaged in something and we have an opportunity here to grab onto that fire that they do have and help it grow."

Me to We identifies itself as a social enterprise that provides people with better choices for a better world. Aspiring to transform consumers into socially conscious world changers, one transaction at a time, Free the Children founders Marc and Craig Kielburger formed the organization known as Me to We. The community leadership training program that has been born from the coming together of the NHYA and Me to We, will take place in Bethany on April 25 and April 26. The internationally acclaimed leadership training is intended to help youth ages 12 to 18 discover their passions, find their voice and create positive change in your community and the world.

"Whether they are connected to something in the community like sports our church group is also connected to the greater community and different demographics of people," she said.

"It's also important for them to feel engaged and that their voices matter. We really need to pay attention to what these kids say are the issues and what they say are the things that they need so that we can support them in that. By giving them tangible and realistic tools and techniques to supporting them in their action plan helps teach them that they can actually make a difference in the world."

The program costs \$333 per child and the fee includes transportation from Bancroft to Bethany where the training will take place, four meals and snacks, as well as the overnight stay and two days of programming. Recognizing that \$333 is a lot of money for many families the NHYA has been seeking donations from the community to help fund registration for local youth.

"The reality is that the more sponsored spots that we have the more we can open this opportunity out to other kids," said Malloy.

?We are taking full sponsorships, where taking donations of whatever people feel they can contribute. This opportunity is for everyone and anyone. We want all youth to feel a part of something.?

Sitting on Bancroft's economic development committee, Malloy said they are constantly looking at ways to encourage young people to live and invest in Bancroft and North Hastings. She believes it is up to the next generation to actively create the community they want to live in.

?Making them feel included, engaged and listened to is really important,? she said

?The experiences they have being in Bancroft or whereas will help them decide if they want to raise kids here. They want to feel that they are comfortable, valued and supported in the area. This training helps teach the youth that they actually can make a difference.?

To register or for more information on the community leadership training program contact Rebecca Malloy at: 613-334-8262, or at coordinator.nhyia@gmail.com.