

# Youth centres in jeopardy of closing

By **LISA TALLYN**  
Staff Writer

If new funding isn't found, the two youth centres in town will be forced to close next year.

Sandra Melhuish, CEO and Executive Director of Links2Care, which operates the centres, said it costs about \$150,000 to run both Off the Wall in Acton and The Open Door in Georgetown.

Currently the United Way of Halton Hills and Town provide about a quarter of the annual funding. In addition, first a Trillium Grant, then the Region of Halton provided about half of the annual requirements. However, neither the Trillium funds or Region funding was intended to be permanent and by Dec. 31 (2013) no more money will be available from either source.

Each year Links2Care makes up the funding shortfall (about 25 per cent) through charity events, donations and its own reserves. While it will continue to be an important funding source, it's not likely the organization can raise three times its prior annual contribution to keep the centres open.

The Links2Care board has decided to go into its reserve funds to fund the shortfall through June 30, 2014. But if alternate funding can't be found, the centres will close after next June.

Melhuish said if the centres closed, "It would have a very negative impact on the community."

So, in an effort to secure new funding, the Links2Care board has created a committee to look for other funding options.

She said they have approached the provincial government many times over the years but have had no success.

They have also approached local businesses and are hoping area residents might also come through with ideas.

Approximately 700 youth regularly use the centres, both as drop-in centres and as a source for counseling and referrals.

Melhuish said they have a "very relaxed drop-in atmosphere." There are pool tables, video games, big screen televisions as well as computer stations.

The two staff youth workers in the centres deal with a variety of issues with the youth on a daily basis including drug and alcohol abuse, bullying, pregnancy and homelessness. She said over the summer there were nine homeless youths living in tents on private property and the youth workers checked on them to ensure they were safe and attempted to get them back home or into a shelter.

Anyone interested in providing funding, ideas, or taking part on the special committee is asked to contact Melhuish at [smelhuish@links2care.ca](mailto:smelhuish@links2care.ca).



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