

Farewell to a friend

By DEE DEE HAYNES
Herald Special

As family and friends were preparing for Easter celebrations, a small group of people, who attend the Open Door Youth Centre and the Young Mother's program were facing their first holiday in two years without their friend and confidant, Vanessa Bell-Smith.

Ms. Bell-Smith has left the hectic pace of life in Ontario and is returning to her home in Dalhousie, New Brunswick.

Vanessa had been employed with the Open Door for two years prior to her resignation and she became an important part of our community.

Along with working as Director in the two programs, Vanessa also did family counselling, planning and organizing of fund-raising events, and she made herself available to anyone in need 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

During the short time that I knew Ms. Bell-Smith, I saw her give up her privacy and independence so that a youth could have a place to stay and also help others establish themselves and sort out their feelings and frustrations.

In this confusing and complicated world that we live in, we need more people like Vanessa.

At a small gathering held in Vanessa's honor, Dave Presswood, an Open Door native, described his first impressions of Bell-Smith, "When Vanessa first came to the Open Door, I thought that here comes another Open Door person, but Vanessa was more. She not only wanted to be with us, she wanted to be a part of us." This is definitely what happened.

Vanessa saw this group through weddings, relationships and break-ups, through birth and pregnancy to convictions and jail sentences. From drug and alcohol abuse and addiction to rehabilitation. Most importantly from loneliness to friendship and love.

As a small token of appreciation for all that, Vanessa was presented with a jewellery case from the Open Door, a watch and collage of photographs from the Young Mothers; toiletries from Sarah Selhi and Steve Holmes; a bottle of wine from O'Tooles.



Vanessa Bell-Smith (centre) has left her position as Director of the Open Door, to return to her hometown Dalhousie, New Brunswick. Friends and well-wishers gathered recently to present Ms. Bell Smith with gifts and fond farewells. (Photo by Dee Dee Haynes)

Roadhouse and poetry, cards and best wishes from all.

John Roxborough, a board member of the Open Door, expressed his sincere gratitude to Vanessa and told us all about how there will always be a bit of Vanessa in all of our lives because she touched us all in different ways.

John also added that we need to deal with our feelings as Vanessa has shown in the past, to let her know how we are feeling and to resolve our conflicting emotions.






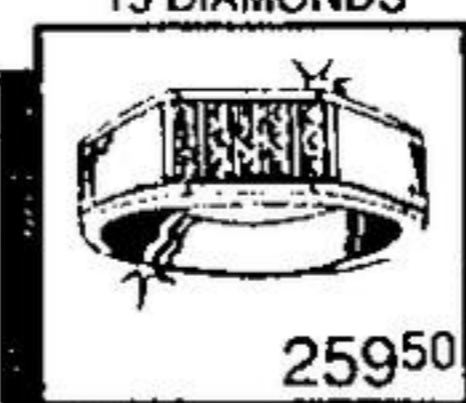
With our last hug and a promise to write back as soon as we get our first letter, Vanessa Bell-Smith left our lives, but we are all better from knowing her.

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