Attitude to poverty must change

Rishia Burke is a Re-

search Associate with

Community Develop-

ment Halton , who

looking to foster inclu-

Paine/Metroland West

Photo by Graham

aoes

door-to-door

Media Group

By JULIA LE and DAVID LEA

Metroland Media Group

People in poverty are just busy surviving, says Community Development Halton (CDH) Research Associate Rishia Burke.

Some are barely scraping by on social assistance; others are caught up working multiple jobs so that they can continue to provide for their families.

Burke said she can't imagine the "tremendous stress" that comes along with surviving— the hard choices people have to make each and every day, the isolation felt when you feel you have no one to turn to for help.

She said communities are fragmented in a way now where we're too afraid to talk to each other when we could be working together to build healthy neighbourhoods.

CDH believes that poverty can be eliminated if everyone, including governments and community groups, come together to build strong and supportive communities.

"It is structural in how we respond to it and poverty is something we know enough about that we can change it," said CDH Executive Director Joey Edwardh.

Edwardh said that, although the recession has helped people understand there are bigger causes that create unemployment than a person who just doesn't want to work, there are still misconceptions about those living in poverty.

"Halton's stereotyping of the poor when you don't see people and don't want to know has always been something we've had to deal with here at CDH," she said, adding that CDH has been going out into the neighbourhoods to break these stereotypes, engaging in community building activities.

A part of its strategy to tackle poverty is bringing neighbours together to build "their own relationships and trusts and what we call in our business 'social capital' to effectively take action together to make their neighbourhood a better place for them to live and for their children to grow up in or for their seniors to be contributing members," said Edwardh.

It's a slow methodical process, but one CDH believes is essential.

The organization has been working with other groups to build community gardens. It has also been engaging groups across Halton to hold events in their respective communities like dinner and movie nights or community dinners.

CDH has also been working with sports groups to make recreation more accessible to low-income families.

Meanwhile, members of the Halton Poverty Roundtable (HPRT) have been working

Living in Poverty



Part 4 of a 4 part series

to raise awareness among the region's poor about government services, such as guaranteed income supplements, tax credits and more, which many qualify to receive but which few actually use.

Easing the bureaucratic nightmare lowincome families must go through to get the services they need was another suggestion that emerged from talks with the community undertaken by the HPRT.

Specifically the group is calling for the creation of a Halton Housing Centre so

there would be one place people could call to find out about housing supports within the Halton community.

In an effort to address the affordable housing needs in Halton communities, Halton Region has been looking at ways to increase the units currently being offered.

Sheldon Wolfson, the Region's social and community services department commissioner, said Halton administers 4,299 assisted housing units, which is a mixture of social housing units (3,997), affordable housing units (302) and rent supplement and housing allowances (684).

Through it's Investment in Affordable Housing Program, the Region plans to build 300

assisted housing units by 2014.

Wolfson said the units will be a mix of new units and subsidies through new rental assistance programs.

"In partnership with Habitat for Humanity Halton, 20 eligible households will receive down payment assistance," he added. "These units are included in the 300 assisted housing units."

Its investment in building these units is \$1.6 million, according to the Region's 2013 budget, and another \$810,000 will help support low-income residents through the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative, which combines five housing and homelessness programs into a single, municipally-delivered program to better address local priorities.

The Region's budget also includes an additional 100 child care fee subsidies for low-income families and additional special needs services for about 20 children.

For more visit www.theifp.ca



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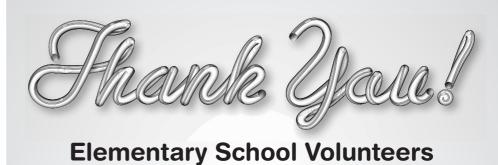
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Alicia Tait, Mississauga

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