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Social issues topic of one-day workshop

More than 70 people participated in a successful one-day workshop focusing on social issues in Halton Hills at St. Andrew's United Church recently.

Participants included representatives from Halton Region, the Town of Halton Hills, a wide range of "not for profit" groups and organizations, as well as church groups and private citizens.

Mayor Rick Bonnette discussed how the social component is an integral part of the Integrated Community Sustainability Strategy (ICSS), which was recently adopted by Council.

Regional Councillor Clark Somerville explained the important role that Halton Region plays in the delivery of many social services in Halton Hills, including child care subsidies, subsidized housing, employment skills, managing the Ontario Works program, services for seniors, and mental health programs.

Keynote speaker, Dr. Joey Edwardh, executive director of Community Development Halton, gave the audience a snapshot of the demographic and social dimensions of Halton Hills as a community of communities.

Edwardh emphasized that social services enhance the quality of life of

the entire community, and the importance of neighbourhoods as the core mechanism for people to look after each other.

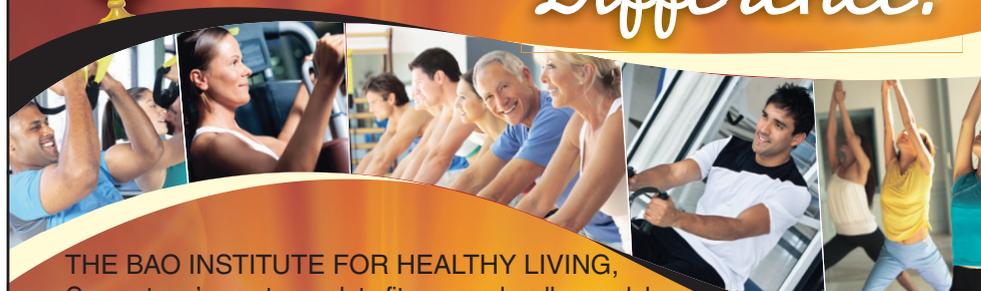
Beatrice Sharkey, on behalf of Halton Hills Cultural Roundtable, gave an example of how a small group of people can build an effective network to share information, improve co-operation and partnership, and increase the effective use of resources. She emphasized how the social services sector could benefit from such a mechanism locally.

Participants broke into small groups to discuss issues in the social services sector. A key outcome was strong support for the concept of creating a structured ongoing network in the social services sector. Volunteers will be following up to make this concept a reality.

"Our objective was to emphasize that the social services sector is as important as the other three components of the Sustainability Strategy, and to sow the seeds for a network that would bring greater cohesion and effectiveness to the social services sector in Halton Hills," said event organizers David Clayton and Nancy Heinmiller (original co-chairs of the social component of the ICSS).

"We are pleased that we went some distance in achieving these goals, and greatly appreciate the help of the team who helped organize the event, the delicious lunch provided by the Amma Foundation of Canada, and the enthusiastic participation of those who attended."

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