

Chief urges residents to get a CO detector

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alarm activations — a figure Brassard said is comparable to last year.

"It's what's turning into the norm," he said.

Brassard explained carbon monoxide is a colourless, odourless gas that's known as the "silent killer." It can come from malfunctioning fuel-burning appliances like stoves, furnaces, etc.

While the detectors are mandated in new homes, Brassard encouraged those who own older homes to purchase the devices as well.

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Pride group celebrates new office

By Melanie Cummings
SPECIAL TO THE CHAMPION

The past five months have been a whirlwind of tangible progress for the Halton Organization for Pride and Education (HOPE).

The education group has opened a small office in Burlington and hired a staff person with the \$217,000 grant it was given by the Ontario Trillium Foundation in May. The money breathes three years of stability into the charitable organization, which aims to eliminate homophobia, biphobia and transphobia throughout the region.

HOPE's volunteer board of directors has decided it's time to celebrate that achievement.

At the Burlington Arts Centre Thursday from 7 to 9 p.m., HOPE will officially launch its full-time presence in the region. The public is welcome to attend.

"It's an important night for Halton's lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, transsexual, two-spirited, and queer people," said HOPE's newly-hired coordinator and longtime volunteer Marcus Logan.

"It's a night where we can all be proud of our lives and contributions to

our community."

Among the guests attending the event is Gilles Marchildon, executive director of Egale Canada, a national organization that advances equality and justice for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans-identified people and their families across Canada through court interventions, parliamentary hearings and public education.

Halton Regional Police Superintendent Signy Pittman and Ontario Minister of Health George Smitherman will also attend the launch.

HOPE volunteers have been educating the community and creating a supportive region for the local lesbian and gay population since 1998.

Over the years, HOPE has established partnerships with 20 community organizations, including the Halton District School Board, Halton Regional Police, Transitions for Youth and other agencies.

"Prior to this grant, all the work that HOPE has achieved was done from our volunteers' homes and after we'd all put in a full day of work," said Logan.

Between 15 to 20 members attend the group's monthly board meetings.

"They are a dedicated, action-oriented group," said Logan. "But I feel we're missing the two-spirited (male and female traits in one body) aboriginal representation on our board though."

This month, Logan is busy running diversity training for about 50 Halton police officers and for 177 elementary teachers at area private schools. He's also booked to speak to high school students in a family and diverse society class.

For Logan, some of the most important work achieved by HOPE has been made through its youth group, which has been running for five years.

He said he has seen shy and scared teens come to the safe environment of the group, and through peer support increase their level of confidence to become well-adjusted, proud, healthy adults.

According to a 2004 Statistics Canada report, among men and women in this country between the ages of 18 and 59, one per cent reported that they consider themselves to be homosexual and 0.7 per cent considered themselves bisexual.

A questionnaire posted on the HOPE Web site www.haltonpride.org is currently seeking input from respondents about additional services needed for the community.

By the time the Trillium money runs out three years from now, HOPE expects to have its roots dug deep in the community and have found financial stability through other financial supporters.

HOPE's vision for the long-term is admittedly "extremely" optimistic.

With co-operation and education among politicians, religious leaders, parents and police, and in schools, hospitals, businesses and homes, the education group wants Halton to become the first Canadian community to receive provincial and/or federal funding to continue its work.

"We are a brilliant example of continued community collaboration and trusted community partnerships," states HOPE's Web site.

All the dough goes to a great cause.



\$1.00
plus tax

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