

Local Youth Aid Centre Shares Directors' Home After Being Forced To Move



(Photos by Stuart's Studio)

Visitors to Richmond Hill Youth Aid Centre often seek help in determining their vocational and educational goals as well as counselling regarding personal and family problems.

They also help one another through the group dynamics process, discussing their hopes and hangups among one another. The centre is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and its staff and directors are hoping that money will soon be found so that it can continue to serve troubled youth in the community.

Pictured above, Co-executive Director John Raynor, facing camera, raps over coffee with a young visitor in the kitchen of the centre at 190 Markham Road.

fito is confined to the kitchen, and deals with peace and love and humor.

Their relations with the police have been so good that it has given many a young visitor quite a different picture of what a policeman is.

YAC has appealed to the town, to ARF, to the province and to the federal authorities for financial assistance so that the project can continue and expand.

Meanwhile it was kept open with the aid of private donations and proceeds from a donkey ball game held in Richmond Hill's Town Park late in August. In any case they would have had to move before winter comes, for the old house was not equipped to meet cold weather. It needed a new furnace, and there was no hot water.

clients from YCA went to the counsellors' house for baths and to wash their hair.

And the upstairs was not insulated, for it was not intended as living quarters. The young people converted the large bright attic into sleeping quarters for girls. The boys sleep downstairs, since the ratio of visitors comes to two boys for every girl.

GET JOB OFFERS
The staff are proud of some of their "success stories".

The most outstanding is the story of a young man who was a ward of the Children's Aid Society and lived in the Richmond Hill area. When he became legally independent he dropped out of school and drifted, but could not hold a job.

He was given accommodation by YAC and took a heavy equipment course at Sheridan College. He graduated at the end of August and found a job and is now independent.

Local industries have been very helpful in offering good jobs to those who need them, Barbara reports, although a few people have called who were obviously just looking for cheap labor.

"We like them to find their own jobs if they can," she explained, but some do not know how to go about it.

When guests find work they are expected to also find a room elsewhere as soon as they get their first pay. YAC was set up to give aid in a crisis and does not readily tolerate freeloaders.

Through the three summer months there were 131 counselling interviews covering problems having to do with family, drugs, relocation of residence, education, welfare assistance, financial aid, employment and personal affairs. Many of the young people who have gone for help have been ordered from their homes by their parents, and without YAC would have nowhere to go but the streets.

There were 32 referrals to medical help and 9 referrals to psychiatric help. Drug crisis interventions totalled only 34.

Records show that 300 persons were given overnight accommodation, but Barbara warns that statistics can be misleading. In many instances the figures

deal with the same people who remain at the centre for several days and receive counselling, medical help and accommodation.

Just 11 were given financial assistance by the centre, and the average age of those seeking help was 17.

NEEDS NEW HOME
When moving day arrived October 1, YAC was still without a home, although the town and the York County Health Unit had agreed to provide further financial assistance.

Fortunately the landlord of the counsellors' house agreed to let them move the project in. It is not an ideal situation, Barbara admits, but at least it will keep the program going.

They have learned a lot in the past four months, and are now looking for a place which will provide a little more space. They have also decided to clamp down a bit on house rules — no more writing on walls, for example.

And they are not despairing—they still have faith in the people of Richmond Hill.

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Hill Youth Aid Centre Gets Help To Continue Until End Of Year

Richmond Hill's Youth Aid Centre, which has been in operation for the summer months and has proved successful in coping with problems of more than 1,000 young people, will continue to operate at least until the end of the year. The centre was set up as a pilot project by the Addiction Research Foundation, with Richmond Hill Town Council contributing \$3,000 towards its expenses. The problem of these young people covered many areas.

Monday September 14, the group of interested citizens involved in its operation approached council for an additional \$5,000 to enable the centre to continue operations until the end of October, when it was believed that money would be forthcoming from the provincial government for the last two months of the year. At a meeting of council's finance committee, (Chairman Deputy-revee Ivan Mansbridge) September 18, it was agreed that an additional \$2,500 would be made available to the centre. This was confirmed by council in a brief meeting following the committee meeting. The rest of the money needed to keep the centre functioning has been provided by gifts from individuals and groups in the town.

At the September 28 meeting of council, Reeve Donald Plaxton reported that he had received a phone call from Newmarket, asking his approval of the transfer of \$5,000 from the contingency fund of the York County Health Unit to the Newmarket Crisis Centre, a similar operation. "I told them there was no way I would give my approval unless our youth aid centre was treated on the same basis. Within five minutes I was called again to be told that Richmond Hill would share the grant with Newmarket and that it would be apportioned on an equal basis."

The young people who used the youth aid centre on Markham Road had many problems, council was told September 14, mostly regarding family affairs, a need for shelter and for food and an understanding listener. It has been only recently that the victims of drug use have learned to trust the young people in charge and are finding their way to the counselling and help available for them. This makes continuance of the project essential, council was told. Because the house used during the summer is slated for demolition to make way for a building project, other quarters will have to be found, it was also reported.

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