

Drop-in centre for homeless youth opens

BY LISA QUEEN
Staff Writer

A growing number of homeless and at-risk youth in York Region is the reason for a new drop-in centre, according to the facility's executive director.

"There are still people struggling to understand there are homeless people in York Region, especially homeless youth," said Margaret Campbell, executive director of Pathways for Children, Youth and Families of York Region.

"It's not always about wealth with kids. Sometimes, it's about parental conflict, abuse or other issues."

On Thursday, Pathways held

an open house for the Home Base Drop-in Centre on Yonge Street north of Elgin Mills in Richmond Hill.

The centre serves youth 14 to 20 years old, offering a safe place, a hot meal, counselling, help securing employment and an opportunity to reconnect with their families and communities.

The facility replaces a centre established near Yonge and Major Mackenzie Drive as a pilot project three years ago to assess the needs of troubled and homeless youth.

Ms Campbell said the response has been overwhelming, with about 400 youths turning to the centre every year.

About 73 per cent are from

Richmond Hill, with the remaining 27 per cent coming from other York communities.

"This is not a Richmond Hill phenomenon. It's going on in all of our communities."

The new centre will provide youths with a recreation area, private rooms for counselling, an area where they can work on resumes and a kitchen to cook hot meals.

"At one point in the old kitchen, we were using a toaster oven and a hot plate to cook," Ms Campbell said.

The centre is located at 10944 Yonge St. For information, call 905-884-3070.



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