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# Youth centres get donations

**Group hopes to build \$3.7M homeless shelter**

BY SIMONE JOSEPH  
Staff Writer

Eighteen-year-old Rose was angry, scared and resentful. She had problems at school with her teachers and other authority figures. She had a drug problem and her home life in Richmond Hill was troubled, too.

Today, Rose lives in a comfortable Markham home with people she considers friends. She has clear goals and fewer worries.

Rose's home is actually a group home for youth run by Pathways for Children, Youth and Families of York Region, a Markham-based agency.

When Rose, who didn't want her last name published, first settled into the home five months ago, her overwhelming emotion was relief.

"I was relieved because it was somewhere safe and somewhere (where) I don't have to worry.

Her main goals now are finishing Grade 12 and attending George Brown College to study culinary arts.

What would she have done had she not come to Pathways group home? Where would she be?

"Some people think they have no choice. Live on the streets or live-through it (a bad experience). Here was another choice," she said. "It made me happy. I have been really happy here."

Pathways runs two fully staffed, co-ed homes in

Markham for homeless youth 16 to 19. Youth can stay in the homes for up to one year.

Pathways opened its first group home in 1988 after Markham residents got together and decided homeless youth in the area needed a place to live. Pathways provides 13 beds to youth who have lived in York Region at some point in their lives.

Pathways also runs a drop-in centre in Richmond Hill to help young people between 13 and 24 with such challenges as finding shelter or a job. Pathways also has six family resource centres for parenting and family programs in Markham and one in Stouffville.

Last week, Richmond Hill council donated \$1 million to Pathways to help build a \$3.7-million transitional housing project that will provide shelter for 24 young people aged 16 to 24.

"It's phenomenal," said Jim Thomson, executive director of Pathways for Children, Youth and Families of York Region. The organization plans to build

The Richmond Hill centre will combine the youth drop-in centre Home Base, emergency shelter and transitional housing for youths wanting to go back to school or find work.

"So, it would give the youth of Richmond Hill and York Region a permanent place to go which is a great idea and I think it's definitely needed," Mr. Thomson said.

Pathways has also received \$14,000 from the McKesson Foundation, which assists chil-

dren and youth with health and education issues.

The donation will be used to create life skills rooms in Pathway group homes.

Some may question if group homes for homeless youth are needed in York Region. Young people begging or sleeping on benches is a fairly common sight in downtown Toronto. But in Markham and other parts of York Region, homeless youth aren't easy to spot.

"(People) think because it is a wealthy area, there are no homeless kids but there are lots. It's (just) not very visible," said Christine Adonis Isaac, residential supervisor and team leader for Pathways' two homes.

Many homeless youth find shelter with friends, jumping from one place to another.

"They (youth) do a lot of couch surfing. They'll go from friend to friend until they run out of places to go," said Kim Gooder, program director of residential services for Pathways. About 91 per cent of the youth have difficulty at home, she said.

Pathways' fourth annual Pathways to Wine, a fundraiser, is coming up. An Evening of International Wines and Silent Auction is Thursday from 7 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. The charge is \$50 per guest at the Southbrook Farm & Winery on Major Mackenzie Drive between Bathurst and Dufferin Streets in Richmond Hill.

For more information on Pathways and its upcoming fundraiser, call 905-471-7877 or go to <http://www.pathwaysyorkregion.org>

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August 23 - 26	Tues. - Friday	9:00 - 12:00
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