



STAFF PHOTO/MIKE BARRETT

With \$90,000 in regional funding, Inn From the Cold president Kirby Brock can keep the shelter's doors open.

Funding brings vulnerable in from cold

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It's bureaucratic terminology, but it translates into humanity.

The Community Development and Investment Fund, administered since 2003 to assist low income and vulnerable York Region residents, means children of homeless families have renewed hope.

The region, which this week announced \$2.8 million for 33 community service projects, also helps isolated newcomers, supports literacy, battles addictions and expands a range of supports for our most vulnerable neighbours.

The regional dollars shelter, feed and clothe the homeless during our brutal winter nights.

In addition to providing up to 4,500 meals, paying 25 per cent of its rent and purchasing food, clothing and supplies, Inn From the Cold can handle 1,000 homeless visits per season, shelter president Kirby Brock said of the \$90,294 received this year.

The Newmarket shelter provides overnight accommodations for the homeless five nights a week from November to March, along with nights when the temperature drops below -15C. The project will expand

to include employment search support.

Although more than 300 volunteers assist the shelter and fundraising augments operating budgets, the fund is essential, Mr. Brock said.

Regional support through the fund touches lives in all nine municipalities.

"Without this money, we wouldn't be able to open our doors," Jewish Family and Child Service York Region branch services director Monica Auerbach said of the \$70,000 received to assist low-income families.

It gives the organization the capacity to provide programs and services for children, their caregivers and volunteers, many of whom are newcomers.

"It's very important. It's a great preventative program that breaks down isolation, offers socialization and learning and recreational activities for children," she said.

Last year, the Thornhill initiative helped 1,243 pre-schoolers and about 400 parents and caregivers, Ms Auerbach said.

For East Gwillimbury's Blue Door Shelters, the \$88,500 infusion translates into two additional child and youth workers at New Leeder Family Shelter, executive director Patti Bell said.

FUNDING SNAPSHOT

► **Inn From the Cold:** Part of its \$90,294 funding will go to employment support;

► **Job Skills:** It's \$167,108 will be used to help 80 low-income residents acquire specific job skills;

► **Rose of Sharon Services:** Newmarket organization will use \$43,400 for its new parenting and personal development program;

► **Women's Centre of York Region:** Bridging the Gap program for low-income women received \$126,959;

► **Blue Door Shelters:** Its \$89,500 will be used for child and youth support at the new Leeder Family Shelter.

"Families gain invaluable help from the workers," she said.

Extra staff help kids and parents through serious upheaval by providing child care, protection, programs and friendship.

"Kids get one-on-one help. When the parents are working or out, they know their kids are with us. We wouldn't have the staff without the

funding. It's been spectacular for the kids," Ms Bell said.

Last year, about 50,000 residents benefited from Blue Door services and programs supported through the regional fund. Similar numbers are expected this year.

During the past seven years, the focus of the regional funding has been on purchasing high priority services that meet one or more of three priorities: child and family support, homelessness prevention programs and employment support.

Originally funded federally and provincially, the majority of the fund now comes from the region, strategic service integration and policy managing director Cordelia Abankwa-Harris said.

"It's a proactive, preventative fund to make sure our most vulnerable residents receive support," she said.

Without it, families and workers often turn to crisis services, she added.

This year, more than 50 proposals for funding, totalling almost \$6 million, were submitted in response to the region's request for proposals.

While the region allocated a little less than half the funding requested, each proposal was evaluated based on need.

It suggests the need clearly exists, Markham deputy mayor and com-

munity and health services committee chairperson Jack Heath said.

"During this challenging economic time, now more than ever, these services are needed to support our most vulnerable residents," he said.

Examples of 2010 fund investments include \$77,000 to Richmond Hill's Krasman Centre for an application support worker who will help people who are on the long-term Ontario Disability Support Program waiting list to navigate the system and its requirements and, \$167,108 for Job Skills Smart Start, an employment project to help a minimum of 80 unemployed, low-income residents develop skills and obtain certifications necessary to compete for employment in the food and drink or customer service sector.

Other agencies being supported include Pathways for Children, Youth and Families of York Region - Home Base Youth Drop-In Centre.

The youth drop-in centre in Richmond Hill will provide services to about 1,200 homeless or at-risk youth by providing counselling, case management, employment and housing services, social recreation, food, clothing, life skills, experiential learning, creative expression and other resources with its \$330,000.