Group hopes to provide adult guidance to youths

BY SANDRA BOLAN
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More than 60 per cent of Stouffville's youth come home to an empty house, according to Caleb Evans, regional director of Young Life in York and Durham regions.

And when kids have time on their hands, there is no telling the type of activities they can get involved in, good and bad.

Which is why Mr. Evans and a group of local parents are hoping to establish a branch of the not-for-profit Christian outreach organization in town.

"Every kids need to have a positive adult," in his or her life, Mr. Evans said.

The organization is for 12 to 25 year olds and is run by trained volunteers and staff.

"It's safe, fun, positive about relationships. Positive alternatives to Friday and Saturday night activities. Organized chaos directed by an adult," he said.

Young Life has been in Canada since 1954 and can also be found in 77 other countries.

"Young Life starts with concerned adults who spend time building bridges of authentic friendship with teens — where they are, as they are. Because their leaders believe in them unconditionally, teenagers begin to see that their lives have great worth, meaning and purpose. Young Life offers teens adventure, hospitality and unconditional friendship," according to the organization's parent website.

It's not a counselling group, but an organization of peers.

"Very informal, very relational. So the kid feels like this is my friend, my peer. But put boundaries of how to have a good time," according to Mr. Evans.

Stouffville parents involved with the organization saw the impact Young Life was having in Uxbridge and Port Perry and said, according to Mr. Evans, this community could use an organization like that.

One of the biggest assets to a youth is a positive adult relationship with someone outside his or her family.

In general, 10 per cent of children are connected to organizations with affiliations to churches or youth groups, according to Mr. Evans. Another 10 per cent are involved in Brownies or Cubs-like activities, while 80 per cent of youth have no affiliation with a group at all.

"Kids in smaller communities certainly don't have as many options. ... (They have) more space to feel alone," according to Mr. Evans.

The group's next step is to obtain funding in order to support program facilitation staff. A request for money will be reviewed by town council during the 2013 budget grants and donations deliberations.

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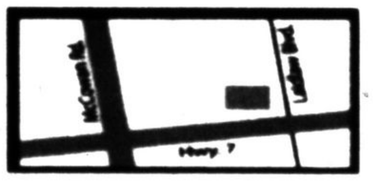

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