

SSRSB SchoolsPlus Update October /November 2015



Staffing:

In October we said goodbye to Bridgett Morgan our SchoolsPlus Outreach worker for 6 schools, 3 of which were new to SchoolsPlus this fall. In an effort to continue to provide service to these schools, the existing Outreach Workers covered most of the schools. It wasn't until November 23rd that we were able to hire to that position. The following is a list of the staff who currently serve the 19 schools:

Shirley Burris	Associate Facilitator (50%)
Linda Jensen	Facilitator
Paula Davison	Outreach (New Germany Jr/Sr High, New Germany Elementary, Bridgewater Jr/Sr High, Bridgewater Elementary, West Northfield
Dave Brennan	Forest Heights, Chester Area Middle School, Chester District School
Amy Foster	Forest Heights High, New Ross Consolidated, Aspotogan Elementary and North Queens(p-12)
Tina Atherton	Parkview Education Centre, Newcombville Elementary, Petite Riviere Elementary, Pentz Elementary
Tina Dearing	Dr JC Wickwire Elementary, South Queens, Liverpool Regional High, Greenfield Elementary
Charlene Flint	Parkview (Charlene is working on loan from Community Justice for this school term)

Team Meetings:

The team meets once per month to share successes and barriers, and coordinate efforts to meet the needs of students and families. In October we agreed to develop best practice procedures to improve consistency and to learn from each other. In November we had Alanon/Alateen representatives educate us on what is available to students who have a loved one struggling with alcohol use. We have arranged to have Heartwood present at our December meeting and we plan to visit the YMCA Youth Centre to learn what they can offer our students.

Community Collaboration:

Parenting Support:

SchoolsPlus , Bridgewater Elementary Guidance, Community Services Family Support Program and Family Support Centre, Better Together Family Resource Centre Parenting Journey Program have collaborated to offer a group for parents at the Family Support Centre in Bridgewater. The parents have determined their needs

through a focus group type meeting. The meetings will be supportive, informative and interactive. Some meetings will focus of parents having fun and building more positive relationships with their children. The group meets at 12:30 for lunch every Tuesday and their meeting follows lunch.

Municipal Alcohol Project:

SchoolsPlus is working with the Municipality to promote responsible use of alcohol and to change the culture around drinking in our community. Out of this project youth were gathered from YAC and the YMCA Youth Leadership Group to form the Youth Alcohol Project (YAP). They will meet regularly to develop ways to address the culture of drinking among youth.

SASLQ:

SchoolsPlus is at the table with a variety of agencies that make up the Sexual Assault Services Lunenburg/Queens Committee. SchoolsPlus assisted in the development of a proposal for a grant to address sexual violence. Part of the grant proposal was for funds to gather youth to have a voice at decision making and problem solving tables around this issue and to develop their leadership skills so they are more comfortable being a youth voice.

Youth Advisory Committee:

SchoolsPlus, RCMP and Bridgewater Town Police continue to work with a group of youth representing a number of schools from both counties.

The youth just met with representatives from Heartwood to get direction in regard to how to apply for a grant to prevent Sexual Violence.

They developed and recorded 4 Public Service Announcements with CKBW for November's Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

One of the youth attended a weekend Youth Truth Leadership event where youth learned they have a voice on important matters in society.

A presentation was done to the media and others regarding their accomplishments and desire to make a difference. Youth Committed to attend the following Committees as a youth voice:

- Road Safety Committee

- SASLQ

- Youth Cybercrime Advisory Committee (RCMP) Provincial

3 youth will work with NASCAD on a game about Luring

5 youth will work on the Youth Alcohol project (MAP)

YAC will continue to work on addressing the following areas of concern:

- Violence and Bullying in Relationships

- Substance Abuse and Sexual Abuse and Harassment

Students teaching students

By GAYLE WILSON
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Dinner theatre shows, music videos, online games and camps may not be the traditional means of highlighting serious issues such as teen sexual violence, substance abuse, bullying and road safety. But that's largely the plan of the new South Shore Youth Advisory Committee (SSYAC).

Driven by the common goal of having students teach students, the teenagers who make up the SSYAC - known as YAC for short - held their first meeting at Bridgewater Junior/Senior High School last week. SSYAC was formed earlier this fall through the amalgamation of youth advisory committees in Lunenburg and Queens counties, which stemmed from an after-school project that started at Forest Heights Community School in 2009.

The students' aim is to spread awareness of various issues that hit home among their peers. For the 2015-2016 year, the 60 junior and senior high school students who make up the group are focusing on awareness concerning child luring, sexual harassment and assault, and cyber and road safety. They're working in conjunction with the South Shore Regional School Board's "Name The Shame" project on sexual assault, as well as the RCMP and the Bridgewater Police Service.

Addressing the dozen or so students who attended last week's meeting, Braden Newell, YAC's communication liaison and youth facilitator, recalled how over the past four years the various YAC groups have been creating posters, videos, radio commercials, and bracelets to get their messages out. The issues, he says, are ones that YAC members feel "are really affecting our lives and society as a whole."

In 2014, the Lunenburg County youth advisory committee won first place in the South Shore Video Fest for its social awareness production, "Downfall of Society." Its next film, "The Story of Addiction," was awarded top spot in the same festival in 2015 and won the People's Choice Award.

Now in grade 12 at Bridgewater's Park View Education Centre, Newell is a former Bluenose Academy student. He says he gets former classmates approaching him to say the YAC initiatives are making a difference.

"People are being a little bit more thoughtful," explained Newell.

Candace Elliott is an interdisciplinary design instructor at Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD) and has a graphic arts business in Bridgewater. She's been assisting YAC with its posters and other design-based projects. This year, she has her NSCAD students working on a plan for YAC for an online game and possibly a board game, that might be used by students, their families, educators and police.

"We, as adults, have a tall order to try to get information into teens that is important," she told LighthouseNOW. "By nature, they turn off."

At the same time, she recognizes it's important to give youth the tools to help them make better decisions.

"A gaming environment allows them to be interactive with information at their own level," according to Elliott.

Bridgewater Police Chief John Collyer, who attended the meeting, said it's

"early days" in terms of determining the effectiveness of YAC's efforts. However, he said that the topics the students are discussing, such as sexual assault and substance abuse, are "huge cultural issues."

He says they won't be sorted right away, "but engaging the youth is going to be key" to the solution.

Meanwhile, at last week's meeting the students decided they would be addressing child luring and "Name the Shame" through a dinner theatre production to be held in one of the schools next spring. Students will write, produce and perform the play.

As well, the students will be highlighting substance abuse by producing one or two music videos with their own songs to go on YouTube. They're also intending to work on some events aimed at young children.

"We still plan our annual events such as GPS (Girls' Power and Strength) camp and OTG (Boys' Off the Grid) camp, as well as exhibition work and Youth Truth," the outgoing facilitator, Shirley Burris, explained.

According to Burris, students will also be sitting on various community groups, including the Youth Alcohol Project through the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities, Sexual Assault Services Lunenburg Queens and the Road Safety Committee. They will also work with Constable Paul Rogers of the Bridgewater police and the Youth Cyber Awareness Committee in conjunction with the RCMP's Constable Rod Francis.

YAC's new facilitator is Linda Jensen.

"We, as adults, have a tall order to try to get information into teens that is important."

Candace Elliott
NSCAD instructor



Media Release October 15, 2015

South Shore YAC to team up with NSCAD to Design a Luring Prevention Game

The South Shore Youth Advisory Committee (SSYAC) has teamed up with 3rd year students at NSCAD and their professor, Candace Ellicott to design a game for youth and parents around luring prevention. On October 13 the SSYAC (a partnership of SchoolsPlus, Bridgewater Police, and RCMP) were hosted by the 3rd year NSCAD students for a work session to design the game.

"The day was very productive and we learned a lot! We look forward to bringing this game to fruition, with our NSCAD partners!" reveals Shirley Burris, of South Shore SchoolsPlus. The game development is a joint project of Candace Ellicott's students at NSCAD, and South Shore Youth Advisory Committee, involving students from all secondary schools in the SSRSB. In part, the work is funded by NS Crime Prevention through Lighthouse grants supporting the ***Name the Shame Program***, a program for awareness and prevention of sexual assault and abuse. Candace Ellicott has worked with the SSYAC over the last two years in developing and designing materials to accompany the awareness messages.

SchoolsPlus Advisory:

The Advisory for SchoolsPlus meets monthly and alternates months between Queens and Lunenburg County. Agencies at the table share what services they are offering in the community, identify gaps in service and problem solve. We will be developing an online resource of service providers and their contact information to share in an effort to work more collaboratively.

Big Brothers Big Sisters In School Mentor Program:

Community Justice, the RCMP and SchoolsPlus worked with Big Brothers Big Sisters to promote this program. An interview with the Breaker was published and a number of volunteers were recruited to attend Parent Teacher Meetings in late November to promote the program. 13 potential volunteers for the program as a result of these efforts. (See next page)

The key role of mentors

Big Brothers, Big Sisters recruiting volunteers

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One hour a week can make a big difference in a young person's life. It can help establish better habits, improve school attendance and bolster self esteem. That is what the in-school mentoring program offered by the Big Brothers, Big Sisters (BBBS) of the South Shore can accomplish with the help of volunteer mentors who volunteer one hour of their time once a week.

Susan Himmelman, South Shore Community Justice,

knows what is required to be a mentor. She shared one hour of her time once a week with a student who shared her interest in sports and outdoor activities. In the time Himmelman spent as a mentor she saw her young friend gain self confidence and improve her school attendance record.

BBBS is now partnering with other South Shore Agencies in an effort to raise awareness of this valuable program. The partnership includes the Lunenburg Detachment of the RCMP, South Shore Community Justice and The Schools Plus Program of the South Shore Regional School Board. The mentoring program is proven. It has been operating successfully in the Lunenburg Queens area for over 20 years but more volunteers are needed to meet the

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Big Brothers, Big Sisters has formed a partnership with other community organizations to raise awareness of the In-School Mentoring Program and to recruit volunteers to serve as mentors. Shown are partnership members: Cst Angela MacEachern, Lunenburg District RCMP (left); Jamie Irving, president of Big Brothers, Big Sisters South Shore; Vanessa Mossop, executive director of Big Brothers, Big Sisters South Shore; Linda Jensen, Schools Plus facilitator SSRSB and Susan Himmelman, South Shore Community Justice.

Ann O'Connell

Programming:

- SchoolsPlus Outreach are working with the Family Resource Centre in New Ross to offer an after school program for students on Thursdays.
- SchoolsPlus, Aspotogan Elementary School, Chester Recreation Department, Fox Point Community Centre and Better Together Family Resource Centre met to develop programs for the students and parents in the Hubbards area (after school/parenting and Moms and Tots).
- SchoolsPlus and Chester Recreation continue to offer the Open Air Society. It is a hiking and Outdoor Survival/Adventure after school program being offered at Forest Heights for students in the Chester area.

Bridgewater and Area HUB:

SchoolsPlus attends the weekly HUB meeting on Wednesday's from 1-2pm at Freeman House with front line service providers. We are able to bring complex cases to the table to increase collaborative work with other agencies and offer some services/ideas to other professionals who bring forward situations where individuals are struggling.

SchoolsPlus is also at the HUB Tier 1 meetings on a monthly basis with representatives who are decision makers in the various agencies/departments represented in the HUB .

Attendance Project:

The Attendance Pilot began in September at Chester District Elementary School and Dr. JC Wickwaire Elementary in Liverpool. The schools have used a variety of methods to educate students, parents and school staff about the importance of attendance such as: Assemblies, letters, signboards, posters, presentations, videos, buttons(Every Day Counts). One SchoolsPlus Staff and an Outreach worker have been assigned families where they meet the children at the door each morning to welcome them and if absent they contact the parents and offer assistance to get the child to school. Increased attendance has been documented for families who historically struggled. The caseload for the outreach workers will increase in January and discussions will take place about sustainability of the program.

In School Programs delivered by SchoolsPlus:

VOICES program for girls at Parkview
Rainbows program for grief work at Petite and Pentz
Friends for Life program at several schools is being planned

Assistance Offered by SchoolsPlus:

Clothing and shoes for students
Transportation to appointments
Arranged for accommodation ,phone and safe travel to a teen girl at high risk
Arranged for food and lunches
Referrals for services
Support to engage with Employment Solutions, Income Assistance, Freeman House
Outreach and other services.