



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Bonnette and Members of Council

FROM: Jennifer Ancona, Recreation Coordinator- Youth

DATE: May 27, 2021

MEMORANDUM NO.: MEM-RP-2021-0005

RE: Youth Services Update

PURPOSE OF THE MEMORANDUM:

The purpose of this Memorandum is to update Members of Council on the status of Youth Services in Halton Hills

BACKGROUND:

In October 2020, Council approved Memorandum RP-2020-0002 regarding Youth Services Update through Resolution No. 2020-0240 that provided an update on the work of the Youth Network and the delivery of youth services in Halton Hills.

In 2020, Council approved an operating budget of \$328,000 to support continued operations of the two youth centres and the overall youth program.

COMMENTS:

The purpose of this memo is to provide Council with an update on the following information regarding the provision of youth services in Halton Hills:

- a) Summary of continued commitment from the Youth Network;
- b) Summary of continued youth service delivery throughout the pandemic;
- c) Next steps and status of the new Acton Youth Centre including an update on the grand opening celebrations and recognition of donors.

Youth Network

The Halton Hills Youth Network is a collection of youth-serving agencies developed and led by the Recreation and Parks Department since 2016. The purpose of the Network

is to ensure youth service delivery is aligned and most effective in addressing youth needs through coordination and collaboration.

In 2019, Reach Out Centre for Kids (ROCK), in partnership with Halton Alcohol, Drug and Gambling Assessment, Prevention and Treatment Services (ADAPT) and Support House, was successful with a grant proposal through the Halton Region Community Investment Fund and received 3-year funding in the amount of \$289,478 to provide on-site mental health, addictions and substance use supports for youth in the Youth Centres.

In 2021, the project is entering the third and final year of funding. Highlights continue to include:

i) Intensive Youth Worker

The Intensive Youth Worker from ROCK is an on-site mental health professional who provides support and enhances positive mental health in the community by providing dedicated service in the Youth Centres. During the closures of the past year, the Intensive Youth Worker continued to support youth virtually.

ii) Peer Support Worker

The Peer Support worker with ADAPT supports and plans for young people seeking substance use information and services. The Peer Support Worker continued to support youth both in person and virtually throughout the pandemic and facility closures.

iii) Just Be You

The Just Be You program, operated in partnership with ADAPT and Support House, is a youth-led group program providing social recreation and peer-support for ages 15 - 25, experiencing mental health and/or addictions issues. Funded through the grant, it continues to operate virtually once per week with an average of 10 youth per session. This program will continue to run virtually for the foreseeable future.

iv) Youth Information Sessions

Education and drop-in services through the Youth Centres contribute to safety and well-being through programs that respond to situations of elevated risk to prevent harm and/or reduce need for emergency or crisis services through a proactive approach. Information sessions facilitated through ROCK continue to be delivered virtually and include topics such as managing social isolation, coping with stress and anxiety, adjusting to Seasonal Affective Disorder and navigating school transitions.

Based on the success of the program elements from the original funding request, staff is exploring options to secure sustainable funding and will report back to Council and Budget Committee as necessary.

Halton Hills Youth Centres

The Town of Halton Hills Youth Centres are committed to the development of recreation programming that promotes an active, social, and educational environment for youth visiting the space. Recreation continues to play an important role on the health care continuum and is a conduit for single-point access to a variety of health and social services. Participants range from ages 12 – 24 years for daily recreation programming and wrap-around services by various partner agencies. Youth are able to come and go to each location freely. There are no barriers to entry and there is no cost to participate.

Aligning with the priorities of the Youth Service Delivery Model, youth have the opportunity to participate and engage in the following at the Centres:

- Recreation and socialization opportunities including physical fitness and active living
- Access to healthy and nutritious food options and basic cooking skills
- On-site mental health and addictions supports and obtain referral services to which they may otherwise not have access
- Increased life skills through participation in workshops from partner agencies
- Service navigation
- Youth leadership and community involvement

The Halton Hills Youth Centres- Georgetown and Acton are open Monday- Friday 3:00- 7:30pm. Due to the changing pandemic framework, modified operational hours were implemented with the addition of curbside pickup for supplies and the provision of mental health and addictions supports.

Youth Service Delivery through the COVID-19 Pandemic

Since spring 2020, Town staff and members of the Halton Hills Youth Network have been serving youth in a virtual environment through the **Youth Engagement and Outreach Action Team**. The purpose is to use existing social media channels of the Town and agencies of the Halton Hills Youth Network to offer relevant services virtually.

Staff and members of the youth network working frontline meet bi-weekly to collaborate on content, plan strategies for continually engaging with youth and to identify gaps in service. Instagram and Twitter are used to connect youth with recreation, active living, health, and social services by agency partners including ROCK, ADAPT, Bridging the Gap, Support House and the YMCA of Hamilton, Burlington, Brantford. Throughout the past year of virtual service delivery, there has been an average 150-160 views with each post and an increase in following by 20% on our social media channels.

Highlights of virtual services include:

- online recreation, social activities, and DIY projects;
- mental health related topics, coping mechanisms, social isolation, and strategies for reducing anxiety;
- food supports and cooking tutorials;

- ROCK workshops;
- ROCK's virtual walk-in clinics;
- virtual Just Be Youth group programming offered in partnership with ADAPT and Support and Housing Halton; and
- employment assistance.

On May 20, 2021, the Youth Engagement and Outreach Action Team was presented with the **CMHA Halton REACH Award**. This award is presented annually to an individual, organization, or group who has advanced community mental health and addiction awareness and support in Halton. The name REACH emphasizes the connection of the award to CMHA's values of Respect, Excellence, Accountability, Collaboration, and Hope. Out of many submissions received, the Halton Hills Youth Centres were recognized for the award for innovative social media initiatives utilized maintain connections with youth throughout the pandemic. A virtual presentation with Town staff and the partner agencies has taken place.

Staff hosted a successful Virtual Youth Week 2021 that was celebrated May 1 – 7, 2021. A full week of activities was planned online along with a virtual Youth Recognition Awards and Youth Art Exhibit. Recipients from the 89 nominations for youth recognition awards were featured through videos and messages, with an introduction to the awards by Mayor Bonnette. The annual Youth Art Exhibit was featured virtually and throughout one day, art from the 38 submissions was showcased on Instagram and Twitter to celebrate the talented youth artists in our community. Staff had 50 virtual youth attendees for youth week events and averaged 190-200 views on videos and posts.

Throughout the pandemic and various levels of restriction, staff have continued to offer daily virtual programming and, where permitted, in person programming. Halton Hills Youth Centres averaged 280 youth visits per month. Food support, provided by Food for Life, Halton Food for Thought and the Georgetown Breadbasket, continue to be a key resource accessed by youth. On average, 98 points of access for food supports have occurred over the last five months.

During the most recent stage of the pandemic, the Halton Hills Youth Centres have been open for curbside pick-up and access to provision of mental health and addictions services. ROCK's Intensive Youth Worker and the ROCK virtual Walk-In clinics have continued to support youth virtually. ADAPT's Peer Support Worker has supported the Youth Centres both in person and virtually. ROCK has hosted a series of information workshops for youth focused on Seasonal Affect Disorder, social isolation and coping with stress and anxiety. Four hundred weekly art and bake kits have been handed out over the last five months with an average of 3-4 youth a night accessing curbside services.

Through the modified operations of the Youth Centres, staff and agency partners of the Youth Network will continue to adapt and response to changing levels of service.

Skatepark Ambassador

In Spring 2020, the Town's Skatepark Ambassador was present for 12 – 15 hours per week across three neighbourhood skatepark locations to promote youth engagement and community education including proper protective equipment related to skateboarding, sharing the space, and skateboarding etiquette. For 2021, pending provincial guidelines, the Skatepark Ambassador will resume with the same purpose and hours per week until September.

Acton Youth Centre

In October 2020, construction began for renovations to 2900 square feet leased portion of the former Acton Town Hall for a new Youth Centre with a capital budget of just under one million dollars. This new space will allow a fully integrate “one-stop-shop” for youth services and is designed to support the principles and priorities of the youth service delivery model. Construction continues and is targeted to be completed in early summer. When timelines permit, youth programming and services will commence within the new space.

Through the transition period between in Acton, virtual programming and curbside pick-up services will continue to be available to youth at the Acton Town Hall.

Three donations have been received towards capital funding for the new Acton Youth Centre:

1. The Service Club Collaborative of Halton Hills (Kinsmen Club of Georgetown, Rotary Club of Acton, Optimist Club of Halton Hills, Rotary Club of Georgetown, Lions Club of Georgetown and Kiwanis Club of Georgetown) donated \$10,162.53 to support the capital construction of the large counselling room known as Community Room #2.
2. Rotary Club of Acton donated \$5,000.00 in memory of Dave Manes, a former Rotarian, to support the capital construction of the small counselling room known as Community Room #1.
3. On behalf of the S.A.W Memorial Golf Tournament and in memory of Steven Worby, a donation was made by Brett Worby and family for \$5,000 to support capital construction of a conversational pod and \$2,000 to support the purchase of two laptops for youth to use while in the space.

Recognition for the donations will include plaques within the Acton Youth Centre and donor recognition as part of the Acton Youth Centre grand opening. A media release and social media feature will provide information regarding the donations in the coming months.

Acton Youth Centre Grand Opening Celebrations

The Acton Youth Centre grand opening celebrations have pivoted to accommodate pandemic restrictions. A completely virtual grand opening experience has been planned that will be facilitated through a pre-recorded video. Included in the video will be short speeches from key individuals, a ribbon cutting, donor recognition and highlights of the facility's amenities. Filming will take place in June with a public launch of the video tentatively scheduled for July along with via social media and website posts.

CONCLUSION:

Staff remains committed to being the lead organization of the Halton Hills Youth Network with the purpose of guiding the work of youth service delivery in Halton Hills. In 2021, focus will continue with the opening of the new Acton Youth Space, expanding the provision of recreation programming, improving access to wrap around services, evaluating the outcomes of the Community Investment Fund and working with agency partners on future business planning.

Reviewed and approved by,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Howard', written in a cursive style.

Samantha Howard, Director of Recreation Services

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Warren Harris', written in a cursive style.

Warren Harris, Acting Chief Administrative Officer & Commissioner of Recreation and Parks