

NORTH SHORE ROTARY LEADERSHIP KEY TO REOPENING YOUTH SAFE HOUSE

North Shore, February 20, 2008 -- The NS Youth Safe House, a project of the NS Rotary Clubs since its inception, is open and operating again after closing due to lack of funding. This important NS community project to reopen the Safe House could not have been successfully undertaken without the cooperation of many committed people and the leadership of the Rotary Clubs of West Vancouver, West Vancouver Sunrise, North Vancouver and Lions Gate.

In September of 2000, a report, prepared by the North Shore Youth Task Force on Homelessness, concluded that there was a gap in NS youth services and that a local facility for North Shore Youth seeking refuge was needed. The report was shelved until Rotary entered the picture and successfully lobbied the NS municipalities for implementation of the report and the Safe House opened on December 1, 2002.

North Shore Youth would no longer have to go to Vancouver for help and, during the next 3-½ years more than 1,000 youth in need, and at risk, received the assistance they needed. After three years the Federal operating grant was not renewed and, on September 30, 2006, the North Shore Youth Safe House closed its doors. It closed, not because it did not serve the needs of North Shore youth, but because it lacked the continuity of funding support that such a facility requires.

The North Shore Rotary Clubs would not let it remain closed. The Community Youth Safe House Advisory Committee, composed of the various stake-holders, had been monitoring the operation during its existence and developed a new business plan and Rotary mobilized a number of North Shore Service Clubs to do what was necessary to return the physical facility to operational status.

A great many concerned North Shore citizens came forward to lend assistance making it possible to reopen the Safe House:

- An anonymous donor contributed \$385,000 to meet the first year operating expenses.
- The District of NV provided the house for \$1.00/year, a value of \$22,000 in lost rent.
- 19 companies volunteered their services and resources to renovate the house, a value of \$80,000.
- Other companies provided services with a value \$28,000.
- Cash donations from schools, churches, NS Service clubs and individuals totaled more than \$50,000.
- The grand total of cash and in kind services exceeded \$563,000.

Under Rotarian Chair Esio Marzotto, a Committee the of NS Service Clubs undertook a campaign asking NS residents to sign a petition to bring to the attention of the Provincial Government the North Shore Community's urgent need for long term funding for the facility. More than 7,600 signatures were collected during the period October 19 – 28, 2007. On Nov.16, MLA Katherine Whittred accepted the petition on behalf of the four very committed North Shore MLA's and presented it in the legislature the following week. On Dec. 5, a letter was received from Tom Christensen, Minister of Children and Family Development stating the following, "I am pleased to advise that the Ministry of Children and Family Development is working towards funding transition beds and other youth and family services at the Safe House." Federal funding was also reinstated.

Hollyburn Family Services, a NS community service organization in operation since 1990, agreed to manage the facility. Alan Kwinter, the Executive Director, has implemented a new management plan to provide a safe and caring facility for vulnerable 13- to 18-year-old youth. It includes four beds for short-

term emergency accommodation and integrated counseling to help stabilize the youth in their family homes as well as two longer term beds and counseling to help youth transition to independent living.

The Youth House reopened to young people needing help on Friday, Dec. 15, and as of February 20, 2008, more than 50 young people have received attention at the facility.