

Orillia Youth Opportunities Committee

An Examination of Youth Homelessness in the Orillia Area

Youth Homelessness Task Force

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AN EXAMINATION OF YOUTH HOMELESSNESS IN THE ORILLIA AREA

Introduction

Youth are a particularly vulnerable population in society. They rely on adult care-givers, have limited skills, experience and education, and are going through significant social and developmental changes as they transition into adulthood. Safe, stable housing forms the strong foundation from which youth can grow. Remove it and all aspects of a youth's life and development can suffer. The creation of a youth shelter in Orillia would aid vulnerable youth in our community, significantly contributing to their successful transition into adulthood.

This report will begin by defining 'homelessness' and 'youth' as research terms, and will then discuss some of the causes and impacts of homelessness on individual and community levels. The methodology of the studies conducted will be outlined along with goals and concerns of same. Finally, the report will articulate the results of these studies, the analysis of the data collected, and the consequent recommendations.

Youth Homelessness Defined

The term "homeless" can incite a variety of images and meanings for different people, everything from someone 'couch surfing' for a few nights, to those living and sleeping on street sidewalks. In order to effectively examine youth homelessness locally, a single definition of homelessness was required to form the foundation for research and analysis. The definition utilized by the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (2012) was adopted for purposes of this study:

"The situation of an individual or family without stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it."

The age range representing "youth" for purposes of discussing or designing a prospective youth shelter was determined to be 16 through 24, as those 15 years old and younger would still be protected by the Children's Aid Society mandate and those older than 24 could appropriately access an adult shelter. Youth surveys were distributed primarily to individuals between the ages of 13 and 24.

Causes of Youth Homelessness

A number of interacting factors underlie youth homelessness. Research typically finds that the majority of homeless youth come from situations of abuse, interpersonal violence, or neglect and that running away is often a last resort for youth dealing with unbearable situations (Aratani, 2009; Gaetz, 2014a; Thompson, Bender, Windsor, Cook & Williams, 2010). Conflict within a family may also arise from challenges youth and their parents are facing, such as mental health issues, differing religious beliefs, problems with school, substance use and delinquent or

criminal activity (Gaetz, 2014a; Thompson, Bender, Windsor, Cook & Williams, 2010). Sexual orientation, peer groups, romantic partners and personal style can also be causes for disagreements within a home (Thompson, Bender, Windsor, Cook & Williams, 2010). Alternatively, youth may be forced out of their homes by their parents, leave as a result of neglect or maltreatment, or be abandoned (Thompson, Bender, Windsor, Cook & Williams, 2010). In addition, severe poverty in families can lead to those youth leaving home earlier and then experiencing homelessness as a result of their inability to support themselves (Gaetz, 2014a). This distress is compounded by shortages of affordable housing, lack of employment, and lack of community supports (Stewart et al., 2010).

In 2014 the average gross household income in Orillia was \$70,000.00, the lowest in its comparator group within the 2015 BMA Municipal Study involving 104 municipalities in Ontario. The 2014 Vital Signs Report for Simcoe County recorded youth crime as high, the child poverty rate as 21.5%, and the poverty rate of single parent families as 32.2%.

“I’ve had friends in situations where they can’t be at home and people won’t know where they are because they move around so often. They meet some scary people”

Impact of Youth Homelessness

The effects of homelessness have both a wide reach over communities and a devastating impact on individuals. The first issue to consider when looking at the effects of homelessness on individuals is the significantly different circumstances faced by youth (as opposed to adults) as a result of their age, relationships, and level of development. Once this distinction is noted, the impacts of homelessness on youth can be better understood. Further, the disservice a community does in neglecting the issue of youth homelessness can also be examined.

Homelessness impacts youth differently than it does adults; creating an effective response to youth homelessness requires these differences to be understood and taken into account. Normally, youth are living in situations where they are heavily dependent upon adults. Their adult caregivers provide a home to live in, food to eat, utilities, and other household needs. This is particularly important given the barriers youth face in earning an income sufficient to support themselves, especially if they have not completed high school (Gaetz, 2014a). Caregivers also provide mental and emotional support, and tie youth to a social network of family, friends and neighbours at a time when their cognitive skills are developing, particularly decision-making (Gaetz, 2014a). All of these supports and nurturing relationships, along with the benefits that they can provide youth, are severed when youth become homeless (Gaetz, 2014b). Effectively addressing youth homelessness, therefore, must mean more than providing temporary shelter; it must assist youth in becoming independent, self-sufficient, responsible, adults (Gaetz, 2014a).

Homelessness impacts youth in significant, and often traumatic, ways. Homeless youth tend to suffer from a higher number of mental health challenges, such as anxiety, depression, and self-harm (Aratani, 2009; Gaetz, 2014b; Thompson, Bender, Windsor, Cook & Williams, 2010). They also suffer from declining physical health, weaker immune systems, and have increased rates of pregnancy (Gaetz, 2014b; Thompson et al., 2010). Homeless youth also have higher

rates of substance use, behavioural problems, and poor academic performance, they are more likely to drop-out from school, spend time in juvenile detention centres and are at higher risk to be victims of crime (Aratani, 2009; Gaetz, 2014a; Thompson et al., 2010).

Having a safe, stable home is the foundation required for all major aspects of life, including good health, access to nutrition, employability and engagement in one's community. Remove this fundamental requirement and not only is the individual harmed, but the community lacks the involvement of another healthy, active member. Further, society becomes responsible for managing the effects of a homeless population through other means, and the costs associated therewith. An approximation of such costs would be as follows (Pomeroy, 2007):

- Psychiatric, in patient bed: \$456.00/day
- Emergency hospital: \$425.00/day
- Ambulance pick-up: \$345.00/day
- Street arrest, community policing: \$320.00/day
- Prison, detention centre: \$140.00/day
- Long term care: \$125.00/day
- Highly supportive housing: \$100.00/day
- Emergency shelter: \$50.00 per person/day
- Medium supportive housing: \$50.00/day
- Low supportive housing: \$40.00/day
- Subsidized self-contained residence for single person: \$25.00/day

Methodology

Gathering firsthand information and data from within the Orillia area is vital to understanding the impact that youth homelessness is having locally. Two separate methodologies were employed to collect such information, one which targeted youth directly and the other which involved community agencies working with local youth.

Youth Surveys

Local youth were provided the opportunity to complete a one-page survey, answering questions relating to their personal experiences. A copy of this youth survey is attached as Appendix "A" to this report. The surveys were distributed between November 2015 and January 2016, through local high schools, Probation and Parole, the Orillia Youth Centre, the John Howard Society, Green Haven, Jubilee House, Children's Aid Society, and the Orillia Learning Centre.

Participation in the survey was entirely voluntary and the ability for youth to choose not to answer any or all of the questions was explained at the top of the page. A definition of homelessness was also provided on the survey before any questions relating to homelessness were asked. One open-ended question near the end of the survey provided the option of leaving the designated writing space blank, or of writing on the back of the survey should the youth wish

to write more. All other questions were closed with options of selecting or not selecting a provided response or of filling in a blank with a self-constructed response, such as period of time the responder has been homeless. The words used to form the questions were kept simple and clear to accommodate varying ages and levels of reading comprehension.

Agency Interviews

The following agencies provided insight regarding their experiences with local youth:

- Ontario Provincial Police
- Ontario Works
- John Howard Society
- Housing Resource Centre
- Green Haven
- Simcoe Muskoka Child Youth and Family Services
- Child Advocacy Centre

These interviews centered upon the following three questions:

1. How frequently does your organization encounter youth aged 16 to 24 experiencing some form of homelessness?
2. Does your organization have a protocol in place to address a youth's homelessness when discovered? If so, what does it involve?
3. How does youth homelessness impact the work that your organization is trying to do?

The agency respondents were also encouraged to expand on their answers and to provide as much additional information as they felt relevant to the topic, which permitted responses unique to each agency to be gathered.

Goals and Concerns

The primary goal of the youth homelessness research being undertaken was to define the scope of the problem locally and to determine whether or not there is a need for a youth shelter in the Orillia area.

Two primary concerns relating to the youth surveys arose. The first was that it would be difficult to get surveys to youth currently experiencing homelessness, as their removal from formal services and educational systems makes their information difficult to capture (Stewart et al., 2010). Youth in such dire and vulnerable circumstances would be less likely to be in regular attendance at school and the majority of surveys were completed in local high school classes. This concern was addressed by having local agencies and organizations that more readily encountered vulnerable youth distribute surveys as well.

The second concern was that youth would not self-identify as homeless, even if they were experiencing it in some form. Youth have a tendency to perceive themselves as making

autonomous choices in leaving a home environment, even when they then find themselves in poor, unstable, or unsafe circumstances (Thompson et al., 2010). The questions in the survey were organized and written in a format designed to reduce this risk. A definition of homelessness was provided before any questions relating to a youth's experience of same were posed. Then, options of experiences which may result in homelessness were outlined for the youth to identify with. Following those options was a list of different examples of homelessness that the youth could select as having experienced. Only after homelessness was defined, factors leading to homelessness were listed, and examples of homelessness were presented for a youth to read and identify with, were youth directly asked about experiencing homelessness. This progression was specifically designed to assist youth with understanding what homelessness can include and overcome the strong tendency to not identify as homeless. Asking about specific forms of homelessness being experienced resulted in both more detailed information being collected and a more accurate figure being calculated of how many youth are facing homelessness, even when they fail to self-identify as such.

Results

Quantitative

A total of 1,864 youth surveys were completed. The following is a summary of the quantitative responses received, expressed in both the number of answers submitted in each category and the corresponding percentages based on the total number of surveys completed. The qualitative data relating to questions 5. c) and 10 are discussed further below.

1. How often do you attend school?

Almost Always: 82.4% (1,535)

Most of the Time: 13.6% (254)

Sometimes: 2.5% (47)

Rarely: 0.4% (7)

Never: 0.6% (11)

Chose not to answer: 0.5% (10)

2. Do you live with your parent(s) or guardian(s)?

No: 3.6% (67)

Yes: 89.2% (1,662)

Chose not to answer: 7.2% (135)

"I have friends who are/have been homeless for long periods. It makes me sad to see them suffer. We don't have enough resources for the homeless."

3. In the past 2 years, have you (check all that apply):

Been kicked out of your home for a night, or longer?

8.3% (154)

Run away from your home for a night, or longer?

9.2% (172)

Seriously considered leaving, or running away from home, but had nowhere to go?

18% (335)

Been in any other situation where you had no place to stay for a night or longer?

6.1% (114)

Lived in an unsafe home environment?

7.2% (134)

Chose not to answer: 72.6% (1,354)

4. In the past 2 years, have you had nowhere to stay and done any of these (check all that apply):

Couch surfed / stayed at someone's house?

13.1% (245)

Slept in a vehicle overnight?

5% (92)

Had to sleep outside?

3.7% (69)

Stayed in an empty or abandoned building?

1.4% (26)

Stayed in a shelter or 'safe haven'?

1.6% (30)

Chose not to answer: 84.2% (1,570)

"My classmate's behaviour and mood has changed since he was kicked out."

5. a) Have you been homeless in the past 2 years?

No: 88.9% (1,657)

Yes: 2.7% (50)

Chose not to answer: 8.4% (157)

5. b) If yes to 5. a), are you currently homeless?

No: 12.2% (227)

Yes: 0.5% (9)

Chose not to answer: 87.3% (1,628)

"I barely escaped homelessness. Sometimes I worry for my future. I was lucky; many are not. As a teen, I was homeless twice and I would love to see better resources out there to cope with the issue."

6. Have you ever been homeless?

No: 89.8% (1,674)

Yes: 5.4% (101)

Chose not to answer: 4.8% (89)

7. Have you had family members who have been homeless?

No: 78.3% (1,459)

Yes: 18.1% (337)

Chose not to answer: 3.6% (68)

8. Do you personally know any youth who are homeless?

No: 80.6% (1,503)

Yes: 16.6% (310)

Chose not to answer: 2.8% (51)

9. Do you think Orillia needs a youth homeless shelter?

No: 6.9% (129)

Yes: 53.3% (993)

Not sure: 37.7% (703)

Chose not to answer: 2.1% (39)

11. Are you:

Male: 48.6% (906)

Female: 47.4% (884)

Prefer not to answer: 2.5% (46)

Other: 0.6% (11)

Chose not to answer: 0.9% (17)

12. Your age:

13: 2.2% (41)

14: 28% (522)

15: 24% (448)

16: 20.6% (383)

17: 16.9% (315)

18: 3.6% (67)

19-24: 2.2% (41)

Chose not to answer: 2.5% (47)

“Our youth are our legacies, they are our future. We need to shelter them and rehabilitate their confidence. They need a safe environment to stay, to become better than they were before homelessness and to have access to community services and outreach programs.”

Qualitative

Of the 25 responses to question 5c – if currently homeless, how long have you been homeless? – 12 responses confirmed that the youth answering was not homeless. The following are the remaining answers relating to duration of homelessness:

- i) Off and on for the past 6 months

- ii) Off and on
- iii) 1 year
- iv) 10 years
- v) 3
- vi) 7 months
- vii) 3 days
- viii) Not long
- ix) 3 weeks
- x) 4 months
- xi) 1 week
- xii) Forever

There were 210 responses to question 10, “How has homelessness affected you, and or others in your life?” Some of these responses are quoted within the body of this report. The full text of all responses is attached as Appendix “C” to this report.

Analysis

Many youth in the Orillia area are facing turmoil which can result in homelessness. Out of the 1,864 youth who completed the survey, 510 noted that in the last two years they had been kicked out of their home, run away, seriously considered running away but had nowhere to go, had no place to stay, and/or lived in an unsafe home environment. A total of 294 youth noted that in the past 2 years they experienced some form of homelessness, the most common being couch surfing (245 youth). The O.P.P confirmed in their interview that youth leaving their family home and couch surfing is something that their officers encounter frequently in Orillia. Ontario Works also reported that the most common form of homelessness they encounter is couch surfing, which increases in the winter months. Another 92 youth reported through surveys that they had slept in a vehicle, 69 slept outside, 26 slept in an empty or abandoned building, and 30 in a shelter or ‘safe haven’. This means that approximately 4 out of every 25 youths in the Orillia area have experienced some form of homelessness in the past two years.

Despite these results, only 50 youth actually self-identified as being homeless in the past two years, although another 157 chose not to answer that question. Youth have a strong tendency not to identify with the label of “homeless”, particularly if they are not sleeping in the streets. The O.P.P. referred to “flopouses” as places with open door policies, with youth coming and going regularly, despite the residences not always being safe environments for them. There were 9 youth who did report that they were currently homeless at the time the survey was taken and 101 youth reported being homeless at some point in their lives, with another 89 not answering the question. A total of 310 youth reported personally knowing other youth who are homeless.

Current Shelter and Emergency Services

Orillia currently has one emergency shelter for men (Lighthouse Christian Ministries) as well as Salvation Army Motel Voucher and Victim Crisis Motel Voucher programs. The Simcoe County Emergency Shelter Database Analysis of 2015 indicates that of the 1141 individuals entering a shelter in Simcoe County during 2015, 29% (332) were between the ages of 16 and 24. 217 of these individuals entering one of these shelters identified as coming from Orillia. Youth Haven in Barrie, the closest youth shelter to Orillia, housed 15% of all individuals entering emergency shelters in 2015. People using the emergency shelter system in 2015 were primarily between the ages of 16 to 24, male, English speaking, single, Canadian citizens, not accompanied by families and with little to no income (Fox and Pozgaj-Jones, 2016).

Green Haven Shelter for Women estimated 25% to 30% of the women they assist each year fall between the ages of 16 and 24. This would total 20 to 25 young women each year. While the primary issue these women would be facing would relate to domestic violence and abuse, this distress is often complicated by the risk of homelessness or precarious housing.

The local John Howard Society estimated that approximately 2 out of every 10 of their youth clients are experiencing some form of homelessness. Ontario Works estimated they had approximately 75 homeless clients, but noted that those with short term or intermittent homelessness are not captured by this figure. Further, those under the age of 18 are not typically recipients of Ontario Works as a result of eligibility criteria. The O.P.P. and John Howard Society both reported having no formal protocol in place to address youth homelessness when encountered. O.P.P. officers may refer youth in perceived danger or with nowhere to go to the youth shelter in Barrie or the local hospital. The Orillia Housing Resource Centre stated their only option to address homelessness in local youth is to refer them to Youth Haven in Barrie. The John Howard Society also noted youth in Orillia travelled to Youth Haven, which is at capacity, receiving youth from as far away as Collingwood. The O.P.P. does maintain their Foot Patrol Strategy and Situation Tables which involve contact with social service agencies in the community to consider risk factors and possible interventions as required; however, they did express a desire to have more accessible resources and supportive organizations in the community to consult with and to offer youth as needed. The John Howard society noted how homelessness undermines the work they are attempting to conduct with youth. If youth do not have a stable residence, if their basic needs are not being met, this in turn prevents them from being able to focus on secondary concerns, such as programing through the Society. The Orillia Housing Resource Centre noted staff were left feeling helpless. If Youth Haven is at capacity, there is nothing else that they can currently do for homeless youth in Orillia.

"If there is a youth shelter here in Orillia with beds and a supportive environment, the youth who suffer with unsafe housing/homelessness will have a chance to change their paths and this will have a great impact on everyone in this community."

Recommendations

It is recommended that supportive emergency accommodations be developed to assist youth in the Orillia area who are facing homelessness or the risk thereof. These accommodations would not simply function as emergency housing, but also as a source of structured assistance and services designed to help youth in the community become successful adults.

Simcoe Muskoka Child and Family Services noted that when a youth lacks adequate housing, everything else in their life is put on hold. Counselling sessions, schooling, medical and dental appointments are often missed as the youth seeks housing. Such periods of interruption to crucial self-care can be very challenging and certainly is very impactful.

The Child Advocacy Centre emphasized the need for structured programming and wrap-around supports for vulnerable youth. Housing is essential; however, providing a roof is not enough. Youth need to develop life skills, receive academic support and assistance with earning employment. Youth may lack a regular physician, have mental health needs, require medication, have experienced trauma or may benefit from counselling. Green Haven also stressed the unique needs of homeless youth relating to life skills, the challenges involved in managing on their own, developing a positive and responsible support network, completing their education, finding employment, managing their finances, accessing transportation, and finding housing. Youth face all of these challenges over and above their developmental and emotional needs.

These suggestions are supported by research, which stresses the importance of identifying and responding to the unique needs of youth and addressing the barriers they face, not only in housing but in all aspects of their development and maintenance (Gaetz, 2014a; Gaetz, 2014b; Stewart et al., 2010). Becoming a successful, independent adult involves being able to financially support oneself and the ability and maturity to make good decisions, engage in self-care, develop and sustain positive relationships, and have a meaningful life (Gaetz, 2014a).

It is recommended that the supportive emergency accommodations built for youth in Orillia be sure to include partnerships with local community agencies and services in order to assist youth with all of the challenges they face in their transition to independent adulthood. Such partnerships could include the following:

- Medical and dental care
- Addiction and counselling services
- Education supports
- Employment assistance and skill development
- Life skills training, including financial management

“Homelessness impedes many basic things we need and people in my life are/were not getting proper basic rights to shelter, food, etc. It’s unfair to them.”

The size, location, and staffing needs of the proposed supportive emergency accommodation for youth in Orillia would depend in large part on funding, community support and the recommendations of partnering agencies and services. However, the O.P.P. did suggest a location with easy access to amenities, public transit and schools, but at some distance from the downtown core.

Conclusion

A significant number of youth in the Orillia area are facing homelessness; however, this problem remains largely hidden to the general public. Youth are quite vulnerable as a result of their age, inexperience with life, and reliance on adult caregivers. Youth experiencing homelessness typically are also facing trauma and upheaval in their lives. A lack of housing and supports for youth undermines their ability to gain education, skills, employment, and to develop into productive, self-sufficient adults, which in turn negatively impacts the communities in which they reside. Creating supportive emergency accommodations for youth in Orillia would allow them to receive the services and assistance needed to help them with all of the challenges they face in their development, as well as provide a safe place for them to stay when they have nowhere else to turn.

Youth facing turmoil can be redirected from lives of instability and danger towards growth and productivity, benefiting individuals and the communities to which they contribute; however, responsive emergency services will not end homelessness. Strategies required to prevent youth from becoming homeless involve complex social issues and requires ongoing research and support as well. While these strategies are considered, emergency services can be used to assist those already in need of care and support. Orillia, as a community, has the ability to provide vulnerable youth with the support they are lacking, to provide them with the opportunity to change their lives for the better.

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Appendix A: Youth Survey

Orillia Youth Homelessness Survey, 2015

Your participation in this survey is voluntary. You can answer as many or as few questions as you are comfortable with. Your answers will be completely anonymous. The data from these surveys will be used to determine the need for a youth homeless shelter in Orillia. Please answer honestly.

1. How often do you attend school?

Almost Always Most of the time Sometimes Rarely Never

2. Do you live with your parent(s) or guardian(s)?

No Yes

Definition: Homelessness describes the situation of an individual or family without stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it.

3. In the past two years, have you: (check all that apply)

- been kicked out of your home for a night, or longer?
- run away from your home for a night, or longer?
- seriously considered leaving, or running away from home, but had nowhere to go?
- been in any other situation where you had no place to stay for a night, or longer?
- lived in an unsafe home environment?

4. In the past two years, have you had nowhere to stay and done any of these? (check all that apply)

- couch surfed / stayed at someone's house?
- slept in a vehicle overnight?
- had to sleep outside?
- stayed in an empty or abandoned building?
- stayed in a shelter or 'safe haven'?

5. a) Have you been homeless in the past two years? No (skip to Q6) Yes (answer Q5b)

b) If 'Yes' to 5a), are you currently homeless? No (skip to Q6) Yes (answer Q5c)

c) If 'Yes' to 5b), how long have you been homeless? _____

6. Have you ever been homeless? No Yes

7. Have you had family members who have been homeless? No Yes

8. Do you personally know any youth who are homeless? No Yes

9. Do you think Orillia needs a youth homeless shelter? No Yes Not sure

10. How has homelessness affected you, and/or others in your life?

Leave this question blank if you have been unaffected. Write on the back of this page if you need more space for your response.

11. Are you: Male Female Prefer not to answer Other (specify:)

12. Your age: (circle one) 13 14 15 16 17 18 19-24

For questions or to arrange for pick-up, please contact Kevin Gangloff at the Orillia Youth Centre by calling (705) 325-8082 or by email: orilliayouthcentre@rogers.com

Appendix B: Youth Responses Regarding Impact of Homelessness

Responses to Question 10 of the Youth Survey

“How has homelessness affected you, and/or others in your life?”

**recorded as written on the youth surveys, listed in descending order of data entry date*

“yuppp” [3/18/2016 2:18 PM]

“grew up to fast” [3/18/2016 2:16 PM]

“Sometimes I need to leave home for a few days so I can think.....” [3/1/2016 12:42 PM]

“A good friend of mine has been homeless.” [3/1/2016 12:33 PM]

“Homelessness, threat of becoming homeless, and having an unsafe/under-maintained apartment has affected both myself and my daughter in these ways: -high and difficult to manage stress levels, which impact well-being and anxiety levels; -increased feelings of shame, which affect how I felt about myself and my belief of being a good mom; - being put into situations that forced me to rely on unsafe people. I think Orillia needs a youth homeless shelter because homelessness, threat of homelessness, and unsafe/under-maintained available housing affects EVERYONE. It has an impact on families struggling to hold together for their own issues without proper healthy tools to cope; it affects the teens and youths who are treated with disrespect, abuse and are unwanted or feel unwanted; it has a huge impact on the children of anyone - youth, adult, male and female parents - who are homeless or in an unsafe situation to have a roof; it has an impact on the teachers who guide and shape the children in these situations; it affects families of friends who have unsafe or no place to live; the people in the community who don't even know homeless people because of the kinds of opportunities that people with limit choices in dire situations feel are available; it affects every single community resource and the people behind planning, running, working, and volunteering for them. Also, when any person - male, female, youth, adult - feels shame because of homelessness, threat of homelessness and unsafe housing, it greatly impacts their sense of worth which has an influence on how they feel about belonging to a community and their ability to contribute to that community whatever their talents, skills, and aptitudes. I strongly believe that most who struggle with homelessness have needed support in their youth [excluding mass job loss in a community where many have little-nothing]. If there is a youth shelter here in Orillia with beds and a supportive environment, the youth who suffer with unsafe housing/homelessness will have a chance to change their paths and this will have a great impact on everyone in this community.” [2/16/2016 10:03 PM]

“Depressing and scary.” [2/16/2016 9:53 PM]

“I barely escaped homelessness. Sometimes I worry for my future. I was lucky; many are not. As a teen, I was homeless twice, and I would love to see better resources out there to cope with the issue.” [2/16/2016 9:52 PM]

“My mom had a really bad childhood and now has anger issues and is bipolar now, so it's kind of difficult to talk to her.” [12/21/2015 3:49 PM]

“It has made me more independent and able to care for myself.” [12/21/2015 3:46 PM]

“My aunt has been living in homeless shelter for a few years. “ [12/21/2015 3:44 PM]

“Father was bankrupt, so he had to sleep at his work place. “ [12/21/2015 3:43 PM]

“It's sad AF” [12/21/2015 3:40 PM]

“My brother was homeless during winter 2014. I found it hard to sleep.” [12/21/2015 3:40 PM]

“It's not right for homeless people to live on the streets because maybe their parents couldn't afford to keep their kids clean and if your not , you can't do anything because your gonna have abuse or anything ride so they cause trouble and will take their life down the wrong way because they don't care about anything” [12/21/2015 3:38 PM]

“Being homeless, living in my cousins basement for 6 months has made me stronger and more appreciative. I am to now live in a beautiful home. Not a house, a home.” [12/21/2015 3:38 PM]

“Has not affected me.” [12/21/2015 3:37 PM]

“It hasn't” [12/21/2015 3:37 PM]

“Makes me feel concerned and bad for them” [12/21/2015 3:36 PM]

“It hasn't really affected me. However I've seen it effect some else for a period of time.” [12/21/2015 3:36 PM]

“I feel sad for them, because most of them don't deserve it while others squander their time in leisure time and slacking off. Nobody deserves to be in a homelessness.” [12/21/2015 3:35 PM]

“I know of a youth who was homeless, he now lives with a family friend of ours.” [12/21/2015 3:34 PM]

“It hasn't effected me personally, but I couldn't imagine not having a safe place to stay at night.” [12/21/2015 3:33 PM]

“My dad is homeless and I don't get to see him anymore and it's hard” [12/21/2015 3:32 PM]

“In ways hard to explain. I'm always trying to help people get on their feet. Because of being on my own since I was 14 years old.” [12/21/2015 3:31 PM]

“Homelessness impedes many basic things we need and people in my life are/were not getting proper basic rights to shelter, food, etc. It's unfair to them.” [12/21/2015 3:30 PM]

“Worried my brother and sisters, also my father. Mother didn't care because she kicked me out.” [12/21/2015 3:29 PM]

“I was homeless by choice” [12/21/2015 3:29 PM]

“I've had family members that have seen homeless people and gave them what they had left and didn't have money to back home” [12/21/2015 3:29 PM]

“It hasn't affected me but I know it affected others not having anywhere to go or stay” [12/21/2015 3:28] PM

“I know a girl who has been couch surfing since she was 16 and she is currently turning 18” [12/21/2015 3:28 PM]

“I was couch surfing for 3-4 years. I was 16 when I became homeless and I know of many youth/young adults that are in this situation now.” [12/21/2015 3:28 PM]

“omg never bin homeless” [12/21/2015 3:27 PM]

“I knew a man that was once homeless, a close family friend. When I was little we found a little turtle with a broken shell, he spend his only money on food for the turtle. He gave it to me and I helped it get better.” [12/21/2015 3:26 PM]

“It's been hard because we have somewhat no where to go” [12/21/2015 3:23 PM]

“I feel bad for people who are homeless, I think Orillia getting a shelter for youth is a great idea. Got shelters for women and men. Why not one for youths” [12/21/2015 3:22 PM]

“Nothing really.” [12/21/2015 3:19 PM]

“I've seen many youth affected by homelessness, whether they were kicked out, evicted or willingly chose to leave a bad environment but had nowhere to go. I've seen friends loose all hope because they no longer had things many of us take for granted daily such as a warm bed, a hot shower and clean clothing. I've witnessed multiple downward spirals of friends who have lost all hope all because they had absolutely nowhere to go, they've turned to drugs, illicit activity such as theft, they've put a halt in their education as a result of homelessness and pure embarrassment. They loose all self esteem and self worth and are constantly wondering "Why me. What am I going to eat. Where can I sleep tonight". Our youth are our legacies, they are our future. We need to shelter them and rehabilitate their confidence. They need a safe environment

to stay, to become better than they were before homelessness and to have access to community services and outreach programs.” [12/21/2015 3:17 PM]

“I think Orillia should have a youth homeless shelter but seeing the way people are that wouldn't be the first place they would go. We would feel uncomfortable or embarrassed” [12/21/2015 3:17 PM]

“It hasn't, not really” [12/21/2015 3:15 PM]

“Although I've never been homeless, I have witnessed and know many people that are or were homeless. It is unfortunate to see that homelessness still exists in Canada, a "first" world country. Back where I'm from, it was an everyday occurrence to see families getting kicked out of there home just because they bought food instead of rent. “ [12/21/2015 3:14 PM]

“Makes me upset seeing them outside in cold” [12/21/2015 3:13 PM]

“It has affected me by how so many people are homeless and have nowhere to go it hurts me to see other out in the cold suffering” [12/21/2015 3:12 PM]

“While I haven't been personally affected by homelessness, I have come across many areas where the homeless have had to resort to creating their own make-shift homes from fallen trees and such. It saddens me to know that they must resort to such measures, especially as the weather worsens. Homelessness for all sorts of people, not just youth, is a huge issue that I have often come across and would like to help if I had the resources.” [12/21/2015 3:10 PM]

“Not really but for some I checked yes because we had to stay in a hotel or camp for awhile while our house was getting redone so we like technically didn't have a home to stay in.” [12/21/2015 3:09 PM]

“I do volunteer projects in the summer to aid those in cities who are struggling, particularly dealing with those that are homeless. So, homelessness affects how I appreciate my home life and how I view problems in the world.” [12/21/2015 3:08 PM]

“Makes me sad when I see homeless kids” [12/21/2015 3:07 PM]

“Stop taking things for granted. Needs a women's shelter that is not just for battered women” [12/21/2015 3:07 PM]

“Reference #4 - 'had to sleep outside" - I chose to” [12/21/2015 3:05 PM]

“We need a homeless shelter” [12/21/2015 3:03 PM]

“I had a friend who had slept in the park for a long time, I referred him to sleep over at my friend's house.” [12/21/2015 3:01 PM]

“My classmate's behaviour and mood has changed since he was kicked out.” [12/21/2015 2:59 PM]

“My cousin was kicked out of her house by her parents and had to live with her grandparents.” [12/21/2015 2:58 PM]

“I've had friends in situations where they can't be at home and people won't know where they are because they move around so often. They meet some scary people.” [12/21/2015 2:57 PM]

“Sick, frost bite” [12/21/2015 2:57 PM]

“It hasn't” [12/21/2015 2:56 PM]

“It's made me thankful that I have a home and friends/family who've helped me when I needed a place to stay” [12/21/2015 2:56 PM]

“Homelessness has affected me in many different ways such as seeing it on the streets and not known what to do or who to tell” [12/21/2015 2:55 PM]

“When I was little my mom would always tell me about how towns should have homeless shelters cuz I have/use to live in a womans shelter for a while I was little.” [12/21/2015 2:55 PM]

“It's effected me when my parents split up because my siblings, my mom and I had to live in a trailer.” [12/21/2015 2:54 PM]

“Some of my friends have had this problem countless times, they get depressed, I want to help them but can't always.” [12/21/2015 2:53 PM]

“It hasn't affected me personally. But I have been in fights with my family but couldn't leave because I had nowhere to go.” [12/21/2015 2:52 PM]

“I have been kicked oh before for a few days. thats it. I have friends who are/have been homeless for long periods, it makes me sad to see them suffer. We don't have enough resource for the homeless.” [12/21/2015 2:51 PM]

“My older sister would be kicked out or runaway constantly when she was in highschool. I was worried about her constantly.” [12/21/2015 2:50 PM]

“It hasn't really, I haven't been around homeless people.” [12/21/2015 2:48 PM]

“It is never good for someone to be outside all the time regardless of the effect it has on me. Everyone deserves to have a roof over their head and a bed to sleep in. Most of the people who are homelessness are not there of their own volition. Help them.” [12/21/2015 2:48 PM]

“I see it on the streets of Toronto and if I have change on me I give it to a homeless person” [12/21/2015 2:48 PM]

“not to sure.” [12/21/2015 2:47 PM]

“I feel sympathy when I see a homeless person and I wish I was able to help in some way.” [12/21/2015 2:46 PM]

“My friend gets kicked out a lot.” [12/21/2015 2:46 PM]

“Never had any interaction with them” [12/21/2015 2:45 PM]

“Kids are without a place to stay every night. Personally not me but this shelter is needed.” [12/21/2015 2:44 PM]

“No I have only seen homeless in bigger cities” [12/21/2015 2:44 PM]

“When I see people who are homeless I feel really upset but I understand what they're going through. Everyone has hard times at least once.” [12/21/2015 2:43 PM]

“My sons father lives in his car. It affects his relationship with his son” [12/21/2015 2:43 PM]

“When you see homeless people you feel bad and it makes you want to help.” [12/21/2015 2:41 PM]

“Not me personally nor anyone I know in Orillia. I don't know many people here” [12/21/2015 2:41 PM]

“It made me stronger but it also sucks being a teen and feeling like nobody's there for you” [12/21/2015 2:40 PM]

“Cause you have different homeless people in the streets so they could get hit by a car or even commit suicide.” [12/21/2015 2:39 PM]

“The chose that I made be I was homeless, stealing next” [12/21/2015 2:38 PM]

“It sucks, I ended up staying in the hospital for a couple of nights, admitted in the psych ward due to @home problems. Sleeping in a car is shit and I've been in many dangerous situations due to homelessness.” [12/21/2015 2:35 PM]

“I was homeless so the actions that occurred have changed how I see the world” [12/21/2015 2:35 PM]

“Don't always have somewhere to stay, unwelcome, etc. have previously had to stay with friends and family” [12/21/2015 2:34 PM]

“I live with my daughter in a rooming house. We have people coming and going all the time. I have had things stolen from me and don't feel safe there but I can't. Afford more than 700 a

month cause both me and my daughter have problems with sugar levels so all the money I get goes to food. We still don't have enough even with food banks" [12/21/2015 2:33 PM]

"It's sad to see someone with no home." [12/21/2015 2:32 PM]

"I know many people at school that have a bad environment at home and they wish to leave but don't have a place to go" [12/21/2015 2:32 PM]

"Homelessness affects me because when I'm walking down the street and I see a homeless person, I feel like I need to help them." [12/21/2015 2:30 PM]

"Cold nights, not enough to eat, tired all the time" [12/21/2015 2:30 PM]

"It is a must." [12/21/2015 2:29 PM]

"My cousin is pregnant and 18 and is living in an unsafe environment and she has no place to go and is stuck where she is not safe while she is pregnant." [12/21/2015 2:29 PM]

"homelessness has not effected me but i still think that orillia could use a teens homeless shelter" [12/21/2015 2:28 PM]

"It hasn't" [12/21/2015 2:27 PM]

"Makes me sad to know that in this day and age that this happens" [12/21/2015 2:27 PM]

"When my family see homeless people they want to take them to a shelter but other in the vehicle said no don't pick them up" [12/21/2015 2:26 PM]

"It has made me appreciated my family and home" [12/21/2015 2:26 PM]

"When my dad was my age he left on the first day of school and lived by backpack in Toronto for a year" [12/21/2015 2:23 PM]

"Stayed at my best friend's house just because my mom was being rude." [12/21/2015 2:22 PM]

"Gives them a place to stay" [12/21/2015 2:21 PM]

"Seeing people who want to/could do so many things with their lives because they are intelligent and generally good people but they don't have the basic necessities they need to even live, let alone succeed." [12/21/2015 2:21 PM]

"I don't talk to my dad's side of the family so I have no idea." [12/21/2015 2:21 PM]

"Seeing homeless people makes me sad and depressed because I have the things they don't" [12/21/2015 2:20 PM]

“I think they (Orillia) should have a 24 hour place for homelessness people to go.” [12/21/2015 2:20 PM]

“It has changed the way I think about being homeless it doesn't always mean living on the street” [12/21/2015 2:18 PM]

“My brother's friends get kicked out a lot and stay at my house and their presence makes me uncomfortable and unsafe in my own house.” [12/21/2015 2:18 PM]

“My parents divorced and with loss of jobs. My sister and I have had come it not any temporary living arrangements.” [12/21/2015 2:18 PM]

“My cousins were kicked out of their house” [12/21/2015 2:17 PM]

“It hasn't affected me on a personal on to have the knowledge that young kids/teens may have a life without the protection of a house or safe environment motivates me to want to be more knowingly on this topic and see things being done to help.” [12/21/2015 2:17 PM]

“I don't know I was just scared and depressed” [12/21/2015 2:16 PM]

“My family puts on a Christmas dinner for the homeless or less fortunate in our community. Personally, it breaks my heart and we need more homeless shelters, especially in the winter.” [12/21/2015 2:15 PM]

“I used to be in a shelter but it was kind of fun.” [12/21/2015 2:15 PM]

“homelessness has affect a family friend of mine, he had to live at other peoples houses because he did feel well come in his own home! (not me)” [12/21/2015 2:12 PM]

“A few people I know have almost been kicked out, so I believe that shelter would greatly help the not so lucky ones.” [12/21/2015 2:11 PM]

“My foster brother was couch surfing for a long time before he came to my family because he left home at a young age.” [12/21/2015 2:10 PM]

“I don't think it has” [12/21/2015 2:09 PM]

“Cousin ended up turning to drugs and alcohol and got addicted. Lived in cars and abandoned buildings.” [12/21/2015 2:06 PM]

“I think a youth shelter in Orillia is a really good idea because I know many people that have been kicked out with nowhere to go.” [12/21/2015 2:03 PM]

“After my uncles girlfriend left with the kids they had to go to a safe haven because she wouldn't get a job. My cousins were 3,4,4 and 6. If that safe haven wasn't there those toddlers would of slept under a bridge. That place saved them.” [12/21/2015 2:03 PM]

“my family is not poor. Mum kicked me out because she found out that knew she was cheating. Sad” [12/21/2015 2:03 PM]

“I used to live in an abandon shack so I know how it feels” [12/21/2015 2:01 PM]

“When I as younger my mom, sister and I lived in a woman's shelter for about half a year after staying at my moms friend for a few months” [12/21/2015 2:00 PM]

“It affected my Aunt because she had no home for 6 years when she was my age!” [12/21/2015 2:00 PM]

“I know a few people who have been homeless, and they are very affected by it, mentally & physically. They don't have good relationships with their parents at all.” [12/21/2015 1:58 PM]

“My boyfriend's uncle was homeless and away from overdose” [12/21/2015 1:57 PM]

“Not having anywhere to go when your in a really bad environment is really hard and takes a toll on your mental health” [12/21/2015 1:57 PM]

“I know people whose parents have kicked them out late at night who end up walking around all night or sleeping on benches and staying at friend's house.” [12/21/2015 1:56 PM]

“It's really tough to see a close friend going through not having somewhere to sleep, shower, eat” [12/21/2015 1:56 PM]

“you feel insecure and worthless with high anxiety” [12/21/2015 1:55 PM]

“My house burnt down and we didn't have a home for 2 months” [12/21/2015 1:54 PM]

“Homelessness has not affected me personally but the amount of people even more so teenagers is horrible they should have a safe place to step and not worry about the weather elements hurting them” [12/21/2015 1:54 PM]

“Sometimes my brother gets kicked out and it would be nice if there was a shelter so that if he can't stay with a friend he can go to a shelter” [12/21/2015 1:52 PM]

“My uncles has been homeless a lot of the time so he lives with my grandma often” [12/21/2015 1:51 PM]

“Not much, it was for a very short time when I was young. I barely remember it.” [12/21/2015 1:49 PM]

“Brings back thoughts of V. Nom” [12/21/2015 1:49 PM]

“They aren't themselves.” [12/21/2015 1:48 PM]

“It's really hard on yourself and family especially.” [12/21/2015 1:48 PM]

“My uncle has been homeless for a large part of his life” [12/21/2015 1:47 PM]

“My uncle has been homeless and stayed with us.” [12/21/2015 1:44 PM]

“When friends of my family have become homeless my family has taken them in. On 2 separate occasions homelessness have found shelter in my home.” [12/21/2015 1:43 PM]

“I stayed at a women's shelter with my brother and mother twice. I was younger then, the last time we had to stay there was when I was still in elementary school--so perhaps grade 6. I was not ashamed, I understood what it meant to live there and why we had to. I actually liked it, everyone at the shelter was quite nice. Although I know that not everyone there might have tried taking it in the most positive way either. It's not always easy to. Sometime I would get so depressed, how could we be going through this again? I thought. My mom relied on me with her problems, which I think is why I now need to always know what's going on. I do not blame her for treating me as an adult. I am eager to reach adulthood, but sometimes I would get cold. Living at a women's shelter has taught me much about people's thoughts and how to appreciate the little and small things. I agree strongly to have a youth centre. My mom and I hadn't a clue that there was a place to stay and we were so blessed when we found out. We would have been a wreck without having somewhere to stay, I know.” [12/21/2015 1:43 PM]

“Homelessness hasn't affected me but people around Orillia are homeless and need shelter.” [12/21/2015 1:42 PM]

“It makes me sad and others” [12/21/2015 1:40 PM]

“Homelessness affects everyone in different ways” [12/21/2015 1:39 PM]

“When my father was young, he was kicked out of his home by his step-mom. All I know is that he had to spend his nights sleeping in the back of a laundromat, he doesn't talk much about his childhood. He lived in Orillia.” [12/21/2015 1:35 PM]

“Some of my friends have been kicked out of their house and seeing them be emotionally hurt by these things really hurts me” [12/21/2015 1:34 PM]

“It has not affected me before.” [12/21/2015 1:33 PM]

“my mother was homeless when she was younger.” [12/21/2015 1:32 PM]

“It has affected others in my life by getting kicked out or having no money.” [12/21/2015 1:31 PM]

“My uncle was homeless for a little bit till he contacted us and told us what happened then everything was sorted out.” [12/21/2015 1:30 PM]

“My uncle's friend was homeless and he felt bad for his friend.” [12/21/2015 1:28 PM]

“september last year my house had a kitchen fire. so, my family had to look for a new place to stay. we stayed at a hotel and cottage until february while we waited for insurance to fix our house. during that time I got dressed and my grades fell.” [11/5/2015 10:20 AM]

“It affected me because I didn't have a stable home because of family problems so I would leave and now I live with my brother but it is still tough sometimes. They should make a homeless shelter in Orillia.” [11/5/2015 10:19 AM]

“someone I know had no where to go” [11/5/2015 10:16 AM]

“I think people need to focus on homeless shelters more because there are a lot of homeless people.” [11/5/2015 10:13 AM]

“I've give my friends places to stay, help them get jobs so they can afford apartments, and house people” [11/5/2015 10:13 AM]

“it has really affected me...” [11/5/2015 10:08 AM]

“It has not :)” [11/5/2015 10:04 AM]

“Boyfriend's best friend and cousin are both currently homeless.” [11/5/2015 10:03 AM]

“My friend is currently homeless.” [11/5/2015 10:02 AM]

“It hasn't.” [11/5/2015 10:00 AM]

“It hasn't really.” [11/5/2015 9:59 AM]

“There is a homeless lady that lives at the end of my street.” [11/5/2015 9:37 AM]

“It hasn't really affected me or others in my life.” [11/5/2015 9:29 AM]

“My mother worked at a shelter so I would go in and spend christmas with them.” [11/5/2015 9:27 AM]

“I saw a homeless man downtown Orillia last Tuesday.” [11/5/2015 9:26 AM]

“Made me mature faster” [11/4/2015 9:58 PM]

“I have divorced parents and I don't want to stay at either's house but I have nowhere else to go” [11/4/2015 10:12 AM]

“my mom kicked me out” [11/4/2015 10:09 AM]

“Lost friends because they were homeless, got very sick because I was homeless for 1 week.” [11/4/2015 9:46 AM]

“IDK” [11/4/2015 9:42 AM]

“I don't know.” [11/4/2015 9:37 AM]

“Every time I eat pizza I walk past two homeless people and they ask me for it and if affects me because I say no I want my pizza #endhomelessness2016” [11/4/2015 9:36 AM]

“There are people I know that did not have a place to live, and or a safe place to sleep.” [11/4/2015 9:29 AM]

“it was only 1 night, I ran away from my Dad's, I stayed with my mom so it wasn't that bad.” [11/4/2015 9:29 AM]

“It's sad to see some of my friends homeless.” [11/4/2015 9:28 AM]

“Don't want to talk about it.” [11/4/2015 9:23 AM]

“one time a friend of my mom's had to stay with my family for like a year” [11/3/2015 10:25 AM]

“nope” [11/3/2015 10:23 AM]

“A girl that used to be on my bus got kicked out of her house, her dad was beating her...her mom wasn't in the picture...” [11/3/2015 9:46 AM]

“My dad never had the option to leave home and he ended up in jail because of it.” [11/3/2015 9:44 AM]

“Homelessness has not personally affected me but I have had friends who had been/ kicked out and needed a place to stay (another friends house).” [11/3/2015 9:43 AM]

“My family member was left without any support and had many resulting physical and mental problems. There were no shelters and the care system did nothing. This is still unresolved.” [11/3/2015 9:41 AM]

“it bothers me that people are homeless” [11/3/2015 9:35 AM]

“I did not know where my cousin was until I reconnected with him and found him, also my best friend was kicked out after a problem happened at home and is now living with her boyfriend.” [11/3/2015 9:33 AM]

“it sucks” [11/3/2015 9:25 AM]

“I don't know” [11/3/2015 9:23 AM]

“I don't want to answer this.” [11/2/2015 10:30 AM]

“it has pulled my mom and I far apart” [11/2/2015 10:27 AM]

“Nope” [11/2/2015 10:18 AM]

“when ever I see homeless people it makes me kind of sad and I feel bad for them” [11/2/2015 10:16 AM]

“One of my friends had to steal and do illegal things in order to be able to buy things for himself.” [11/2/2015 10:06 AM]

“It hasn't affected me” [11/2/2015 10:01 AM]

“It hasn't affected my life.” [11/2/2015 9:58 AM]

“It hasen't” [11/2/2015 9:49 AM]

“many things difficult for my family” [11/2/2015 9:45 AM]

“I cannot say I have ever noticed homelessness in Orillia, so no it hasn't really affected me.” [11/2/2015 9:38 AM]

“I have a friend who was kicked out and lived with us for a week--> she was allowed to go back into her home after that week. Another friend who was kicked out for coming out as a trans-male and not allowed back into his home unless he refers to himself as a girl, Grace. People think homeless doesn't exist here in Orillia. Awareness must be spread.” [11/2/2015 9:37 AM]

“have not been affected” [11/2/2015 9:36 AM]

“My aunt's brother was homeless for approximately 3-6 months.” [11/2/2015 9:33 AM]

“I have a friend who gets kicked out often. He is always looking for a place to stay and I hate to see him suffer” [11/2/2015 9:33 AM]

“I have not been directly affected by Homelessness. But there are many people who are and they feel unloved and unwanted a turn to bad things like drugs and violence. People should always be able to go somewhere where they are loved and welcomed.” [11/2/2015 9:32 AM]

“other than knowing of the existence of it, and it making me think prior to making decisions that affect people in a negative way, no” [11/2/2015 9:28 AM]

“It hasn't affected me” [11/2/2015 9:15 AM]

“hasn't” [11/2/2015 9:14 AM]

“It hasn't” [11/1/2015 7:09 PM]

“I’ve had two friends that are currently couch surfing, I don’t know too much about who, I just know that they are suffering” [10/30/2015 10:51 AM]

“Had friend stay at my house for a couple days.” [10/30/2015 10:47 AM]

“personal effect” [10/30/2015 10:46 AM]

“i have a friend who was homeless for almost a year I believe” [10/30/2015 10:42 AM]

“I’ve had lots of friends kicked out of their homes, some have stayed with me” [10/30/2015 10:37 AM]

“It makes me feel sad for others” [10/27/2015 8:39 PM]

“Got myself an apartment” [10/27/2015 8:36 PM]