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NEWS LOCAL

Huron House Boys' Home was founded 45 years ago



By Tyler Kula, Sarnia Observer
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Huron House Boys' Home executive director Don Adam stands at the sign for the Bright's Grove refuge for wayward boys. The mental health facility was holding an open house in honour of its 45th anniversary Thursday. Handout/Sarnia Observer/Postmedia Network

In its 45 years as a residence and refuge for wayward youth, the Huron House Boys' Home has helped more than 1,100 boys, says its executive director.

"That's fairly impressive," said Don Adam.

Many, typically arriving at the mental health facility's doorstep after suffering physical, mental or emotional abuse at home, have gone on to further education and become productive members of society, he said.

That legacy, in part, was what was on display when the 1970-started, 12-acre Bright's Grove-area haven was set to open its doors to the public for a 45th-anniversary open house celebration Thursday.

"The reputation of the boys' home is fantastic, but people don't really understand what we do here, and we want them to," Adam said.

The home takes in 12 to 18-year olds, typically referred via the Family Counselling Centre or children's aid societies (CAS), Adam said.

Through programs like character building, anger management, substance abuse, resiliency, stress management, job search, life skills, independent living and others, they're prepared to either set out on their own, he said, or repair relationships with their family and return home.

"We have youth with a variety of challenges, some with nowhere to go, and we're home for them," he said.

The boys engage in sports and arts programs on site, attend school in the community and play in Sarnia Minor Athletic Association leagues, he said.

"They are involved in community jobs and giving back to the community," he said, noting that includes raking leaves and mowing lawns for area churches, community groups and agencies.

About 85 per cent of those who come through, along with parents and, in the case of CAS kids, workers, dub the experience at Huron House Boys Home a success, he said.

"That's very high."

Funding from the province only covers about one-third of its \$1.4-million operating budget, he said. The rest comes from fundraising and CAS agencies purchasing services for their youth.

"In 1997 we were fully funded for 24 beds and that's slowly been whittled away, and that's very unfortunate because the service is still needed," he said.

Ultimately, the home operates on the principle that every boy who enters it can be helped and is worthy of that help, he said.

"We want people to know what we're doing here, that we are part of the community and that we bring value to the community," he said.

"These kids, I'm not sure what would happen to them if we weren't around."

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