

the **P**ORTAL

youth outreach association

2021 AND BEYOND

Christmas Newsletter



Letter from the Board

By Joel Murphy
Board Chair

The year 2021 has been a year of significant growth for the Portal. The staff team has grown, our board has grown, our office space has grown, and we were able to purchase (with significant support from our provincial government) three homes to help support more youth. However, what I am most proud of is how even amidst all that growth, the Portal has remained true to being a youth-focused organization who puts relationships and people before anything else. It is a privilege to serve this organization and community. As a board of directors, we are so grateful for the amazing support being shown by our community, stakeholders and our government partners. The Portal staff are amazing and truly doing 'life changing' work. We have a great team and are hopeful for the future.



Behind Every Homeless Statistic, There Is A Story

On March 31st, The Portal hosted a small in-person event that was live streamed to Facebook and YouTube. We premiered our documentary "Homeless No More" where youth talked about their lived experiences here in the Annapolis Valley. If you didn't participate in the event or see the documentary, we would encourage you to do so. Statistics tell part of the story but behind every number is a person's life.

Following the showing of the video, Kelly (Housing Locator for The Portal) moderated a panel discussion with Russ Sanche (Portal Executive Director), Julia Cecchetto (Kentville Police Chief) and Rachel Beddingfield (Director of Parks and Recreation, Kentville). Great information was shared, and important questions were asked from online and in-person audiences. Rounding the evening out were ways that community members, groups and organizations can help respond and work together to prevent and end homelessness in the Annapolis Valley. Everyone has a part to play.



Having A Home Is Central To Having Hope

There is a lot involved in finding housing and keeping it. We would like to honour our hard-working staff and community partners that enable young people to have a safe place to live. Housing complications this year included COVID-19, a housing shortage, and the ongoing challenges with poverty. It is thrilling when we can offer someone a safe and stable place to live. Housing and Youth Outreach Highlights in numbers:

138 times youth dropped in (Covid year!)

309 crisis situations averted

1107 moments of supportive coaching

123 involved in programs

492 mentoring moments

507 advocacy actions

2880 outreach opportunities

10 youth kept in their homes or independent living

15 youth and 7 children newly housed in our

Supported Apartment Program

4 youth and 1 child in our supportive living homes

3 youth housed in Host Homes



What Moves You?

On Saturday, October 2nd, we hosted our 3rd annual Ride for Refuge. We got to see what moves you, to do something about youth homelessness. Participants biked 10km, walked 5km, or went freestyle. Some unique contributions included baking, hiking, and paddle boarding. Participants enjoyed a free breakfast sponsored by The Lions Club. People from all walks of life and all ages got moving. We are so grateful for everyone that participated, donated, volunteered, sponsored and cheered us on! Thank you to our local community! We hope you enjoyed The Ride for Refuge 2021 as much as we did!



7 Sponsors
19 Teams
81 Registered Participants
246 Donors
\$21,942 Grand Total!

A Hard, Yet Amazing Year

After 10 years we have served over 1000 young people. Those same young people have shaped our work. Due to the incredible support of the community and government, youth now have options for housing for the first time.

This summer we had the opportunity to purchase three homes (Windsor, Kentville & Middleton) to create safe and secure housing for youth at risk. We are thankful to the community who donated their time and resources to make this dream a reality. Over 400 volunteer hours went into the houses to turn them into welcoming homes. All furniture was donated from the local community. We can make a difference when we join together. Thank you for partnering with us!

Edge Employment Training Program

We had 19 youth fully complete the program in 2021, plus 6 that are still in the program. Of the 19, 16 are employed.

It was a challenging year with multiple groups having to do portions of the program online, but we've been so happy to connect many young people to supports and services they need, while walking alongside them in their work journeys!



- Connection
- Housing
- Employment



"Edge allowed me to reconnect with the part of myself I've been missing. It might feel scary in the moment to say yes, not knowing what you're walking into, but I'm so thankful for this opportunity. If you're debating it, just do it!"
- Paige (Season 12)

"There were people in my life who told me I'd never be able to find a job, but I proved them wrong. Edge helped build my confidence and now I'm working in a job I love." - Keely (Season 12)



We started prepping for job interviews this week and capped it off by shopping for professional outfits to seal the deals!

Pictured is Season 13

Prevention

What an active year for youth in our Prevention programs! In the Spring we released the Prevention Design Toolkit, with our Homeless No More event. There have been lots of activities to join such as art, horseback riding, cross country skiing, walks with dogs, and one of the biggest hits has been lazer tag.

This summer we hosted two youth summer programs which gave youth opportunities to explore new recreational activities such as surfing, kayaking, fishing, hiking, zip-lining, paddle boarding, bowling and so much more. Participants gained many skills through with different service based activities such as demolition, park clean ups, and gardening.

This fall youth also enjoyed apple picking, more demolition and helping out at a horse barn. We are looking forward to our Winter Break activity days that will be packed full of fun activities, food and socialization. 2021, although a hard year, brought new friendships, new connections and a sense of community and belonging for many of our youth. We are looking forward to 2022, and want to welcome Braden onto the team he will be working part-time in our Prevention/Recreation programs.



Gingerbread House decorating was held at The Portal for the youth

Through Prevention & Recreation youth gain:

- Sense of belonging
- Community connection
- 1st Aid CRR
- WHMIS
- Volunteer work
- Team skills
- Health education
- Mental health skills building



Some youth participated in a service project doing demo work

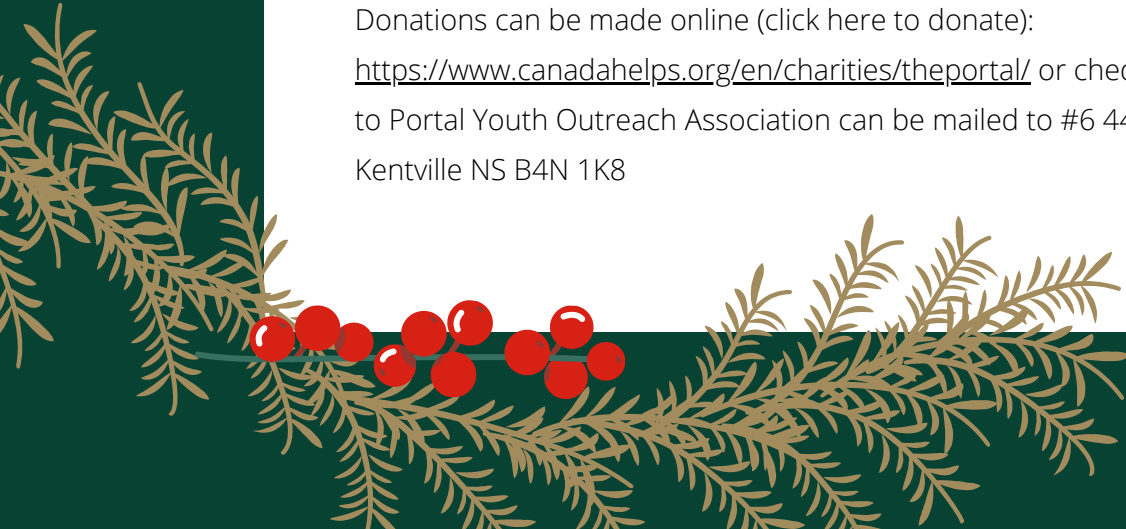


Watch For It

There are so many people working behind the scenes, it is challenging to capture it all. Homeless No More continues to be a group that advocates for a change in systems, available options for housing, prevention programming, and seeing the capacity in the community increase. This last year has seen municipal leaders, and community-based leaders come together with the provincial government to grapple with the issues of the housing shortage. We hope to see some solutions come to pass in the near future.

- More wrap-around support for emergency housing options
- The launch of the Valley Roots Housing Association to provide, mixed market, mixed tenure housing developments that are attainable for all
- Youth in care accessing the youth outreach program
- Greater cultural safety and sensitivity in our organization

Join The Cause

- Volunteering- currently recruiting volunteers for the following areas: Volunteer Coordinator, Support Living Program Respite, Website Upkeep, Rec Room Buddy's, Social Enterprise Development
 - Increase our access to housing by renting to our Supported Apartment Program, or create housing stock by creating an Accessory dwelling Unit on your property
 - Donations directed to general fund help us with emergency situations. Donations can be made online (click here to donate): <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/theportal/> or cheques made out to Portal Youth Outreach Association can be mailed to #6 440 Main Street Kentville NS B4N 1K8
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Shout Outs

Thank you so much to the local businesses and organizations for supporting our efforts. We're grateful to have supporters like you.

Eisses Farms Limited
Michael Contant
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Brian Morrison
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Middleton Baptist Church
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Monk & Nun Interiors
Jeanette Elliott CPA
Chuck Hennessey- RBC
Donna Conrad RE/MAX Advantage
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Acadia Women's Basketball Team
Locally Seen East Coast
Our amazing volunteers
Individual donations- names withheld

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Happy Harry's New Minas
Karis Builders
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Living Stone
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Gates Insurance Ltd
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Sports Chek New Minas
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Kings Arms Pub by Lew Murphy
Locally Seen East Coast
Beaton Properties
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