



MEDIA RELEASE

Youth Recognized at National Housing Day/*Be A Voice* Awards

NIAGARA REGION, November 27, 2015 – Youth in Niagara helped Niagara Regional Housing (NRH) and partners mark National Housing Day at the *Be A Voice* contest awards today. “The *Be A Voice* contest was a great opportunity to shine a light on Niagara’s youth while bringing increased awareness to the importance of affordable housing. Contest entries demonstrated that youth recognize affordable housing as an essential building block in the foundation of a healthy life for individuals and families. The talent was outstanding and it was an honour to be involved as a judge,” said Shirley Cordiner, NRH Board Chair.

There were close to 60 entries and each was evaluated for originality, knowledge of the subject matter, critical thinking and presentation. Partners included the District School Board of Niagara, Habitat for Humanity Niagara, Niagara Catholic District School Board, Niagara Poverty Reduction Network and Niagara Region through the Niagara Prosperity Initiative. Sandy Rempel from Habitat commented that “the students really did their research to understand the state our area is in with regards to homelessness and affordable housing and came up with some very creative ideas.”

The *Be a Voice* Spirit Award was presented to Sir Winston Churchill Secondary School (St. Catharines) for most contest entries. Fifth place (\$100) went to Rachel Bannerman (Sir Winston Churchill) for her poem, “Home Street Home”. Rachel noted that she “hadn’t realized the extent of the problem but now that I do, it’s time to realize how I can help make a solution”. Fourth place (\$100) went to Kailey Augerman (Sir Winston Churchill) for her photo/poster, “Sleeping Without Shelter Should Not Be An Option For Anyone”.

Third place (\$250) went to Kerry Benitez, Katana Brown, Hannah Hamil, Soleil Laroche, Ally Lawson, Angela Paul, Chantel Prince, Lama Rafehi, Naomi Sapezinskas and CJ Warner (DSBN Academy, St. Catharines) for their mobile. Second place (\$500) went to Morgan Conquergood, Megan Kanyo and Julia Munro (E.L. Crossley Secondary School, Pelham) for their video, “Homelessness Isn’t Black and White”. First place (\$1,000) went to Kiersten Atamanyk, David Butko, Alex Carullo, Matt Mocha and Chae Porter (Notre Dame College School, Welland) for their video, “Affordable Housing Man”. “The most important thing I have learned from this project is that this isn’t just an issue that’s happening in poorer countries, it’s happening right here in Niagara,” said David. “This is significant because this is our home and it affects everyone around us.”

See www.nrh.ca and www.habitatniagara.ca for more information about affordable housing in Niagara.

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