



Howard Staples is the business manager of Youth on Purpose, a program designed to help youths and young adults overcome their problems.

Advance News photo by Troy Landreville

■ Youth

Cleansing on purpose

by Troy Landreville
REPORTER

An Langley organization aims to take 80 troubled youths to "cleansing-camp" this summer.

Youth on Purpose's basic goal is to help teens and young adults aged 16-24 overcome their demons and, as its business manager Howard Staples puts it, "come from a place of contribution and purpose."

"This program helps youths who don't know what to do with their lives," Staples said.

For 12 days this August, the group will travel with a half dozen counselors to a remote location on Bowen Island, for activities and therapy which Staples feels will help make them better people.

"Going someplace remote gives them focus," Staples said. It gets them away from distractions. It is a cleansing experience but it is also a heck of a lot of fun."

The program is funded through private and corporate donations.

"It is difficult to get government help because the program doesn't have a proven track record in Canada yet," Staples said. "But we haven't excluded government money by any

means."

It is modeled on a very successful Swedish program called 'Fri Sikt', headed by Sandy Levey-Lunden. Last summer three youngsters out of 88 dropped out of the intensive summer program. Over the next year, which consisted of follow-up meetings, weekly support groups and one-on-one meetings, nobody left the group. At the end of the program, 82 per cent of the youths either had a job or were back in school. A year later, that number rose to 90 per cent.

Six counselors from that successful program in Sweden will join the group in Bowen Island.

Once the summer camp is over the youths meet eight more times over the year.

"All of those who went through

the program in Sweden said it was the most enlightening, freeing thing they have done in their lives," Staples said.

"It comes down to a basic choice: fear or love. This experience allows them to look deeply inside their minds, belief systems and past. At some level they need to know that they have to work on themselves."

The number of youths working with Youth on Purpose suffer from a wide range of problems from sexual abuse, to anorexia, to loneliness & isolation, to feelings of hopelessness.

Youth on Purpose holds a public presentation and open house at its office located inside Langley Twin Rinks on every Thursday at 7 p.m. The next meeting takes place May 25.

The phone number is

532-5840.

Langley Twin Rinks is at 5700 Langley Bypass.

AdvanceNews AT A GLANCE

This summer, four courses are being offered in Langley:

■ **Youth on Purpose:** A year long course highlighted by a two-week intensive course in August.

■ **Elders On Purpose:** A course in freeing oneself from guilt and judgement and learning how to support and communicate effectively

■ **Partners on Purpose:** A course for youth and their parents. The Youth on Purpose brochure states that it will "heal past wounds and open the doorway to honest communication and heart-felt listening;

■ **Communicating On Purpose:** A two-day course for those in business looking for ways to effectively and honestly communicate in the workplace.