

Lighthouse Counselling and Support Services to hold vaping awareness discussion over two days

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Shelburne-based Lighthouse Counselling and Support Services has recognized a community need to raise awareness on the concerns surrounding vaping. To tackle the issue, the organization is hosting free-to-attend discussions on Nov. 21 and 22.

The goal of these events is to provide a safe space to learn about the risks and damages associated with vaping, and to remind people that help is available here in town.

"I really just saw a need in the community that wasn't being met, so I decided that I would test the waters to see if people might be interested in raising awareness about vaping," said Sarah Kaulback, registered social worker and clinical counsellor at Lighthouse Counselling & Support Services.

"There's a lot that people don't really know about vaping, or they are uncomfortable talking to their parents or their kids, so that's why I'm doing it for two days."

The meetings will be separated for privacy. Youth are welcome at the Friday (Nov. 21) event, which will be focused on them, to give them a space to talk freely without judgment. On Saturday (Nov. 22), the discussion will be geared more towards parents, focusing on how they can best support their teens.

According to Kaulback, vaping has been brought up to her multiple times by clients during their visits, so she decided to do some digging and discovered that it is a growing community issue with little information publicly shared.

"I've had a number of clients, both youths and adults, who have brought up vaping as an issue," she said. "There's a heavy presence of vape shops here in town, and in my practice, at least, a lot of people are struggling with it. I've also realized there isn't a lot of publicized information about vaping and its potentially harmful effects, and how to manage it."

"So now we've kicked off this vaping awareness campaign in town to try and spread some awareness and teach people. While we have put posters up around Orangeville, Dundalk, and other communities, our focus remains here in Shelburne," Kaulback added.

In the process of setting up the awareness campaign, Kaulback said she found a lot of publicly accessible information from Public Health about the effects of vaping, but it hasn't translated into public knowledge.

She told the Free Press that there is a disconnect between health officials and the public. Her presentations aim to bridge that gap so important information reaches residents in an environment that remains accessible and understandable.

"We really have been very lucky in setting this community event up," Kaulback said. "Public Health has been very open to helping us get ready. They've been generous enough to send us tons of research and information packages that we'll be handing out at the workshop."

"There definitely is a movement in our community to bring this information forward, so now we just have to find a vessel to disseminate it in a way that's understandable and relatable so that's our goal," she added.

Kaulback is encouraging anyone interested in learning more, even if they don't vape, to attend the info nights. She said that community involvement is the first step in treating the problem.

The youth night is Friday, Nov. 21, from 5 to 6:30 p.m. at Streams Community Hub ? Classroom A+ and will include free pizza. The adult info night is Nov. 22, 10 to 11:30 a.m., in the same location.

Streams is located at 305 Col Phillips Drive, Shelburne.

To register, contact sarah.lighthousecounselling@gmail.com or phone Lighthouse at 519-943-3475.

For more information, those interested can visit the Lighthouse website at www.lighthouse-counselling.ca.