

Working to Solve Homelessness:

Iron Horse Youth Safe House



Iron Horse Youth Safe House in Maple Ridge provides a temporary residence for youth aged 13 to 18. The youth come from all backgrounds – but the majority

have been living on the streets and/or couch surfing for weeks, months, or even years. Before Iron Horse opened in 2005, many of Maple Ridge's homeless youth were forced to go for help to a safe house in Vancouver. This often derailed plans for family mediation and schooling, as well as introducing the youth to a more street entrenched lifestyle.

Programs include:

The local community recognized a great need for this service and raised or contributed over \$60,000 in materials, labour and cash. Volunteers from the Ridge Meadows RCMP Community Policing Programs worked especially hard to establish the house. Many community partners also contribute to the strength of Iron Horse. Bowman Employment Services, for example, assists almost every one of the youth to develop a resume and conduct job searches. This high level of partner commitment is a major contributor to the overall success of the house.

The staff at Iron Horse come from a wide variety of backgrounds. As a residential facility, Iron Horse has two staff members on duty around the clock, including holidays.

Iron Horse also has: teachers, nurses, drug and alcohol counselors, mental health outreach workers, youth recreation workers, and teacher's assistants. Together, the staff find a way to connect with each youth who comes through the doors.

The youth at Iron Horse arrive ready to work on creating a more positive lifestyle. Within 24 hours, staff members help the youth outline their goals and make a plan. If necessary, the youth can stay at Iron Horse for up to 30 days.

Iron Horse has been in operation since June 2005. Already the program has served 330 youth, 95 from the immediate Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows area. It is one of only five safe houses operating in the Lower Mainland that provides a safe refuge for youth in crisis.

Source: <http://www.alouettehomestart.com/programs.html>

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