

Newmarket youth shelter named after 'privileged white guy'

Community Sep 25, 2017 by [Lisa Queen \(/yorkregion-author/lisa-queen/123b2693-9b85-4dc7-9c7d-b9c375ddfe12/\)](/yorkregion-author/lisa-queen/123b2693-9b85-4dc7-9c7d-b9c375ddfe12/) [✉ \(mailto:lqueen@yrmg.com\)](mailto:lqueen@yrmg.com) Newmarket Era

With his parents welcoming about 100 foster children into their home as he was growing up, Kevin Kennedy has always been aware of the struggles facing vulnerable youngsters.

It's that understanding that inspired his career in social work.

While at Seneca College in 1989, he did a placement with Blue Door Shelters, then called Men's Support Services.

From that placement, he worked his way up from counsellor to assistant manager to program manager, always advocating for York Region's often invisible homeless population.

Story continues below▼

When he returned to Seneca as a teacher, now serving as program co-ordinator for the social work program, Kennedy didn't leave Blue Door behind.

He became a volunteer, board member and board president and in 2014 won an award from the United Way of Toronto and York Region for his devotion to social work.

On Sept. 21, Blue Door's youth homeless shelter on Gorham Street in Newmarket was named Kevin's Place in Kennedy's honour.

In his typical self-effacing way, Kennedy jokingly referred to the shelter being named after "a privileged white guy."

But then he talked about how the staff has focused on treating vulnerable people with respect.

"We call it being decent to people. That's the way I was oriented to this field, that you do what's in the best interest of the people. You meet people where they're at," he said.

Story continues below▼

Executive director Anne Stubleby praised Kennedy for his leadership and commitment to delivering progressive emergency housing.

"It is an honour for us to name our youth shelter after Kevin. It's a great place, a creative place, a welcoming place, it's a can-do place, a dedicated place, a caring place. That's the spirit of this place. That's the spirit of Kevin," she said.

"Knowing Kevin, success for him will not be measured on a plaque or having something named for him. It's the work. It's every kid, every person who is welcomed, who had a good stay, who engaged with staff and community, who moved from homelessness to a home."

Blue Door, a nonprofit organization and the largest provider of emergency services in York Region, also operates Porter Place for men and Leeder Place for families.

by [Lisa Queen \(/yorkregion-author/Lisa-Queen/123b2693-9b85-4dc7-9c7d-b9c375ddfe12/\)](/yorkregion-author/Lisa-Queen/123b2693-9b85-4dc7-9c7d-b9c375ddfe12/)

Lisa Queen is a reporter for YorkRegion.com and its sister papers. She can be reached at lqueen@yrmg.com (<mailto:aliraza@yrmg.com>). Follow her on [Twitter \(https://twitter.com/lisaqueen\)](https://twitter.com/lisaqueen) and YorkRegion.com on [Facebook \(https://www.facebook.com/YRMGNews\)](https://www.facebook.com/YRMGNews).