

Muskokaregion.com's Big Ideas feature opens the conversation about the future of Muskoka to community columnists and to readers. Go to muskokaregion.com to join in. Find the Big Ideas Hot Topic and read the columns as they are written and archived on the site and go to the comments section to add your voice to the discussion. Send your Big Idea to psteel@metroland.com.

uReport Reader-submitted content

YWALK4 Women&Girls raising awareness about girls' mental health

"Muskoka is beautiful and secluded with palatial homes for the Canadian super wealthy that fit the Hollywood model elegantly," according to a recent article in the New York Times. This is true yet does not reflect the realities of life for many who live in our community.

As girls approach adolescence they experience two serious problems: high rates of sexual assault and a sharp decline in mental health.

Research links "sexualisation" - when a person's main value is attributed to their sexual appearance rather than their intelligence or other qualities with the three most common mental health problems for girls - eating disorders, low self-esteem and anxiety/depression. Adolescent girls are twice as likely as boys to suffer from depression. For girls depression typically stems from negative body image, low self-esteem and stress.

Girls experience sexual assault at much higher rates than boys. Eighty-two per cent of all sexual assault victims under the age of 18 are female. In 2008 over 11,000 sexual assaults of girls under the age of 18 were reported to police in Canada. Only 18 per cent of sexual assaults are reported to police so it is reasonable to assume the actual number was much higher. More than 80 per cent of girls who are sexually assaulted are assaulted by someone they know.

There are no funded support services in Muskoka for children aged 16 and under who have been sexually assaulted. In 2013 then Family, Youth and Children Services of Muskoka served 751 children with mental health concerns. YWCA Muskoka, uniquely a 'YW without Walls', served just over 1,200 women and girls in 2015 at over 40 locations in our region. Thirty-nine per cent of participants in YWCA's violence prevention programs are girls under the age of 18.

If "community" can be where we experience our biggest challenges - sexual assault, social isolation - it is also where many of the responses to these complex problems are to be found. If we believe in the power of community, then we need to connect with one another; develop trust and respect for one another in order to work together.

up with women...

by beth ward



Upon realizing all of this, I decided to get out and connect with women and girls throughout Muskoka, share some facts about the realities of our lives and invite others to join me. YWALK4Women&Girls begins

Monday, Aug. 8 - we will walk across Muskoka, from Dwight to Port Severn, a total distance of close to 200 kilometers. I hope to raise awareness about girls' mental health in Muskoka and will be tweeting facts and photos every day.

Why walking you ask? It is affordable, accessible, everyone can do it regardless of finances, and it is good for both physical and mental wellbeing. Walking highlights the lack of public transportation in our communities and throughout Muskoka. It is slow, persistent and enables reflection and appreciation of all that is beautiful about Muskoka. It connects our communities in support of a common experience and awareness.

Everyone: women, girls, men and boys, are invited to join in "YWalking" in their community for half an hour, half a day or for how long they want. So far the response to date has been overwhelming and I send a huge

thank you to all of you who have signed up to walk already or made a donation. Each evening the starting place and time of the next day's leg will be posted on Twitter @YWalkMuskoka, and on YWCA Muskoka's Facebook page.

YWALK will be kicked off with a BBQ on Saturday, July 30 sponsored by McMaster's Meats on Highway 118, west of Bracebridge. The BBQ will run from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. with proceeds going to support YWCA Muskoka's services.

For more information on how to get involved in the #YWALK, please call 705-645-9827.

The "Up with Women" column is presented by MWAG, a charitable organization that provides free support services for abused women in Muskoka and operates two 24-hour crisis shelters for women and their children: Muskoka Interval House 1-800-461-1740 or 705-645-4461 and Chrysalis 1-866-789-8488 or 705-789-8488. For more information please visit mwag.ca.

Everyone: women, girls, men and boys, are invited to join in "YWalking" in their community for half an hour, half a day or for how long they want.

#MUSKOKA

twitter 

Read this week's top tweets from local movers and shakers:

- Alexis Taylor @MissTaylorMusic I was thinking of planning a trip to #Muskoka for some acoustic shows once my tour with @DougSeegers is over! What do you guys think!???
- Invasion Watch @Invasion_Watch Invasion! European common reed in District Municipality of Muskoka, Ontario: <http://bit.ly/2auQt0Q> #invasivespecies
- Algonquin Outfitters @algonquinoutfit RT @MuskokaRiverX: 2016 Algonquin Outfitters Muskoka River X @ 80 Teams. Waiting List Now Building. <http://fb.me/4IbMEJUFZ>
- YWalkMuskoka @YWalkMuskoka HUGE THANK YOU to Bob & McMasters of #Muskoka Fine Foods for a fabulous YWALK BBQ!
- Gypsy Market Mews @GypsyMarketMews Thank you @Gateway2Muskoka for organizing the #PokémonGO event this past Saturday. We had a blast!! #Gravenhurst #Muskoka #GottaGatchEmAll
- Nellie Jacobs @nelliejacobs Nellie Jacobs Retweeted Liv J.14 yr old Lake Ontario swimmer Maya Farrell launched our Lake #Muskoka #organdonorswim! #organdonor
- m a y @kravingharry Just remembering when Harry stayed at Cindy Crawford's cottage in Muskoka instead of a hotel I cry #WWAToronto 
- Nathaniel Bacon @NathanielBaconX Weekend away at the #Cottage! #Muskoka #cottaging #LongWeekend
- Marisa Brown @Ris_Brown Highlight had to be @TokyoPoliceClub at #SessionMuskoka #bracebridge
- Alexander Stubb Verified account @alexstubb Are we in Barösund in the Finnish archipelago or Muskoka, in the Canadian Lakedistrict?
- Tony Clement :) @tony_clement16 Looking forward to ousting the Liberals in 2019 as #cpcldr and restoring the #MuskokaAdvantage. Make Muskoka Great Again! #cpclleadership
- MLCC @MuskokaLksCC Over 70 visitors to the Duke House #PortCarling Saturday: almost 900 for all of July. @MuskokaLakesTwp
- Rick Maloney @RickMaloneyBB An early attendee to @BracebridgeDtwN #MidnightMadness making sure funnel cakes passed inspection. #Bracebridge

uReport

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Employer-supported volunteerism

BY REBECCA PAUL

When 10-year-old Sadie was recently matched with her new big sister, she told us she had been so excited she was unable to sleep the night before. Kyler, age eight, is thrilled with his new big brother; after two years on the waiting list, their time spent together means a lot to him.

At Big Brothers Big Sisters of Muskoka, we're proud of our success stories and we're frustrated with our waiting list. So, we've added a new program to attract new volunteers and serve more kids: it's called In-School Mentoring and it only takes an hour per week. An adult volunteer mentor is matched with a child at a local elementary school – they meet up at the school each week and spend an hour together doing fun activities. This provides a nice break for a child struggling academically or socially, or both.

Big things happen for the kids involved in our mentorship programs — things like increased sense of self-esteem, improved academic performance, and a stronger social network and sense of connection. Canadian physician, expert on addiction, author, and public speaker Gabor Maté says that people have two needs — attachment and authenticity. By connecting a young person who has a limited support network with just one other caring, reliable and trustworthy adult, we help fulfill that deep need for attachment. From there, a child's sense of self can unfold, paving the way for authenticity.

Every successful program we run requires community partners. In-School Mentoring is funded by United Way Greater Simcoe County; we have agreements with both school boards in Muskoka; we have volunteers matched at four schools

throughout the district and we're hoping to add more in 2016. That's a great start but we need more support.

One element of In-School Mentoring is that it happens during the school day. This is a time when some potential volunteers are at work. We are appealing to businesses throughout Muskoka to strengthen the future of our community by acting today. Please consider creating a policy allowing staff to volunteer during their working day — in doing so you'd help meet the demand of the kids on our waiting list, enrich the lives of your staff, and increase productivity which benefits you and your clients. (A recent Canadian study on employer-supported volunteering states that “employers are recognizing the multi-fold benefits of employee volunteering, including talent recruitment and retention and skills-development.” That's what we call a win-win-win-win situation.

We often share the message with the public that as a small not-for-profit organization, we rely on the community for financial support. Volunteer recruitment is no different. As instances of bullying and youth suicide are rising, we must look at providing more opportunities for proactive, positive, and engaging support for youth.

Imagine the ways we could enrich our community if we acted together.

“It's impossible,” said pride.

“It's risky,” said experience.

“It's pointless,” said reason.

“Give it a try,” whispered the heart.

For the past five years, Rebecca Paul has been the executive director of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Muskoka, 705-644-9914.

Why Muskoka will be rising on Feb. 6

It is 7:30 p.m. in Bracebridge and I'm on my nightly walk. It's beautiful outside, the air feels fresh, and I'm thinking about what a privilege it is to be part of this great community.

Not all women on this planet enjoy this same freedom – to feel safe enough to venture out for a walk.

On Valentine's Day 2012, Eve Ensler, renowned playwright (*The Vagina Monologues* and *The Good Body*) and fierce activist, launched what has become the largest mass action to end violence against women in modern history. This call to action was based on that staggering statistic of one in three women on the planet being beaten or sexually assaulted during her lifetime, and usually by someone she knows. If the world's population is at seven billion, this means one billion women and girls will experience this atrocity in their lifetimes.

In its inaugural year, the uprising took place in 207 countries and, indeed one billion people – women and men – participated around the world, attending events, rising up and dancing, demanding an end to this violence. Muskoka was part of that first One Billion Rising event. Over 1,000 people participated in a variety of events across our district, from school

up with women...

by *laurie lamont*



classroom activities to large, organized dances and flash mobs.

In 2016, we will continue to rise. We will rise to show that we are determined to create a new kind of consciousness, one in which violence will be resisted until it is unthinkable.

The 2016 One Billion Rising campaign theme is Rise for Revolution and the intent is to shift the paradigm, to demand accountability, justice and systematic change. In the words of Eve Ensler, “One billion women violated is an atrocity; one billion women dancing is a revolution!”

Please join the Muskoka is Rising movement on Feb. 6, beginning at 4:30 p.m., at the Nipissing University campus in Bracebridge. Participants will include members of the Bracebridge School of Ballet, Tobin Spring, Gina Horswood, Cassandra Cutting and other community members. As the slogan suggests, we will “strike, dance and rise” to demonstrate our support for the global movement's goal, working to end violence against women once and for all.

For information see Muskoka Parry Sound Sexual Assault Services page on Facebook or Twitter. For the story of a group of young people leading the dance see muskokaregion.com.

#MUSKOKA



Read this week's top tweets from local movers and shakers:

- MuskokaWatershedCncl @muskokawatershd It's here! Check out our new Planning for #ClimateChange in #Muskoka report at http://issuu.com/72926/docs/climatechange_muskoka-2016?e=8875812/33172449 ... or <http://www.muskokawatershed.org/resources/planning-for-climate-change/> ...
- Muskoka Recycles @MuskokaRecycles Muskoka Recycles Retweeted Muskoka GIS Own a property in #Muskoka? Can you find it on Muskoka GIS? <http://map.muskoka.on.ca>
- lauren mac @laur_mac @ArroPark I'm sure #Muskoka locals like me would love a few week day fire & ice nights #prettyplease
- Muskoka Chatauqua @MuskokaChatauqua Was so great having Ian Reid performing for us Saturday night at #Muskoka Place Gallery: such talent & warmth
- Muskoka Prevention @muskokafpo First of the month-Reminder from #Muskoka Fire Prevention-Test all smoke and carbon monoxide alarms #fire #COSafety
- Muskoka EMS @MuskokaEMS @Peel_Paramedics Muskoka stands in support of Peel Paramedics. Our thoughts are with you one and all
- South Muskoka Bears @BearsSMMHA Jan 30 Game Score: Bantam LL - Scotiabank - Muskoka KIA - 3, Huntsville Classic Towing - 5 <http://tinyurl.com/henhewx>
- Billy @Bill97193822 @maiqiufeng1938 “@StoneFigures: feeling sad for the workers at Metro in Bracebridge (store is closing) empty shelves, lost jobs #Muskoka”
- John Pokocky @SMuskokaPhoto 15 Deer-Lake Rosseau. I loved getting all that in one shot. #Muskoka
- Applause! Toy Store @ApplauseTOYS Aren't we lucky to live in #Muskoka & to be able to tube downtown today? So much fun! Downtown Bracebridge BIA <http://fb.me/47kYnqR3c>
- Laura Minielly @HotBiscuitBakes Skating the Arrowhead Trail, with tiki torches! (@Arrowhead Provincial Park in Muskoka District Municipality, ON) <https://www.swarmapp.com/c/5S07x8RIJZf>
- Sue Leith @soobird26 Kids tobogganing down the big hill at the end of the #Gravenhurst “Y”/arena parking lot. Gotta love #Muskoka
- Shawn Forth @Hawkeye3BB Tube run down the main street of #Bracebridge #fireandice #festival #Muskoka <https://www.instagram.com/p/BBLDaR2sRdQ/>



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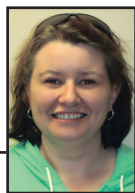
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Remembering all victims of violence against women

up with women...

by rachelle walker



On Dec. 6, 1989, an armed man shot and killed 14 women at École Polytechnique in Montreal. This school shooting was the first of its kind in Canada and was motivated by sexism.

He separated the men and women, and shot the women; he did not get into the engineering program and felt he was not selected because the women engineering students took his place in the program.

The country was horrified and, to this day, memorials are held on Dec. 6 to remember the victims of the Montreal Massacre and all women killed each year as a result of sexist violence.

It's really important for us to pause and reflect, not only about what happened back in 1989, but also about what continues to happen every year in Ontario. Are you aware of how many women are murdered each year as a result of sexist-based violence? The number varies annually but the average is 30.

Thirty women of varying ages, backgrounds and ethnicities are killed each year as a result of sexism, so where's the outrage? If it happens slowly, do we become

more desensitized or is it just not well broadcast? I think it's a bit of both.

Last year, Muskoka Women's Advocacy Group tried to formulate the list ourselves by doing an extensive search online to find news articles about women who were murdered in Ontario. Two people who are very computer literate worked for days to formulate a list and came to a very surprising realization: murder as a result of violence against women is not big news.

The information was difficult to find because these murders did not make big headlines and, most of the time, there was no follow-up report. Have we become so jaded that, if it's an average woman who is being murdered, we just move along as though that is just the way our world works?

Recently, many people were killed in Paris as the result of terrorist attacks. The world is in mourning and there are outpourings of support from all over the globe, as there should be. This attack was a terrible tragedy that affected the lives of many. I wonder, though, why it is we are so angry at the loss of life in a situation involving terrorism but the same doesn't

seem to hold true for sexism?

All across Ontario, people are getting ready to enjoy the holidays. Time will be spent with friends and family, and people will enjoy themselves; however, for approximately 30 families, the holidays will not be the same this year. They will be enduring a normally happy time with heavy hearts because their loved ones have been wiped from their lives.

Please take a moment on Dec. 6 to remember all the women who have lost their lives to sexist violence. Better yet, please join Muskoka-Parry Sound Sexual Assault Services, YWCA Muskoka and Muskoka Women's Advocacy Group at Spirit Bear Lodge (67 Quebec St., Bracebridge) on Dec. 6, from 3 to 5 p.m., as we mark the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.

Rachelle Walker is the executive director of the Muskoka Women's Advocacy Group. She has been working towards ending violence against women for almost 20 years.

For more information on Muskoka Women's Advocacy Group, visit mwag.ca

ONLINE THIS WEEK AT:



Community — South Muskoka

MOTHER TALKS OF ABUSE AT FORMER MUSKOKA CENTRE: Son was hit and drugged while spending five years at former Gravenhurst facility for mentally handicapped, according to affidavit filed as part of class-action suit.

FOOD DRIVE BUSTLES WITH 'HAPPY CHAOS': There was collecting, carrying, dodging, sorting, smiling, laughing and helping at the Salvation Army Food Drive.

ONE MUSKOKA HOSTS FIRST OF SERIES OF ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS AROUND REGION: Read more.

Community — North Muskoka

HUNTSVILLE TOWN HALL TO BUZZ WITH ROOFTOP BEEHIVES: Proposal would place two honey bee hives on Main Street by next summer.

ART MARKET OPENS WITH RECEPTION IN HUNTSVILLE ON FRIDAY: Signal North Gallery presents the 2015 Art Market Place featuring area artisans and their work. An opening reception happens Friday, Dec. 4, from 5 to 7 p.m., 26 Station Rd., Huntsville.

CANADIAN SNOWPASS AVAILABLE FOR YOUTH SKIERS: Participating areas include Hidden Valley Highlands in Huntsville and Gravenhurst KOA Nordic Trails.

All-star minor hockey game Dec. 20 —

Continued from front

be measured against Duchene's score, with the leader board posted on hometown-hockey.com and in each issue of OMHA Hometown Hockey magazine.

If someone does beat Duchene's score of 9:06 seconds, their name will be entered into a draw to win a Matt Duchene-

autographed Reebok stick and jersey.

Contestants must be under the age of 18 and a member-in-good standing of the OMHA in order to win.

For more information on the all-star game visit southmuskokaminorhockey.com. To apply for the Bob Beaumont Bursary, visit mpshl.ca

MUSKOKA 7 DAY FORECAST - FOR YOUR MOST UP-TO-DATE WEATHER AND WEATHER ALERTS GO TO muskokaregion.com

THURS., DEC 3	FRI., DEC 4	SAT., DEC 5	SUN., DEC 6	MON., DEC 7	TUES., DEC 8	WED., DEC 9
CLOUDY WITH SUNNY BREAKS	CLOUDY WITH SUNNY BREAKS	SUNNY	MAINLY SUNNY	A MIX OF SUN AND CLOUDS	CLOUDY WITH SUNNY BREAKS	MIXED PRECIPITATION
- High of 2 Low of 0	- High of 3 Low of -1	- High of 6 Low of 0	- High of 5 Low of 1	- High of 3 Low of -1	- High of 3 Low of 1	- High of 3 Low of 2

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