

?Intro to Adulting? offers important life skills for future



By Brock Weir

Jennifer Quirke was 20 years old when she first tackled a particularly daunting-looking washing machine.

Living on her own for the first time as a student, she had come from a house where her mom was all too happy to do the laundry, but when the time came, Ms. Quirke found she had a gap in her ?adulting? knowledge that had to be filled fast.

And those gaps have only gotten wider as more teens over the years made their way to adulthood.

Whether it is how to properly iron a dress shirt or file taxes, Ms. Quirke and the Aurora Public Library are stepping up to give teens and young adults the knowledge they need to get through life that is often overlooked in the school room through: Level Up! Intro to Adulting.

Beginning this Monday, July 15, and running through Friday, July 19, the five-day program for youth between the ages of 15 and 20 is designed to ?help you become the responsible adult of your parents' dreams.? Focusing on food, employment, research skills, financial literacy, and other miscellaneous life skills, each day will feature a different topic and an expert presenter ?to help you master the basic skills you'll need to get grown.?

?This is something we have been thinking about for a few years,? says Ms. Quirke, now Young Adult Librarian at the Aurora Public Library (APL). ?Now, we have decided to do a week-long session for the summer. It's something I've heard parents say would

be useful, and I've also had teens say they think it would be useful.

?I've heard a lot of teens themselves say they aren't happy with their education and the fact they're not being taught how to prepare their taxes, for instance, but it is going to be something they will be expected to do.?

There is so much focus in schools on skills that teens aren't necessarily going to use later, and more practical skills can fall by the wayside.

?They wish more attention was given to this,? she says.

Topic ideas have been brainstormed over the past few months between Ms. Quirk, APL staff, and members of APL's teen advisory group because, in her words, ?Who better to ask but them??

?I bring all my program ideas to the teen advisory group, but this is one in particular they were really helpful in saying, ?Yes, I don't know how to do this,? she explains, noting that one of the skills that came up was the proper care and ironing of dress clothes. ?I was surprised about some of the things they did know and some of the things they didn't, so I relied very heavily on their input.?

Also helpful was the input of one of APL's summer students who has a year or two of university under her belt. Asked what she wish she had known before setting off on her own, those suggestions provided plenty of food for thought as this program was being developed.

?Each day has a theme and for all of those, the first four days we have an expert coming in,? says Ms. Quirke. ?On the food day, we have a nutritionist coming in and she is going to be talking about food safety, food skills, some easy recipes, shopping on a budget and that kind of thing. Then the last day is more of a more fun day and will have little skills and smaller things that don't require an entire session dedicated to them, so they can go around and try ironing or sewing on a button and other things. At the end I would like to know that people learned something they didn't know already. It's hard to say. I guess I want people to be more confident at the end and feel they are better prepared for the future and for adulthood.?

For more information on Level Up!
? Intro to Adulting, including registration, contact the Aurora Public Library's Children's & Young Adult Information Desk at 905-727-9494 x280, or email ya@aurorapl.ca. Sessions take place July 15 ? 19 from 3 ? 4.30 p.m. Registration is open to teens and young adults between the ages of 15 and 20.