

# Councillor lauds experience of hosting African boarders

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Barkers Point Coun. Marilyn Kerton says playing host family to two young African men participating in a Canada World Youth exchange in Fredericton five years ago was an experience her family never forgot.

When it was laundry day in her household, her eager boarders were all set to load up the dirty clothes and take them down to the banks of the St. John River.

"They had never seen a washer and dryer before," Kerton said.

The cultural differences between a Canadian household and an African one became fodder for stories for the whole family.

Adolf Yawo came from a small village in Togo where his family squeezed together in a dirt-floor hut.

Edward Abassa of Ghana spoke of being out with game wardens and coming across an anaconda snake as big around as a log.

Going to a movie or buying a cup of coffee were all extravagances to the youth. Canadian holidays such as Halloween and Christmas were new.

"It was just incredible to see it through their eyes. The whole concept of Santa was all new to them. We had such a wonderful time with these guys," Kerton said.

"My whole family got involved with these individuals and they had wonderful stories to tell us about Africa."

From snakes to landscapes, it was first-hand learning about another culture and sharing the Canadian one.

Kerton said if you can't travel, you can bring the world to you by serving as a host family to a youth participating in the program.

"It's a wonderful, wonderful experience ... and the city really benefits," Kerton said.

This fall, Canada World Youth will again be looking for families to play host for a nominal \$140 per week stipend to students participating in the three-month exchange visit. To participate, call local project supervisor Stephen Sloat at 451-5016.

He said young people between the ages of 19 and 24 will live, learn and work in a Canadian community.

Nine Canadian youth — male and female, French and English — are matched with nine Ghanaian students as part of the trip. The Canadians won't be assigned to their own province, so they get to experience a different part of their country.

In early to mid-September until the beginning of December, the Canadian and Ghanaian students will work side by side.

"Over those three months, the 18 participants are going to be paired up — one Canadian, one Ghanaian — to live with a host family, and they'll be working for three or four days every week at a volunteer work placement," Sloat said.

"It's meant as a place for these young people to see this part of Canada, not as tourists or travellers, but as community members."

Tentative work assignments will be with the City of Fredericton's trails and parks division. In the past, work placements have been offered by the Fredericton Boys and Girls Club, the Fredericton Multicultural Association, New Brunswick Lung Association and AIDS New Brunswick.

"The purpose of the program is for them to see New Brunswick, see Fredericton. For the Ghanaians, it will be their first time to see Canada, so it will be a really good opportunity to actually see how a Canadian community works," Sloat said.

To be accepted into the program, participants must raise a portion of their own expenses.

"It's a unique opportunity to inspire and work with young people, so they can grow up to be leaders and understand the value of volunteering. It's a really powerful program," Sloat said. "This community has been really supportive in the past."

Fredericton city councillors approved a plan to support the program by providing bus passes to the 18 young people, office space for the supervisor, tours of the community and assistance with placement.

The value of the bus passes is about \$2,000.

Assistant city administrator Chris MacPherson said the support sought from Canada World Youth this year is similar to what the city has offered in past years.

Canada World Youth is a non-profit organization funded primarily by the Canadian International Development Agency.

It has been in operation since 1971 and has had 27,000 participants from 30 countries.

The program was founded by retired Canadian Senator Jacques Herbert.

To learn more about the program and its history, visit [www.cwy-jcm.org](http://www.cwy-jcm.org).