

Teresa Vandebelt, Social Worker



In the Photo:
Teresa making calls from the privacy of her front porch

When social distancing began, Social Worker Teresa Vandebelt knew that her team had to immediately reach out to the people they were supporting. She was, “frankly worried about a number of people because getting out into the community, coming to programs, counselling, or even leaving the house were the only things they did to feel better.”

A high portion of Teresa’s caseload was youth, and this presented an additional challenge - how could she get a hold of a generation who didn’t use email? She got creative. A cell phone allowed her to set up a private line. The next challenge was to provide service from a space that allowed for confidential conversations from her busy (and now crowded) home. The best option was an unheated, non-insulated, enclosed porch. So she wrapped herself in coats, boots, scarves, even toques, armed herself with a hot cup of tea and began providing counselling service from the privacy of her chilly porch.

Months of social isolation, financial and relationship stress are taking their toll on our community. Ever the optimist, Teresa also sees an upside to the situation we find ourselves in. “I’ve had a number of people say, ‘I miss Langs. I miss my team. I miss being able to walk into the building and have people know my name.’ And so if anything, this is really making all of us more aware of our need to connect with each other. We have this great opportunity to expand our definition of community in really active, creative ways.”
