

Champion centre celebrates milestone

By Tiffany Williams

Staff Reporter

The Ponoka Champion Centre is celebrating their fifth anniversary on June 16 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. and they are inviting the public to come and take part in the festivities.

"The main goal is to get the general public into the Champion Centre and meet the guys in here, I think the champion centre is an integral part of Ponoka because the type of people we have here," said Jeff Hanger chairman of the Champion Centre.

There are 16 men who live in the centre and are on subsidized rent. They have their beds changed every week, their rooms cleaned once per week, they get one hot meal a day, laundry, TV and phone are included. Most have their own room with a bed, dresser, fridge, and a desk. They also share common areas such as bathrooms, laundry facilities and TV room. The centre is supported by the Family and Community Support Services, local churches, the Order of Moose and Purple, the Elks and individuals from the community.

"The guys who come here have a very stable home life now because it is stable there are less problems with their medications, less chances for them to binge and the chances of them returning to the hospital is greatly reduced," said Hanger.

Some of the residents are assisted to make sure that they take their medication on schedule and some also have their finances managed by the manager of the centre Fred Klooster.

The Champion Centre is a nationally registered Christian non-profit charity, which provides permanent low costs housing to people who have lower than average incomes, who are homeless or are in danger of becoming homeless. They also have a second centre in Medicine Hat, which houses six men.

Bruce Murphy has been at the centre since December of 2006, he was recommended to move her from his worker.

"It is clean, has a friendly atmosphere, it is very home like. The comprador here is very nice and the best part is being able to be yourself," said Murphy.

Klooster says that the centre is very much like a home for the residents and they watch over each other it is like an extended family.

MLA Ray Prins and MP Blaine Calkins will be visiting, coffee and baked goods will be on hand.