

Alliston couple issues Habitat for Humanity challenge to local youth

By Brock Weir

Canada 150 has been a year for important discussions about reconciliation ? but a local couple is issuing a challenge to spring into action through Habitat for Humanity.

Melanie Lindayen and John Terry of Alliston will be leading a group of local New Tecumseth Youth to a Habitat for Humanity build in Northwest Territories this July.

?This is a very exciting time as we are recruiting and selecting participants from across the New Tecumseth Area to participate in this fully-funded opportunity and beginning to engage with the community around the important themes of Reconciliation,? says Melanie.

Melanie and John are no strangers to the Habitat for Humanity Project, nor are residents of New Tecumseth.

For over 10 years, the Darling Bequest ? Habitat for Humanity Committee has been working in conjunction with Alliston's St. John's United Church to sponsor and coordinate teams of local youth to participate in global village builds, particularly in Guatemala.

This trip to the far north is an offshoot of the same Bequest.

The couple recently returned to Simcoe County from a time in the Asia Pacific region where they have been doing what they describe as ?meaningful work sailing and living aboard their boat of the coast of Australia? for the past four years.

As a student from Banting Memorial High School, Melanie got her feet wet in the Darling Bequest program, volunteering within the community and internationally on a number of initiatives before launching into an international development career with a focus on humanitarian relief, youth empowerment, gender equality and inter-faith/religious peace building.

?Her recent work - as a Rotary World Peace Fellow, then with the UN Development Programme, and as an Advisor for World Vision country programs in Asia - builds on her experience leading field missions for health and education transformation, alongside marginalized and displaced peoples in Africa and South America. Back in Canada, Melanie is currently managing an international not-for-profit education program, coordinating cross-cultural learning/teaching exchanges between educators around the World,? according to the Trip Program. ?She is a lover of sharing stories, cultures, and spirit

through painting, dance, and wilderness interpretation.?

John Terry, a native of London, ON, brings to the program a background in finance, development and corporate law, along with a passion for ?reclaiming and repairing, gathering and sharing locally foraged foods on land and water.?

?Together, John and Melanie have worked under extreme conditions, from their first meeting in Nigeria, international careers, to sailing the treacherous Bass Strait Triangle around coastal Australia. As a team, they are committed to being a part of the change they dream for the world, through social and environmental justice, activism and off-the-grid living. They share many beliefs and philosophies, including bridging inequalities through a combination of love, curiosity, plurality and solidarity, towards Reconciliation.?

If you are a local student, teacher or youth between the ages of 18 and 30 ? or know someone who is ? who is deserving of the experience of volunteering and travelling with Habitat, applications are being accepted now through December 31.

For more information, email darlingbequest.habitat@gmail.com or call (647) 654-4188.