

National Campus Life Network aims for Alberta high school foothold

The National Campus Life Network (NCLN) is planning to expand its pro-life activism into 15 Catholic or Christian high schools across Canada – including four in Alberta – this school year.

A long-time presence on post-secondary campuses across Canada, this is the first foray hosting such a presence at the high school level.

“A lot of that work (in high schools) will revolve around general education about the pro-life position, presentations and activism,” said Ruth Shaw, NCLN’s executive director. “We have done a lot of work to identify partner teachers who are willing to aid in supporting pro-life clubs, displaying pro-life posters, activism and special campaigns.”

The unveiling of the school names will occur later this year, depending on when NCLN can make physical or virtual presentations in schools, Shaw said. In Alberta, the target schools are in Lethbridge, Calgary, High River and Okotoks. Other schools are in B.C., Saskatchewan and Ontario.

NCLN is predominantly known as an organization that empowers pro-life students on post-secondary campuses while engaging in earnest, ideally transformative discussions with abortion supporters.

Adaptation from this approach was necessary as only two of the 16 campuses with an NCLN presence – Trinity Western University in Langley, B.C., and the University of Calgary – will have students on campus in any capacity at the beginning of the fall semester.

Pro-life university student activists will be involved in the NCLN’s 2020-21 plan. They are undergoing training to give presentations in high schools alongside NCLN staff.

Shaw anticipates these presentations – launch dates will be based on school visitor guidelines in each jurisdiction – will be a powerful experience for the high school students.

“These presentations will also touch upon ‘if you’re ever feeling isolated or if someone is robbing you of dignity,’ it’s the same thing that happens to pre-born children. If you have ever gone through that experience, you wouldn’t wish that on anyone,” she said.

“There is a lot of youth that do come from broken homes or hostile living situations. They’re alone in a lot of ways, especially now due to COVID. We do hope we can provide some restorative healing for this generation because they

need it so badly.”

Student leaders will reach out to post-secondary peers in NCLN’s digital activism strategy.

“Digital activism is an initiative that follows the same three-pronged approach that NCLN takes on university campuses,” said Shaw. “The first is persuasion to the pro-life position; the second is building relationships with people who are not like-minded to you; the third is mobilization to the pro-life movement.”

Through healthy argumentation and concrete relationship building, NCLN hopes pro-abortion students will feel inspired to become supporters of the pro-life cause and become digital activists themselves. Invitations will be extended to supporters of abortion to join these conversations via NCLN’s national digital media platforms and campus-specific social feeds. These conversations aim not “to win a debate” but to recruit.

Shaw also teases that there are “plans in the works to push policy campaigns at universities,” but wouldn’t delve into specifics at this time.

A development that NCLN is endeavouring to combat is the ongoing “trivialization of abortion.” Shaw cites the rise of videos on the TikTok social media platform of girls celebrating their abortions, which was first widely reported in late February.

“We are concerned about the massive amount of TikTok videos of girls filming their abortions and putting it on TikTok for everyone to see, and they’re happy and laughing that they just aborted their child. So that is acutely our focus.”