

“Let’s Talk Shop”

“Let’s Talk Shop” is a facilitated evening event that brings volunteer parents of teens from one community together with volunteer teens from a different community in a confidential, respectful and safe environment. Through guided exercises and meetings, parents and teens are prepared for the event which seeks to: provide parent education, empower teenagers and to strengthen connections between the teen population and the adult population. After a light meal provided to all participants, parents sit in a circle amongst the teenagers and listen to them describe what it is like in *their* world – what pressures and issues North Shore teenagers struggle with. The teens share their insights on topics such as relationships with parents and peers, stress, school, drugs and alcohol, internet influences and other difficult but important issues. There is no glamorization of risky behavior nor is there opportunity to scare or mislead parents. In fact, parents walk away with a renewed sense of empathy and respect for young people, understanding of their challenges and confidence to be a more effective agent in their own teen’s life. The teenagers have a lot of fun and leave knowing they have made a valuable contribution to the adult community. Together with community partners, VCH staff provides a rare and empowering opportunity to build capacity in North Shore teenagers and parents.