

LWP moves into Leeds



LiveWorkPlay will help young people with developmental disabilities face the challenges of living independently

By Andrea Douglas

It's not often that an organization can come up with an innovative idea, sell it to a university and bring it to fruition all within a matter of weeks.

But that's exactly what two Carleton graduates have done – right here at their own alma mater.

The organization is LiveWorkPlay (LWP), a charitable organization that helps people with developmental disabilities. And the two graduates behind its inception are Keenan Wellar (M.A. 2001) and Julia Kingstone (B.A. Psych 99).

This summer, Leeds Residence will host a month long housing project for 10 adults with developmental disabilities. And for all 10, it will be the first time any have ever lived outside of their family homes.

These are all 20-something adults who fall in a grey area when it comes to housing needs. None are disabled to the extent that they need to live in a traditional group home. On the other hand, they're not ready to face the challenges of living independently in a standard apartment.

On June 21st these 10 adults will be moving into 3 of the suites in Leeds residence.

Wellar is quick to point out that without the agreement and support of Carleton's housing administration, the project might not have become a reality. But with the first phone call, Wellar found in John Tracey, Manager of Summer Accommodation Sales and Service, an eager and receptive audience.

"They phoned us and we said yes," says a rather matter-of-fact Tracey. "We try to welcome everyone. And this is a 'feel good' project for us." While Tracey admits he doesn't really know what to expect, he's got the staff resources on a 24-hour basis to help make this project a success.

And success is what Wellar is hoping for. "If all ten people are there at the end of the month, that in itself will be a success. These people have challenges, but they're aware of what most people their age are doing at this stage in their lives and they want to be a part of it. For them to say 'I lived away from Mom and Dad for a month' will be a tremendous source of pride and give them the confidence to take on even bigger challenges in the future."