

The Loft Youth Space Thrives in New Colborne Street Home

Just one year after opening its doors, The Loft—Fenelon Falls’ youth space operated by the BCG Kawarthas—has become a thriving hub for local kids and teens. What began in February 2025 in the basement of the United Church has now fully transitioned to its permanent home at 30 Colborne Street, where the program has been operating since October 2025. The move has accelerated growth, strengthened engagement, and expanded opportunities for youth in the community.

Participation Continues to Climb

Membership has quadrupled since launch, reaching 46 active youth as of early March 2026. Most participants are elementary school students, a pattern similar to the early days of the Club’s Lindsay location. Organizers expect a broader age mix in the coming years as current Grade 8 members enter high school in fall 2026 and as the new downtown location increases visibility and accessibility.

A Weekly Lineup That Resonates

The Loft runs Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from 2:30–6:00 p.m., offering a mix of practical skills, creativity, and social development:

- Cooking Tuesdays continue to draw the biggest crowds, giving youth hands-on experience in the kitchen.
- Arts & Crafts Wednesdays provide a creative mid-week outlet.
- Respect2Connect Thursdays, a healthy-relationships program, is now winding down after a successful run.

New additions to the space—including a pool table and video game console—have quickly become popular gathering points, helping create a welcoming, youth-friendly environment.

New Programs Coming This Spring

Beginning later in March, The Loft will introduce two new after-school offerings designed to reach even more youth:

- A STEM program on Thursdays will incorporate fun experiments and creations that allow youth to dive into the world of science and technology in a fun and engaging way
- A monthly queer youth night, launching as a pilot to assess engagement and community need.

These additions reflect the Club’s commitment to creating interest-driven spaces where young people can connect and feel supported.

Addressing Barriers and Planning for Growth

One ongoing challenge is transportation. Many students who rely on school buses find it difficult to stay after school for programs. The Club is actively exploring

transportation solutions that would allow more youth to participate and still get home safely.

Organizers also anticipate that summer programming, even at reduced hours, will help sustain momentum and attract new members.

A Clear Win for Fenelon Falls

Organizers describe The Loft's first year as "very successful," citing strong growth, high engagement, and overwhelmingly positive feedback from both youth and parents. With its new downtown home, expanding programs, and a growing membership base, The Loft is already delivering meaningful impact—and is poised to play an even larger role in the lives of Fenelon Falls youth in the years ahead.

by Craig Backman, Kawartha Works Community Co-op (KWCC)