

# Help for supportive housing

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Three years ago, Rabeya Klein hit rock bottom.

"I was suffering from depression and because I had a mental illness, I was at risk of losing my house," the Ottawa resident said.

But a move into supportive housing at McPhail House started her climb up.

"They gave me a safe place to stay," said Klein. "It was independent living and there was support as well. I didn't have to worry about my safety in the neighbourhood I was living in."

She left for a time, but returned in July after being diagnosed with bipolar disorder. "I'm a lot better," said Klein, now 33 and working as a French teacher. "It absolutely saved my life."

Representatives from 10 supportive housing agencies, like McPhail House, attended the launch of the Housing Plus Research Project at the University of Ottawa yesterday. The first of its kind, researchers will be looking at



Supportive housing tenant Rabeya Klein, left, and John Sylvestre, principal investigator for the Housing Plus Research Project, check out the website for Housing Plus yesterday.

ways to improve supportive housing in Ottawa.

Supportive housing is geared towards people suffering from mental illness, substance abuse or HIV/AIDS, said John Sylvestre, an assistant professor at uOttawa's school of psychology and the Housing Plus Research Project's principal investigator.

"The first step is getting them housing and the second

step is getting them all kinds of support so that they're successful in keeping the housing," said Sylvestre.

A collaboration between researchers at uOttawa, Carleton University and the Centre of Addiction and Mental Health, the project will allow support housing agencies in Ottawa to compare and share best practices.

While there are 800 tenants

in Housing Plus today, there are still 2,000 more units needed. Support housing is a cost-effective way of preventing homelessness, said Sue Garvey, executive director of Cornerstone.

"It's much less expensive to have people in good housing that meets their needs with the support that they need," she said.

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