

CCS to walk with the community to raise money for homelessness

Written By ALYSSA PARKHILL

Coldest Night of the Year is an annual walk for members of the community to raise money for charities who support those struggling.

The event takes place all across Canada, with a total of 144 locations this year.

This is the first year Caledon is taking part in the event. It was noted that surrounding neighbours have been taking part in the event and Caledon Community Services thought it was time to join in.

‘We have a very viable program in our community that needs this kind of support,’ explained Nicole Hand, Chief Development Officer at CCS. ‘We decided just a couple months ago that we were going to jump in and join them.’

On Feb 22, Caledon Community Services is inviting members of the community to join them on a family-friendly walk to raise funds and awareness of those in need.

Some people may wonder, why are we raising money for homelessness in Caledon? It's simply the fact that, even though you may not see it on a day to day basis, it's definitely there, and is definitely a problem in Caledon.

‘I think all of us as a community, many of us are not aware that precarious housing, homelessness, food insecurity exists in our community. So, at this point we are really calling out anyone who would like to learn more about that, learn more about how CCS is helping to deal with those things and who has the time to be there and cheer on with us,’ said Hand.

There has been a large number of responses to the local event thus far, with many people having already signed up. With 59 walkers and 18 teams currently registered, there is plenty of room for more support.

‘We reached out to our local government, so we have a few councillors who've already signed up their teams. We've had some of our faith communities commit to bringing out their congregation, as well as some local business schools,’ said Hand. ‘We've tossed the net wide. These are the sorts of groups that have started taking calls and said, ‘we're with you’.’

Caledon has listed a goal of raising \$20,000. The event has raised \$5,498 so far and Ms. Hand looks forward to continuing to raise funds for the cause as the event date nears closer.

CCS feels so passionately about helping others in the community. Their entire platform is based on providing a better, healthier and happier life to everyone. They work to educate the community on the importance of helping out each other, and uniting as a community.

‘We are very blessed as a community. We live in a beautifully geographical area with an abundance of resources. And the importance behind this is to let people know that yes, we are all a part of this community. That there are so many of us that are falling below the line and in communities such as Caledon, it's hidden,’ said Hand. ‘Behind the beautiful homes, behind the beautiful landscapes, at parks and beautiful facilities that our town is able to help us provide the citizens of the town, there are these families who do not know where their next meal is coming from. Who do not know whose couch they're going to be surfing on that night.’

She added, ‘What we're trying to do is bring awareness to that. To those families in this community that are one paycheque away from not knowing where their next meal is coming from or where they're going to, or where they're going to put their children to bed.’

In total, The Coldest Night of the Year is aiming to raise \$6 million across Canada, with currently over \$2 million raised so far.

The event will take place on Feb 22, at the Caledon East Community Complex, the arena beside Town Hall on Church Road. Walkers are to arrive at 4 p.m. for registration and to prepare and gather to begin the walk. There are three separate routes to choose from, a two, five- and 10-kilometre route

The Town will be making an announcement before the walk, while some residents who are involved with CCS will share their personal stories with the community. At the end of the walk, CCS will welcome walkers in to the community complex for hot drinks, warm food and togetherness.

For more information about the Coldest Night of the Year event, or where to sign up and/or donate, please visit cnoy.org/caledon.