

Over \$100k raised for Caledon Community Services at Coldest Night of the Year walk]

By Zachary Roman

Well over 200 Caledon residents went on a walk with a purpose last Saturday evening.

On February 25, Caledon Community Services (CCS) hosted its Coldest Night of the Year (CNOY) walk in support of those facing hunger and homelessness.

The walk, which began in Caledon East, was one of many CNOY walks being held by community organizations all across Canada.

Ahead of the walk, a spirited fundraising campaign took place where walkers got pledges and tried to make their team the best fundraisers in Town.

CCS set an ambitious fundraising goal of \$100,000 and Caledon residents were up to the task, smashing past it and raising over \$105,000 as of press time. Donations will still be accepted at cnoy.org/location/caledon until March 31.

Caledon Firefighters fielded a team for the walk this year, just as they did in 2022. They were the top fundraising team again too, raising over \$17,000 in 2023, breaking their own impressive total of over \$14,000 from 2022.

Other top fundraising teams included the Terra Cotta Walkers, Mars Canada, Caledon Community Services, Town of Caledon, Holy Family Church, Caledon East United Church, Christ Church Bolton, Explore Yoga, and Dig A Little Deeper Psychotherapy and Counselling. Also integral to the success of the CNOY walk were a number of community sponsors.

CCS' Chief Development Officer, Mariia Kupriianova, said the walk was an amazing community effort.

"The energy, the overall vibe, the positivity, the team captains brimming with enthusiasm, more than 50 volunteers? it was a very uplifting community event," she said. "We're so grateful, we can't thank the community enough? the people that joined us, all of the walkers, the volunteers? our generous sponsors."

Kupriianova said with growing demand in the number of people that need support from CCS, the community support of the CNOY walk was very much needed.

"The beautiful spirit of our Caledon community was really shining through," said Kupriianova.

Something Kupriianova was happy to see at this year's walk was the amount of different kinds of teams who participated. There were businesses, faith groups, community teams, and even a school team. Some teams were led by newcomers to Caledon while others were led by people who have lived in Caledon for their entire lives.

"It's the commitment to help each other and support our neighbours in need that brought all of our teams together," said Kupriianova. "Every dollar raised helps us deliver services for the most marginalized in our community."

Caledon Mayor Annette Groves said CCS is usually Caledon's first to respond to emerging challenges in a growing Caledon.

"I know that you can't always plan for emergencies, and anyone can lose their footing at some point in their lives," said Groves. "I'm very proud of our generous and committed community that always steps up when people are struggling."

Kupriianova said during the walk, people were encouraged to reflect on what it would be like to not have a warm home to go back to, or not know when the next time they'll have a good meal is.

Reflecting and trying to put yourself in someone else's shoes is an important part of CONY walks.

Kupriianova said CONY walks are empowering as well, as you know you are walking alongside others in communities across Canada for a good cause.