

Coldest Night of the Year

by Marion Van Driel

So you've always wanted to do something real, something practical to help local people living on the street, but you didn't know where to start. Look no further. Your opportunity is coming to a neighborhood near you on February 23. So go ahead - bundle up for a few hours, walk to raise funds for food and services that help your local homeless community and help avert further homelessness. Bring your family, your co-workers, your cycling group, your walking group, your youth group, your book club, your seniors' group ... you get the idea. You'll also get a taste of what it's like to be outside in the cold - not all night long, but still. It could change your entire perspective on homelessness.

A location nearby

Coldest Night of the Year (CNOY) is held in districts across Canada as far as Yellowknife and St. John's to raise funds for local charities that support hungry, homeless and hurting people and vulnerable individuals and families, who need food and/or might be at risk of losing their home. There are 13 locations in the Lower Mainland alone.



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In Delta, Lorraine Yates with Deltassist is organizing CNOY in partnership with New Hope Church in North Delta for the second year in a row. She says the event brings together a beautiful diversity of people from young children to seniors - people of diverse race and faith, in a positive, fun environment. Almost 100 people walked in Delta last year, bringing in \$22,000. Yates sees that as a good foundation for subsequent annual walks. As a team leader, she says her group is very excited to participate again this year, with even better results.

Connecting opportunities

Churches are ideal hosts for this community event. New Hope Church in North Delta hosted last year (and will again) as home base, serving a meal at the end of the walk. It's an opportunity for the church to bless their community and partner together toward a common goal. For those who don't want to walk but still would like to be involved, volunteers are needed for registration, greeters, route marshals, rest stations, and other tasks.

Supporting home causes

Community proceeds stay there. Some of the funds raised last year in Delta went to emergency food bags - available at the Deltassist office, so

that people who come in can browse other services (counseling, transportation to appointments, home care, etc). In addition, a new community garden was created, in partnership with the Earthwise Society; this year fresh produce will also be available. The garden plot is ready, the seeds bought, and volunteers lined up. There will be a teaching program for kids and horticulture therapy. Additional proceeds supplement government funding, to cut the wait list of frail and low-income seniors who require services so they can remain in their own homes.

Business promo

In addition to a fun and worthwhile endeavour for individuals, families and groups, Yates promotes CNOY as an "opportunity for businesses to sponsor a great event; to get the cachet of being involved with a national event ... any major sponsor also gets their information posted on the national website."

Participants can walk two, five or ten kilometers - so choose your walk, pull together or join a team, register on cnoy.org - soon! Engage your community - shine your light!
www.cnoy.org