

OUR COMMUNITY

Campaign socks away hosiery for the homeless



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For people living on the streets and on their feet all day, a good pair of socks can be as important as a meal.

That's why a Victoria church minister is embarking on a campaign to collect 365,000 pairs of socks for the needy.

As part of that campaign, Beth Walker, a minister at Fairfield United Church, is challenging two schools in the neighbourhood to collect 7,200 pairs of socks in two weeks for those who rely on Our Place, an inner-city community centre for the vulnerable.

The facility distributes more than 100 pairs of socks a day.

The campaign, with the motto "Because you cannot survive the street if you do not have warm feet," sees the church teaming up with schools, businesses and individuals to achieve its goal.

"It is an opportunity to have conversations about homelessness," said Walker, who joined the Fairfield Church three years ago. "As the church serves the community, it is important that we find issues in common with our parishioners."

So far, she has rallied neighbours near and far to the cause: Sir James Douglas Elementary School, Little Hands Daycare, Cottage Bakery & Café, Duttons Real Estate, Fairfield Market, Fairfield Bicycle Shop, Fairfield Gonzales Community Association and Margaret Jenkins School.

Walker has already delivered a load of socks collected by the Fairfield Scouts and Guides.

The campaign begins Monday and continues until April 2.

The kickoff takes place at the 10:45 a.m. assembly of Sir James Douglas School on Monday.

Students in the class that brings the most socks will participate in a sock toss at the school on April 2.

Students at Margaret Jenkins school will also get to participate in a sock toss on April 2.

During that game, local "celebrities" — including Walker, Rev. Gail Miller, also of Fairfield United, Victoria Mayor Lisa Helps and Coun. Chris Coleman, Our Place executive director Don Evans and principal Brent Johnson — will hold the targets during the toss.

There will also be a sock toss at Fairfield United on April 5, after the 10 a.m. Easter celebration. For details, go to fairfieldunited.ca or ourplacesociety.com.

Student film focuses on aboriginal housing help

Two Camosun College students recently created a short video as a classroom assignment on one of the relatively new programs that Our Place offers.

The Melissa Roberts and Matt O'Connor video highlights the work of aboriginal housing advocates at Our Place.

The two housing-support workers, Eddie Mack and Derek Book, help the community centre's aboriginal family members get the help they require.

The program benefits from a grant from the Homelessness Partnering Strategy.

Mack and Book connect people with the resources they need to better manage their lives.

"We see a lot of family disruption," said Book. "Once they leave the reserve, all of their support network is gone."

The two work one-on-one with couples, families and individuals to create a case plan.

"Some of the people we work

with haven't seen their kids in a couple of months. They need ID, want to get into treatment, or need help navigating the system," Book said.

"It can beat you down," he added, "when you face so many struggles, can't find work and a landlord won't give you the time of day. It's tough."

They've helped house more than 20 aboriginal people in the past couple of months.

To see the video, go to ourplacesociety.com/aboriginal-housing-advocates.

Masquerade ball to raise funds for Zambian youth

Business students at Camosun College are hosting a masquerade ball to raise funds for rural youth in Zambia tonight.

The students are supporting the efforts of the Victoria International Development Education Association, a not-for-profit group that is one of Canada's oldest international development agencies, with a goal to inspire thought and action on global issues.

To that end, they are trying to raise \$4,000 so that Zambian youth, particularly girls, can attend this year's Teen Vision Conference.

The conference is an opportunity for the youth to develop personally and make an impact in their communities upon their return.

The masquerade ball will feature hors d'oeuvres, a performance by Wontanara Drum and Dance and a silent auction.

Tickets for the ball are \$40, or \$30 for students. The event runs 6 to 11 p.m. tonight in the ballroom of the Westin Bear Mountain Resort and Spa.

There is also a dodgeball event, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday at the Fernwood Community Centre. There will be door prizes, championship prizes and food. For details, go to videa.ca.

Cops do battle to support B.C. Special Olympics

It's cop versus cop at the Battle of the Badges, a fundraiser for Special Olympics of British Columbia on Tuesday.

This is the seventh year of what initially started as a low-key game of hockey. It has evolved into a competition for bragging rights between the Victoria Police Capitals and the Saanich Police Watchdogs.

Senior management from both organizations have embraced the opportunity to build camaraderie, with the losing team having to hoist and fly the winning department's flag in front of the losing team's office for the weekend following the game.

Cliff LeQuesne from 100.3 The Q radio will be the honorary master of ceremonies. Saanich Police mascot Ace will be there for the kids. Saanich Police Chief Bob Downie and Victoria Police Deputy Chief Del Manek are scheduled for a ceremonial face-off as well.

Admission is by donation. The game starts at 6 p.m. at Archie Browning Sports Complex, 1151 Esquimalt Rd. Proceeds benefit Special Olympics of British Columbia. For details, go to specialolympics.bc.ca.

Celebrate First Nations history, culture in Oak Bay

Everyone is invited to First Nations Night, a celebration of indigenous peoples' history and culture, in support of the Sno'yuyth pole project at the Oak Bay High School on Saturday.

The event features music by singers, dancers and drummers. There will be poetry and cultural presentations. First Nations food will be served at the event, sponsored by the Community Association of Oak Bay.

The event is to raise funds for a six-metre cedar totem pole designed by Songhees artist Butch Dick, along with his son and team. The pole will feature elements of



ADRIAN LAM TIMES COLONIST

Grant McKenzie, left, and Rev. Gail Miller, right, push Rev. Beth Walker in a bin full of socks at Our Place. The ministers from Fairfield United Church are leading a campaign to collect thousands of socks for homeless and vulnerable people who use Our Place, an inner-city community centre.



PHOTOS BY DARREN STONE, TIMES COLONIST



Left, Children's Health Foundation CEO Linda Hughes and director of development Norma Camera help Bon Macaron Patisserie owner Yann Fougere put together specially designed macarons that sold for \$2 each Friday in a fundraiser for the Children's Health Foundation of Vancouver Island. Jessica Woolard of the foundation estimated that buyers scooped up 150 cookies for the cause.

local history in its design: an Earth mother, eagle, salmon, camas and sea otter.

The name of the pole, Sno'yuyth, means "spreading good energy." It will be erected outside the new Oak Bay High School. The project is seen as a teaching tool about First Nations culture and a gesture of reconciliation.

Tickets are \$20 in advance or \$25 at the door. The event starts at 7 p.m. at the Oaks Restaurant and Tea Room, 2250 Oak Bay Ave.

For more information, call 250-590-3155 or go to caob.ca.

Peninsula Singers' gift supports music therapy

A gift from the Peninsula Singers will ensure patients at the Saanich Peninsula Hospital continue to receive the benefits from their music therapy program for another year.

The singers recently donated \$5,000 to the Saanich hospital foundation's music therapy program.

Music therapy engages all aspects of a person: the social, physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual. It distracts patients from sometimes unrelenting pain and relaxes them when stress and fear become overwhelming.

It can also ease the journey of those facing death, program organizers say. It provides an important balance to medical treatment.

"Peninsula Singers love music and know how good it is for the soul," said Karen Morgan, executive director of the foundation. "Patients and residents at the Saanich Peninsula Hospital are grateful to them for sharing that love with them. Their recent gift ... will assist in providing music therapy at the hospital, a therapy which results in improved spirits, cognition and a reduced need for medication."

The funds were raised through three Christmas concerts. It's the



KEVIN DOYLE

Sno'yuyth's carver Clarence Dick sprinkles tobacco on a 300-year-old, first-growth red cedar log at the carving shed on Songhees Reserve. It will be carved into a totem pole that will be erected outside the new Oak Bay High School.

seventh year the singers have donated to the program. Peninsula Singers is one of two groups underwriting the program.

For more information, go to peninsulasingers.ca or sphf.ca.

Community Achievement prizes for eight Islanders

Eight Vancouver Islanders will receive B.C. Community Achievement Awards this year. Premier Christy Clark and Keith Mitchell, chairman of the British Columbia Achievement Foundation, announced the list of recipients last week.

"These 2015 award recipients have all gone above and beyond to make their communities stronger," Clark said. "The whole

province can be proud of their contributions."

The winners will be honoured in a formal presentation ceremony at Government House in April.

The Island recipients, who each receive a certificate and a medalion designed by B.C. artist Robert Davidson, are:

- Wayne Beckett, Port Alice
- Pam Craig, Port Alberni
- Mavis DeGirolamo, Victoria
- Louis Druehl, Bamfield
- Dr. Jim Kirkpatrick, Victoria
- Darren and Beth Laur, Victoria
- Colin Smith, Victoria
- Bob Uden, Nanaimo

For background about the recipients, go to bcachievement.com/2015community/backgrounder.