

Week of Action Against Poverty 2014 Report

The slogan this year for Week of Action Against Poverty was *Small Actions/Big Spirits*. It brought a new dimension to the activities that touched deeper into individuals but privatized the actions to the degree that it was difficult to do a community tally. There were tangible results in donations and volunteerism but it was harder to track which donations/actions came directly as a result of the week's promotion.

There was more effort this year in documenting the planning phases of group activities to produce templates for future actions that ease preparations for volunteers.

Activities

As is tradition, the week opened with *Prayers from the Pulpit*. This project is supported by the local ministerial association. All local congregations were contacted by mail, fax or email.

People First and friends gathered on January 27 for their fourth year of ribbon making for the *Red Ribbon Campaign*. Requests for more ribbons came in and there was a scramble to do more ribbons in the week that followed. A total of 1500 red ribbons were distributed to 25 locations. Every financial institute in the community agreed to hang posters and hand out ribbons. Taylor Haney volunteered to deliver the ribbons to the distribution sites.

This year's keynote event was the *Focus on Food Security Resources* workshop. Ruth Illman and Judy Underwood organized this gathering of community food security partners for a collaborative mapping and resource development seminar. Over 25 community members attended and participated in the event. A full report will be available after the seminar's data has been sorted for distribution.

The *Walk in Our Shoes Poverty Challenge* featured two families who volunteered to live on the equivalent of social assistance for five days. Their blogs were excellent commentaries on the issues they faced. Participants were energetic in researching resources and bringing attention empathetically to those who struggle daily living on low incomes.

This year's Homeless in Kenora booklet, *Working and Still Poor*, focused on the struggles of local citizens who were working at either minimum wage or part-time jobs. Keeping housed is a challenge that marginal employment does not alleviate. The focus group was topical given the recent commitment to increase

the minimum wage and this encouraged media comment on the information contained within the booklets. The booklet launch was held at the Kenora public library and was a partnership between the Northwest District Health Unit, our own communications committee and the library. In addition to the booklets, Making Kenora Home donated copies of an excellent children's book, *The Cardboard Shack Beneath The Bridge* by Tim Huff, to the Kenora and Keewatin libraries. The same book was also donated by a private citizen to Ecole Ste. Marguerite Bourgeoys for their school library.

The school, SMB, was very active in WAAP participation. All 239 students wore red and fundraised a total of \$300.00 to donate to the Kenora Fellowship Centre. Mlle Kaitlin Bryck's grade 3 class agreed to give up individual valentine treats to pass through donations to the school drive. One of the youth participants in this year's Poverty Challenge spoke to a class on the impact of her participation to raise awareness of poverty impacts.

Beaver Brae Secondary School also benefitted the Kenora Fellowship Centre through the grade 10 civics class's winterwear drive. Yvonne Bearbull spoke to the class on the importance of their contribution as the piles of warm clothing were handed over for the benefit of the centre's patrons.

Confederation College participated on multiple levels. Wear Red day was successful amongst the staff. Students of the community development class developed an open facebook page to record participation in Week of Action Against Poverty.

Warmth was on many people's agenda during this year's event. The Lake of the Woods District Hospital held a mitt, hat and sock drive. The six boxes of donations were shared between the Fellowship Centre and Saakaate House. The health unit staff raised \$127.71 for the Fellowship Centre while the staff of Legal Aid Ontario and the Kenora Community Legal Clinic raised \$135.00 for Helping Hands. On February 10 the Making Kenora Home members donated all ingredients for a lasagne dinner and volunteered to prepare, serve and clean up to give the usual Helping Hands volunteers a day off of their very important work. The participants were delighted to bite down on the fresh home made baguettes baked and brought in by Henry and Anita Rasmussen. Crossfit Kenora followed this feast on the following day with the donation of a chicken dinner for all.

The Valentine's dinner at Knox Church counted 67 diners wearing red in support of our action week and brought in a pile of food donations for their food share cupboard. An Indian Taco Lunch project by the Kenora Fellowship Centre successfully raised much needed funds for their programming. Numerous donors and volunteers stepped forward individually to benefit local community

resources. These donations were kept private and not reported to the community tally.

Attending to the development of affordable housing, Keystone Lock & Safe donated door locks and installation to the upcoming Habitat duplex build. We are always pleased to see direct action on affordable housing.

The Kenora Senior's Coalition did a telephone tree to advocate for the needs of low income cardiac patients. The streaming of patients to Thunder Bay and Hamilton for cardiac care rather than Winnipeg has created financial burdens on low income citizens. Members of the coalition contacted our MPP to protest the provincial health care policies that have created this issue.

Closing out the week was a free public pancake flip offered by the local New Democratic Party association at Jubilee Church and a Skate for Memories fundraiser for the local Alzheimer Society.

Media Coverage

Although it was challenging to cover events that were reported after occurrence, the media strove to keep the Week of Action in the spotlight. Their efforts were much appreciated. There were 4 television interviews, 5 radio interviews, 6 newspaper articles with 7 photos and 2 organizational newsletter coverages.