

WAAP 2019 Report

The Week of Action Against Poverty was scheduled for February 10-16, 2019. Municipal council again issued a declaration proclaiming the event. The week opened as is tradition with *Prayers from the Pulpit*. Prayers and intentions were also undertaken by both St. Marguerite Bourgeoys and Pope John Paul II students.

People First assembled the ribbons for the *Red Ribbon Campaign* (1500). Unfortunately the support provided by KACL missed facilitating ribbon delivery and media contact with the volunteers so ribbons were not distributed as widely as in previous years.

Fewer groups reported participation in *Wear Red* on February 14 (NWHU, LAO and Valleyview School) however there was a reasonable response. The *Walk in Others Shoes* poverty challenge was undertaken by educators this year. There were 11 bloggers who elicited 3000 hits during the 5 day event. The book launch (*Homeless in Kenora-Stumbling Into Homelessness*) hosted by the library garnered 11 in attendance including 3 media representatives. The focus this year was on unexpected homelessness.

The *Musical Celebration* was held on February 6 at Sunset Grill. There were 8 acts and 5 presenters who showcased local anti-poverty work to the audience of approximately 60 persons. The event raised \$225 for the Coldest Night of the Year fundraiser. The general public enjoyed both this activity and the *Pool Party* sponsored by the local Rotary club on February 15. Approximately 75 persons took part in the free family swim. A thank you email with photographs was sent to the club's president.

ONWA (Ontario Native Womens Association) organized two workshops for low income persons on financial (Feb.11) and tenancy matters (Feb.14). Treaty 3 Governance made a generous (\$250) donation of food supplies to the Minto Family Resource Centre. The Ladies in Black-Warmth and Wellness group held an indoor garage sale which had great media coverage but a poor turnout. The group have stored the unsold items for a spring sale which generally has a larger attendance.

In addition to previously noted participation by St. Marguerite Bourgeoys, Pope John Paul II and Valleyview, other schools held awareness and fundraiser events. St. Thomas Aquinas held an *open presentation* on homelessness and a *Bake Sale* fundraiser benefitting the Fellowship Centre. Keewatin Public School raised \$140 for the school breakfast program through *Evrett's Pink Popcorn* sale on Feb.15. St.Louis School donated the proceeds from their *Family Ice Fishing Day draw* (Feb.17) to Helping Hands. Finally, Valleyview's *food drive* resulted in a significant donation to the Fellowship Centre.

A new event this year was the Office Challenge. Four offices joined in the friendly competition that benefitted community poverty resources. The staff of the Legal Aid Ontario/Northwest Community Legal Clinic held a *clothing drive* that yielded 120 kgs of clothing for Twice As Nice and suitcases for the Fellowship. The Kenora Dental Professionals raised \$110.00 for *emergency food supplies* and 3 boxes of *winterwear*. The local ODSP office held an *internal raffle* that funded 3 boxes of food for the Minto Family Resource Centre. The busiest office was the NWHU (Northwest Health Unit) who held a different event every day of the work week. Activities included a *clothing drive* (62 kgs donated to the Fellowship Centre), *Healthy Muffin* distribution (30 individuals), an educational event (*Gabor Mate YouTube video*) and a *Perfect Parfait* fundraiser (\$105.70 to the Fellowship Centre). The most effective challengers were the financial specialists at Copperfin Credit Union who raised *\$452 plus food donations* for the King George breakfast program which made them the official community champions of this office challenge.

The media was supportive of all efforts as they have been over the years. In addition to the general reporting and publicizing, the Lake of the Woods Enterprise *poll* focused on WAAP participation and reported 43% participation by those who were polled. This was followed up by the March 9 *editorial* that commended the community for the collaborative actions that are leading change for all of us.