

WAAP 2020 Report

The Week of Action Against Poverty was declared by municipal proclamation for February 9-15. The tension that has arose last summer with the temporary closure of the new emergency shelter facility still lingers and impacts community enthusiasm for the homeless population and specifically those struggling with drug addictions. In addition, the impacts of the provincial budget plans are rattling many service agencies with uncertainty.

Yet again, People First assembled and distributed the ribbons for the *Red Ribbon Campaign* (1000). The media coverage was excellent and the distribution ran smoother than last year. Participation in *Wear Red* on February 14 continues albeit with fewer reported group actions.

The Summer of Love fundraiser by the local musical community raised \$1315 for the Coldest Night of the Year campaign which benefits both the Kenora Fellowship Centre and Jubilee Church. Attendance was very good (approximately 75). Trylight Theatre offered space and 35 persons volunteered under the able leadership of Cathy Petracek to stage the spectacular with 10 musical acts contributing to the concert. Interest is already rising for next year's event.

The *Walk in Others Shoes* poverty challenge was not undertaken this year because of a lack of volunteers. Several individuals did step up at the last minute but it was too late to promote the event effectively.

Because of the increased stigmatization of those struggling with severe addictions, this year's edition of Homeless in Kenora focused on their housing needs. The booklet (subtitled See Me, Not Meth) provided an opportunity for those most impacted to share their experiences, for basic information on the issue and for public discussion of the issue. The event was again hosted at the library. The chair of the library board, Marg Poirer, and head librarian welcomed the audience of 12 with gracious words and snacks. The conversation was energized by the personal sharing of those present and those whose voices were released by their stories. attendance including 3 media representatives. The focus this year was on unexpected homelessness.

ONWA (Ontario Native Womens Association) organized a coffee conversation (February 10) and a workshop on tenancy matters held February 13. Attendance between both events was 16 persons.

Because of the rotating strikes within the education system, we did not seek participation through the schools however 4 events emerged that showed the caring that continues to exist despite labour unrest. Both the public and Catholic unions gathered donations during their picket actions. The OETA collected food for the Salvation Army while the EFTO focused on warm socks during their snowy walk which were donated to the Fellowship Centre. Two teachers from St. Thomas Aquinas requested presentations for their students during WAAP. The grade seven students learned about *Homelessness in Kenora* while the grade eight students looked at the *Dynamics of Poverty*.

All of the financial institutions in Kenora participated in postering their facilities and providing information for low income individuals on the grants available for RESPs and RDSPs. These grants have not been accessed by many of those who qualify for the benefit.

The Hot Meal Challenge was launched again. To date 3 organizations have made commitments to benefit local emergency meal providers with a "vacation" while they take on the cost and facilitation of a community meal. Making Kenora Home hosted a chicken stew luncheon on February 10 (Fellowship Centre) while First Baptist took over the kitchen at Jubilee for a chili supper on February 13. Compassionate Kenora's event is to be announced.

Prayers from the Pulpit continued congregational commitments to prayer support. The Northwest Health Unit raised money for the Fellowship Centre through their Valentine's popcorn fundraiser. The Kenora Fellowship Centre offered a meaningful sharing during their Letting Our Light Shine event. A video of this event has been shared online.

The media's support of the campaign was much appreciated. All local media did extensive promotion of the Summer of Love concert. The Daily Miner News did 5 feature stories and an editorial. The Lake (89.5) aired interview pieces to raise awareness of activities.