

Hot food and warm reception

Inn from the Cold offers escape from the cold for those who need it

By Matt Desouza

For the past seven years, the Salvation Army, located in downtown Belleville, has been offering those in need a chance to escape from the cold in a warm place with a hot meal.

During the months of November through March, Inn from the Cold opens its doors seven days a week to anyone who feels the need to get out of the cold, providing them with a warm-up station. Patrons can enjoy a hot drink, visit with others and enjoy a full-course meal.

The program is overseen and run by event co-ordinator Abbey Mills.

"They are able to get a hot meal, beverages, dessert and sandwiches are also offered all at no cost. They are able to stay and socialize with friends, watch TV, play games, whatever they like. We are open to the public six to nine p.m. every night."

A great sense of community is felt inside the Salvation Army, with a handful of local corporations such as Tim Hortons, Ralph Neale's Dodge, Reid's Dairy and Pizza Pizza donating weekly to provide for those in need.

"We've also had a very generous donation from Pizza Pizza. On Sunday nights for six weeks starting in December, they sent pizza down for 50-60 people. That was a real treat."

On an average night, the Inn from the Cold program sees between 50-100 people. Some stay just for the meal, while others stick around for the whole duration, chatting with friends, reading the newspaper and watching TV. All customers come from different walks of life, with a majority of them homeless or at risk of being homeless.

Mills employs a handful of volunteers who are on hand each night helping with the cooking and preparation of the meals,



Photo by Matthew Desouza

Volunteer Karm Knapp hands out meals during dinner service at Inn from the Cold at Salvation Army in downtown Belleville.

along with serving, cleaning and dish-washing duties.

Similar services are offered in the Belleville area for those in need, but not to the extent of the Inn from the Cold program, said Mills.

"There will be another evening meal program at Eastminster United starting toward the end of February, the last six weeks of winter. Also Night Light is another program that will be starting next week here in Belleville. It will offer more

of the social aspect. Less focused on food and more focused on spending time together and interacting," she explained.

Whether you're in need of a hot meal or just simply looking to socialize, the Salvation Army's Inn from the Cold program

has been providing Belleville with a great service and will continue to do so for as long as possible.

"The program will end mid-March this year as it always does, but we'll be ready to go again in November."

Sleep Out! supports those who live on streets

Market Square will be the location for mental health association event to help fund transitional housing

By Anna Brown

The seventh annual Sleep Out! So Others Can Sleep In event is set for Jan. 31 at the Market Square in downtown Belleville.

The sleep out is organized to raise money for the Canadian Mental Health Association of Hastings and Prince Edward transitional housing programs. The organization helps homeless people and families have a better life.

According to the mental health association,

"Sleep Out! So Others Can Sleep In, creates awareness and raises money to help support our four transitional houses in our area for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness."

This year, the local association hopes to raise \$12,500, \$2,500 more than last year. This extra funding will help assist adults in need.

Last year, approximately 250 people crowded into Market Square to spend the night in the bitter cold. They were bundled in as many layers as possible and most were sipping hot chocolate.

Shelters ranged from boxes shaped like houses and painted with extravagant designs to simple shelters that consisted of a large cardboard box and some blankets. People laid out tarps to keep the shelters dry from the snow that covered the ground and floated lightly from the sky around

them.

The current weather forecast for Jan. 31 is -15 C, but with wind chill, that will feel like -19 C. There is a 25 per cent chance of precipitation. North-easterly gusts of wind of 23 km/h are forecast, which may cause issues with the cardboard shelters that volunteers make and spend the night in.

The sun is expected to set at 5:18 p.m. so most of the event, as usual, will be spent in the dark. The light from the rows that line the market square will give enough light for people to socialize and safely settle in.

Elisha Coleman, a second-year paralegal student at Loyalist College, has done the sleep-out for six years. This year will be her seventh.

"It will be the warmest [it's been] but the longer you are out there, the colder it feels."

"Any one of us could find ourselves on the streets in the blink of an eye. So many factors can lead to homelessness. While some people do in fact make choices that lead them to the streets and do not have the desire to help themselves, there are many more out there who do not have the choice. There are working individuals that still cannot afford a roof over their heads," said Coleman.

This year, Coleman is being joined by friends Chis Jeffs and Caitlin Mortarino, neither of whom as done the Sleep Out! before.

Jeffs, a 32-year-old Belleville resident, decided to do the Sleep Out! because "it goes for a good cause and I have known people that have been homeless. I expect it's going to be fun and cold, very cold. But it will be a real eye-opener on what homeless have to go through during the winter."

Road crews work hard to keep streets clear

Changing temperatures impact on condition of county roads

By Adam Dietrich

In the weeks since the ice storm hit Prince Edward County, snow removal crews have been working tirelessly to keep the 1,100-km network of roads, connecting the various communities of the county together, clear and safe.

"It's the worst one I've seen since '97," said Jack Werkhoven, crew foreman. "In some cases, the grader is pushing up to three inches of ice off the shoulders of the road."

Temperatures have ranged from -27 C with the wind chill to as high as 8 C, said machinery operator Dwayne Isenor. Those changes have caused a whole new slew of problems for county residents and crews.

"You don't wanna drive it, but we have to clean it," he said.

The Prince Edward County snow removal crew consists of 30 employees who manage the whole county. Since the ice storm hit the region just before Christmas, workers have been on almost constant 24-hour rotations, said Brian Read, supervisor of the county's snow removal crew.

"We're literally working with everything we've got," said Read, "and that's barely keeping us up with what's next."

In order to deal with the situation, the county has had to hire on at least seven contract trucks to help. Read said he estimates that total costs for snow removal could reach as high as \$2.5 million this year.

"Public safety is priority number one," said Read.

It's not just snow and ice that's the problem on the roads, though. As the temperatures rise, the snow and ice melt. Because it takes a long time for it to disappear, in some cases the road's catch basins remain frozen and so flooding occurs, said Read.

Crews try to manage this by us-

ing a calcium salt mix and machines to steam the ice in the catch basins, freeing up the flow of water, he added.

Another major issue is the re-freeze. In addition to causing all the newly melted ice and snow to re-freeze, it also causes water, which has pooled in the potholes, to freeze and in some cases expand in pre-existing potholes. Read acknowledged this is one of the most damaging features of the recent weather, as well as one of the hardest things to fix at this time of year.

Brad Vaughan, a resident of Carrying Place, said that County Road 3 near his house has always been in disrepair. "The biggest issue, in my view, is the potholes. They've always been there and they're a hazard for drivers, especially those with lower cars," he said.

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Resident Brad Vaughan

Those potholes can be made bigger, icier or more slippery in conditions like those of the last few weeks, said Read.

Vaughan said the county's crews have been doing a good job keeping up with the demands of the inclement weather that has hit the region. This echoes what workers like Isenor have been hearing on the job.

"People have stopped the trucks on occasion to tell us what a great job we've been doing. That never happens," he said.

"The public in general has been really understanding and patient," said Read. "This year has been unlike any other in terms of what the weather has thrown at us."



Photo by Adam Dietrich

Ron Hubbs, a machinery operator with Prince Edward County, grades the side of County Road 3 in Albury, on Tuesday. The built-up snow and ice can narrow roadways and choke water drainage routes.