

Helping the Homeless in Chatham-Kent

What is a homeless person? Is it men, women or children? All of the above. Is it young people or older people? Both. Is it people who are unemployed or people who are working? Either one. Is it by choice?

Some people spend their days walking the streets. Some couch-surf at different friends' homes every night. Some sleep on the sidewalk or in a park or in a bus stop shelter. Some go to shelters where they can spend the night, take a shower, have a meal, search the Internet for job opportunities and talk to others.

The homeless are here in Canada and in every country in the world. They are in small towns and large cities. They are of every race, creed and age. Misfortune, illness, drugs, abuse and poverty leave them without a home.

What have the CWL councils of Chatham-Kent done to help turn this around?

Many councils have donated money after having held fundraisers. It went to local shelters such as New Beginnings and Hope Haven where it helped pay the bills and bought supplies. It went to a Chatham restaurant called Shepherd's Way Inn where poor and homeless citizens can come in off the street and receive a free meal. It went to the Walk With Me program at Right to Life Kent which prepares new mothers to provide a good home for their babies. Money was given to people in our area whose homes were flooded. Even people overseas, in the country of Uganda in Africa, received money from councils toward building a home; many there cannot afford materials to build a simple house. Parents die of Aids which often forces grandparents to raise their grandchildren.

Councils also made donations of items. They collected food for area food banks in the city and in the small towns of Chatham-Kent. They collected for St. Vincent de Paul, shelters, Chatham Right to Life Kent and Refuge, the Migrant Worker Ministry, the Salvation Army, Food for Hunger, the Chatham-Kent Women's Centre. Warm clothes and toiletries were gathered. Our councils also fed the mind by donating books.

In Chatham, Hope Haven, a men's shelter, is only licensed to provide beds for 10 people each night. At 11 p.m., the rest of the men must be turned away, even in frigid weather. Hope Haven receives no government funding. They need money, and volunteers from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. They need clothing, food and hygiene products.

Members of the CWL and guests, we all have a place to sleep tonight, we all have plenty to eat and we own enough clothing for every season. Homelessness will not go away any time soon. Our efforts to help must continue.