

‘Skid row CEO’ pushes for change



Joe Roberts arrived at Langley's Gateway of Hope homeless shelter on Tuesday pushing a shopping cart all the way from Calgary to raise awareness about at-risk youth. This is his dry run for his Push For Change tour across Canada next May.

Monique TAMMINGA/Langley Times

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By [Monique Tamminga - Langley Times](#)

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A former homeless man turned successful business person pushed a shopping cart from Calgary all the way to Langley, arriving at the Gateway of Hope on Tuesday afternoon.

Since July 1, Joe Roberts, who dubbed himself the "Skid row CEO" has been pushing a shopping cart more than 1,000 kilometers to raise money and awareness about youth at-risk of becoming homeless.

He walked 1,171 kilometres in total, and 24 km per day, in some of the hottest weather, in the steepest terrain in Canada in hopes his "Push For Change" campaign would "inspire the country to look at the situation of homeless kids."

Many stops along the way have been at Salvation Army homeless shelters, he said. "The Salvation Army was there for me 25 years ago and here I am again being welcomed home," said Roberts when he arrived at the Gateway of Hope.

"When we make friends we don't want to lose them," responded SA Major James Hagglund.

Roberts will end this tour at the very shelter that helped him turn his life around 25 years ago, at the Downtown Eastside Salvation Army Harbour Light on East Cordova on Saturday.

Roberts began using drugs at the age of nine, dropped out of school by 16 and started living in the Downtown Eastside at 18.

After getting clean and sober, Roberts earned several degrees and took the business world by storm and now is a motivational speaker among other ventures.

While successful himself, he felt he needed to do something to shine a light on a situation he is all too familiar with himself.

“We don’t have illusions that we will end youth homelessness but we need to try,” he said.

“These kids are worth it. They have possibilities. I know that because I was one of them.”

Vancouver has the highest youth homeless population in the country and very few shelters for them.

A youth shelter was discussed for Langley but the logistics of housing teens is more challenging than adults, said the Salvation Army at the time.

Roberts said the Aldergrove Neighbourhood Services is doing a lot to help youth here.

The level of interest in his cause has been much more than he ever expected, he said.

Many corporations and businesses have sponsored his cause and donations have been plenty, including the RV that has come along with him.

Even the modified shopping cart was created by high school students his wife works with as a teacher.

“When we go national we hope this groundswell of excitement will grow and inspire a nation.

“We hope our Push For Change cross-country tour will inspire the nation like Terry Fox did.”

Roberts plans to make a cross-Canada tour next May, pushing his cart 8,000 kilometres from Newfoundland to Vancouver.

Check out www.thepushforchange.com or the facebook page.