

Nationwide cart push on tap



Kevin Pidduck (from left), Marissa Bejer, Colton Archambault, Steve Farrington and Donna Foubert, all of Cloverdale Paint, show their support for Joe Roberts (far right) during a stop on Roberts' practice journey from Calgary to Vancouver. Roberts plans on pushing a cart across Canada next year as part of the Push For Change campaign.

Andre Lodder/ Morning Star

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By [Andre Lodder - Vernon Morning Star](#)
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Being homeless and pushing a shopping cart up and down East Hastings in Vancouver is never easy.

But that's where Joe Roberts was in 1989. After cleaning up, going to school and becoming a successful businessman, Roberts should have no reason for pushing a cart ever again.

Yet that's exactly what he's planning on doing next May. However, rather than taking his cart up and down East Hastings, Roberts will be trekking across the country to help prevent at-risk youth from pushing the cart like he did in '89.

Roberts and his cart recently stopped at Cloverdale Paint in Vernon as part of a trial run from Calgary to Vancouver that will hopefully work out the kinks and promote the journey.

According to Kevin Pidduck, the regional manager at Cloverdale Paint, they chose to support the cause because it fits in directly with the company's values.

"We're a family owned business, being a family-based and people-based company, and this cause is about people," said Pidduck.

"This is something we thought fit well with who we are and who we stand for."

The support from Cloverdale is felt by Roberts and his crew, and they know it's not only about the money.

"It's not just the gift of treasure it's the time and people. They share the possibility with us and get it at a high level inside the company," said Roberts.

Roberts hopes to arrive in Vancouver to complete the practice run by the end of August, but the big trek is set to launch from St. John's, Newfoundland on May 1 of next year.

It's not the first time the trek has been done, many people have tried it including Rick Hansen and Terry Fox, some of the Roberts inspiration. However, Roberts and his partners were looking for a different method, something Roberts can relate to.

"No one's ever pushed a shopping cart across the country," said Roberts.

The idea stemmed from Roberts past, a past that he hopes young kids won't have to endure.

"We believe in the brilliance and the possibilities with kids at-risk. We believe it because I was one of those kids that used to live under a bridge.

"I managed to get my life together, go to college, and within 10 years go from the kid pushing the shopping cart to being on the cover of Maclean's magazine," said Roberts.

A year after some Olympic athletes will be finished their marathons, Roberts will be walking his own marathons, only he'll be doing them for days on end.

He hopes to average 150-200 kilometres per week, and Roberts knows it will be tough, but he also knows he has the motivation, a different kind of motivation than those competing in the Olympics. Something that even a 45-year-old non-athlete can tap into.

“There’s an amazing thing that you begin to tap into, and that’s purpose. If you got purpose and you know why you’re doing something, then that’s connected to the big picture,” said Roberts.

For Roberts, helping and supporting at-risk youth is just as important as walking into a business meeting and doing well.

“I can go and speak to a thousand business guys, no problem, go in crush it and get paid well. I go for free and talk to a group of high school kids and I’m able to connect with them on a deeper level than their parents, teachers, councillors and spiritual leaders, because I’ve been there and I understand where they’re at,” said Roberts.

“Having realized that, I don’t want to let that perish, I want to milk that, and that’s really what the Push for Change is about.”

For more information on Roberts and his journey, visit www.thepushforchange.com.