

City's Push for Change

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Becca McLellan, director of the Why Not Youth Centre, shows Wayne Branchaud the rear of the Colborne Street facility. Branchaud is the community champion for Push The Change, which will provide half the proceeds from Sunday's event to Why Not, which hopes eventually to add a second storey to the centre for meeting and counselling rooms. (Brian Thompson/The Expositor)

Residents have a chance to put the spotlight on homelessness on Sunday when Joe Roberts, the Skid Row CEO, brings his Push for Change campaign to **Brantford**.

"This is a chance to make a difference, to help change the status quo," said Wayne Branchaud, who, with wife Deirdre, organized the **Brantford** visit.

"What I'm telling people is that the experience is free but the memories will be priceless," said Branchaud, who is managing partner of Stepright Capital Planning, a financial planning firm in St. George. "This is an important campaign, a historic effort, and we have an opportunity to be part of it."

Roberts became known as the Skid Row CEO after he rose from a homeless heroin addict to become CEO and president of MindwareDesignsCommunications in Vancouver. He is now a motivational speaker and author.

To bring attention to the problem of homelessness and to raise funds for programs, Roberts is pushing a shopping car across Canada. His 9,000-kilometre trek started in St. John's N.L on May 1 and is slated to end in Vancouver on Sept. 30, 2017. The initiative is expected to include more than 400 community events in all provinces and territories.

Branchaud said residents can gather to meet Roberts at noon Sunday at the McDonald's restaurant at 27 Stanley St.

"From there we'll walk to the Sanderson Centre," he said.

"We're hoping to get 900 people out for the walk."

Branchaud said everyone is invited to listen to Roberts speak at 2 p.m at the Sanderson Centre.

"There will be an additional 200 tickets at the door."

Young people from Why Not City Missions will be part of the event. They will be collecting donations during the walk.

Organizers are hoping to raise \$100,000 locally, with half going to Why Not City Missions and the other half to The Push for Change, a charity co-founded by Roberts in 2011.

Since 2002, Why Not City Missions, founded by Charlie and Sue Kopczyk, has helped local at-risk youth through a variety of programs.

The initiative is being supported by Justin Bester, president of Rotary Club of Brantford Sunrise, and Sherry Kerr, president of the Rotary Club of Brantford. They are spending Saturday night in Victoria Park to raise awareness of youth homelessness.

Fundraising for Push for Change will continue until the end of the month.

So far, about \$3,000 has been raised but Branchaud said he is confident that people will step up to the challenge.

"It's an important issue," he said.

"A lot of the kids who are homeless are struggling with a lot of different problems and often feel cut off from their families and other sources of support.

"This is about helping people see that there is more to them than they know, helping them become the people they can really be."

To learn more about the local Push for Change campaign, visit <http://bit.ly/2eucxZh>.

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