

Tournaments serve to combat homelessness

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Dave Dawson/ The Packet & Times Jamie Ruffolo and Justin Bergsma, pupils in Patrick Fogarty's new student leadership in sports course, are helping to organize a pair of events to raise money for Push for Change. Players from the school's various basketball teams will play against the OPP Thursday at 1 p.m. and students from all three city secondary schools will participate in a ping-pong tourney Dec. 13 to help raise funds for Push for Change and raise awareness about youth homelessness.

Students at Patrick Fogarty Catholic Secondary School are using sports to push for change.

When school principal Carolyn Healy learned about the national Push for Change movement, she encouraged Fred Bosco, who teaches a new student leadership in sports course, to invite the students to put the curriculum into practice.

The students embraced the idea and, with Bosco's help and the assistance of Const. Andrew MacDonald – the school's OPP liaison officer – they quickly planned two events. The first will be a basketball game Thursday against a team of OPP officers.

"We chose five students from each of our school teams – junior boys, senior boys, junior girls and senior girls – who will play against the police," said Jamie Ruffolo, an enthusiastic student of the new course. "Each class can participate by paying \$2 to buy out of class and go to the gym to watch the game."

Half of the proceeds from the game, which will tip off at 1 p.m. Thursday at the Commerce Street school, will go to Push for Change while the other half will go to the Orillia Youth Centre to aid youth homelessness.

Fogarty is also organizing a ping-pong tournament for students from all three city secondary schools.

“We’re hoping to set up 10 ping-pong tables in the gym and have games going non-stop after school on Dec. 13,” said Justin Bergsma. “Officer MacDonald is going to play and he’s arranging to have prizes available. It should be a lot of fun.”

The hope is 20 students from each school – 10 singles and 10 doubles – will play. Cost for a single player is \$15 and cost for a doubles-team participant is \$10. All proceeds benefit Push for Change, which is the brainchild of Joe Roberts, who was homeless as a youth. He is pushing a shopping cart across Canada and will make a stop in Orillia Jan. 1. The 17-month, coast-to-coast journey is meant to raise awareness about youth homelessness.