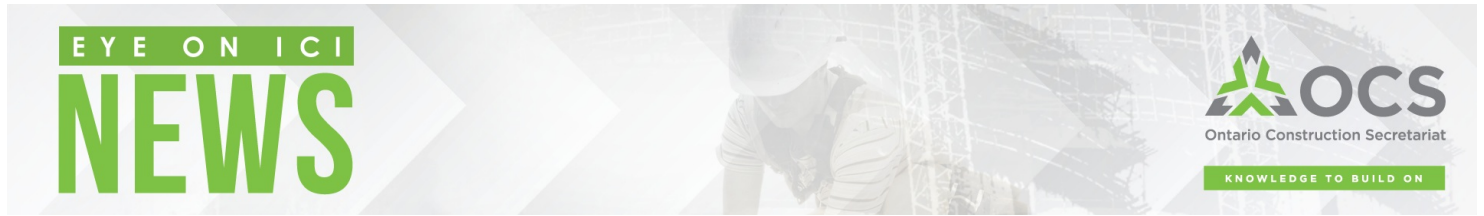


# January 2017 – Article: Making a Difference- The UA Way

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## MAKING A DIFFERENCE – THE UA WAY



It's the middle of January – temperatures are cold, snow is blowing and Joe Roberts is in the midst of pushing his shopping cart from Newfoundland to British Columbia. These days, he's making his way through Northern Ontario – undoubtedly the toughest part of his cross-Canada journey to end youth homelessness.

It was almost 30 years ago that Roberts was homeless and barefoot under a bridge in Vancouver, having sold the boots off his feet to fuel his heroin addiction. However, with the help of his mother and strong support network, Roberts got clean and today is the CEO of a successful multimedia company.

In an [article](#) written by MediaPlanet, Roberts is quoted as saying *“I achieved everything I'd ever wanted before I was 35. My bucket list was ticked, but I wasn't any happier or more fulfilled inside. That's when I started asking myself what my legacy was going to be.”*

Enter the [United Association \(UA\) of Canada](#) and in particular [Local 46](#) representing plumbing, steamfitting and welding professionals in Toronto. Together with the [Quality Control Council \(QCC\)](#) which is part of the UA and [Boilermakers Local 128](#), the organizations are the major sponsor of Joe's Push For Change.

This partnership began in the fall of 2015 when the UA invited Joe to speak at the Toronto Canadian Conference in conjunction with Local 46's 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary. It was on that occasion that Joe met with John Telford, former Director of Canadian Affairs for the UA and his successor, Steve Morrison and representatives from Local 46, who were so inspired by Joe's words and commitment that they asked if there was anything the UA could do.

Dave Griffiths, the Central and Atlantic Region Business Representative for the QCC, says when Joe responded “absolutely”, the UA jumped in with “both feet” and promised that for every dollar raised by UA locals from coast to coast, the UA Canadian Head Office would match the amounts, which to date has resulted in \$500,000 towards Joe’s efforts.

*“This is a great vehicle for the UA and the Quality Control Council”, says Griffiths. “Not only are we on every piece of their marketing, Joe mentions the UA and QCC at every turn. We want young people to know about the trades. We’re not the big bad union – we help people. That’s what we’re all about.”*

There’s no better example than downtown Guelph, Ontario where Local 46 brother Luke Mantin and his family operate **Breezy Corners Restaurant**. Griffiths, who lives in Guelph, happened to mention the Push For Change while enjoying breakfast with his family one morning before the holidays.

*“Luke immediately suggested to me a breakfast with Joe”, says Griffiths. “He said he’d like to open up the restaurant, donate the food and staff and host a breakfast with Joe.”*

The busy restaurant filled with homeless youth from downtown Guelph enjoying a hot breakfast is where the Ontario Construction Secretariat (OCS) caught up with Dave and Joe.

In the trades, UA members typically work six 10-hour shifts or seven 12-hour shifts during shutdowns. Griffiths says Joe is working 7-24 – engaging communities, going to schools, and in the evenings, he is doing presentations along with attending other special events.

*“So our 7-12’s don’t even compare to what Joe is doing” says Griffiths. “He is doing it for 517 days straight and 9,000 kilometres, and what he’s doing ties into what the UA does. We build and work as a team. We help each other and through Joe’s initiative, we’re raising money to help his cause and Canada.”*

That’s the UA way!

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*Inset: Joe Roberts pushing his shopping cart in Northern Ontario, as part of his journey from Newfoundland to British Columbia.*

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