

# Everyone, in Parry Sound and afar, needs a home

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Parry Sound North Star

There are certain things everyone needs – food, shelter and clothing.

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Shelter.

We can be forgiven for thinking that everyone has a bed as warm as ours to crawl into at night. We can be forgiven for thinking that all our community's children are home happily getting ready for bed and our young adults are sleeping at a friend's just as they did during slumber parties of younger years. But that's not always the case.

Joe Roberts is walking across the county in The Push for Change raising awareness about youth – aged 13 to 24 – who don't have safe, consistent housing, but instead spend their nights on the couches of friends and family, on the streets or stay in an unsafe home.

The goal of The Push for Change is to prevent our young from becoming homeless in the first place. It's a goal and inspirational call to action. Tied to Roberts own history with addiction and homelessness as a young adult, it harkens to the memory of Terry Fox and Rick Hansen in overcoming personal adversity to affect societal change.

Roberts is pushing a modified shopping cart across the country making himself a topic of conversation in classrooms and coffee shops and offering up his story as an ember to spark change in our way of looking and thinking about youth homelessness.

As a society we've talked about ending poverty, tackling homeless and ensuring everyone has the help they need for any problems they face, but while we've come far, no one can stand up and say we've succeeded.

That doesn't mean we stop trying.

Roberts is walking in the cold, slush, snow and ice.

He seems pretty determined to do everything within his power to save a generation of young people from finding themselves on the streets as he did.

As we've seen with an overnight campout with local firefighters and police officers, his message is being picked up.

Wednesday, Jan. 11, he'll speak to high school students and to the public in two separate talks. Maybe some in the audience will pick up the call and move forward with it here even as Roberts sets out to accomplish another 24-kilometre stretch.

And maybe, in 30 years The Push for Change walks will be held in communities from coast-to-coast-to-coast marking the anniversary of when things turned around.

It's a noble goal, a noble dream, and one we can all help accomplish.

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