

Manuela Byrnes and her over 500 pairs of Socks

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Along Joe Robert's Push for Change walk in Ontario, various OPP officers have walked with him; providing support, company...

At the Michipicoten Memorial Community Centre on February 15th, 2017, Joe Roberts came to Wawa. As part of his presentation to the community, Superior East OPP Detachment – Wawa Sgt. Manuela Byrnes took to centre ice to speak about her personal challenge to walk with Joe, and her challenge to the communities policed by the Superior East OPP Detachment.



She began her speech by explaining that in the Superior East OPP Detachment area, Sgt. Straun Frederickson, a fellow OPP officer (formerly stationed in Chapleau, now in Sudbury) had walked 70 kilometres with Joe. Manuela was challenged by another officer, "You know Manuela, he walked with Joe 70 kilometres, and I think that you can walk further."

Liking that challenge, Manuela contacted Joe's team, and asked if Joe would 'entertain me walking with him to get more kilometres in than Straun.' The response was 'yes', that they would allow her to walk with Joe. When she talked to Straun to get some details about walking his 70 kilometres, she heard "Oh, no, I did 108 kilometres". With a smile to the crowd, Manuela said "So that changes things a little bit. So alright, I'll do 110!"

In choosing 'socks' in this 'Sock it to Youth Homelessness', Manuela explained, "I didn't want to raise money. I wanted to do something that symbolized homelessness. So I decided that instead of raising money for my walk, that I would collect socks.

But I also needed a goal – how many socks to collect? I thought well maybe I could collect a pair of socks for each kilometre that I walked?" Her goal was to collect 110 pairs of socks. The posters promoting this quest (photo at right) appeared around Wawa, posts on facebook were made, and the story was picked up by media.





On February 4th, at Goulais River, Manuela began her journey with Joe. That meant a lot for her, being her hometown, and where she grew up. “So not only was it a honour and a pleasure to be starting my journey with Joe there, but it meant something special to me.” She walked two days with Joe and was joined by Monique Baker (SSM OPP). “We had some interesting weather. At the end of two days we completed 48 kilometres. I’m not going to lie, I had stiff legs, had to do a lot of stretching; I can’t believe he (Joe) has already walked 5,000 kilometres.”

The next challenge, Montreal River Hill. “That was really wasn’t on my bucket list of things to do in a lifetime.” Manuela said. “But, I did; and I’m proud to say I did it. And I’m also very proud to say I did it with Joe Roberts.” The crowd erupted in cheers to that statement. She continued, “and his wife Marie, cause she wasn’t going to let this challenge go without her.”



“So I had two more days to walk with Joe. My co-partner Monique, said ‘well, if you doing 110, I’m doing 112.’ So, once we completed the Montreal River Hill together, Monique had her 112 kilometres in.” Manuela had two more days of walking with Joe, and with walking twenty-four kilometres each day, wasn’t going to quite make her target to tie.

On Sunday, they began to walk again. At the end of their day, Joe remarked to Manuela, “We did 24 kilometres, a kilometre ago... Do you want to keep going?” They did 27 kilometres that day!

On Monday, another 26 kilometres was added to the length. So Manuela actually 113 kilometres with Joe Roberts! The arena was filled with cheers from the audience.



Big
Thank
you
to
all!
Our
Community
Partners
did
a
great
job
on
Feb
15th.
Your
services
are
needed
and
much
appreciated!
The
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homelessness.
I
walked
over
110kms
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of
socks
were
collected.
These
socks
will
be
distributed
throughout
the
Superior
East
Wawa
and
surrounding
areas!



*Thanks
again!*

“At 9 o'clock this morning, we, the communities of Superior East, and I also received socks from SSM, Toronto, and London, Ontario. I'm proud to say that this morning we are at 446 pairs of socks. My experience with Joe has been wonderful, he is a great man, he is inspiring lots, and he has done and accomplished a lot already.”



She spoke to the youth, “All of our community partners are here today, our community is together. So I want all the students to take advantage and see what is available for you. There are displays set up, make sure you take the time; because you know there are some of us who might need a little extra help if things might not going so well. I want to make sure that you know and are aware of what’s available in our community for you.” Manuela concluded her speech by saying, “I also want to thank Joe, Marie, Jaime and his team for the opportunity, it was a honour and pleasure, thank you so much. From here on in, I wish you a safe travel, we will be following your journey.”

By Thursday, 528 pairs of socks had been collected. The socks will be distributed throughout the Superior East Detachment area for youth.

Editor’s Note 1:48 p.m., Monday, February 20th, 2017 – Just notified Sgt. Byrnes that the article had been posted and was updated that her total mileage was now 140km after walking to White River with Joe!