

Franco-Ouest to raise awareness for youth homeless

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It goes unnoticed or perhaps we choose not to see; but the reality is youth homelessness is an ongoing problem not just in Canada, but in our own communities.

According to Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, in 2016 more than 35,000 Canadians were homeless with 18.7% of them being youths.

To bring the harsh reality to light, local Espanola high school students at École Secondaire Franco-Ouest, will be spending a night outdoors to draw attention and raise awareness to issues facing homeless youth.

The Sleep Out Challenge isn't new to the school, with the first event taking place in the fall of 2014. This year, the staff and students are helping Joe Roberts in raising the awareness level of the sensitive subject even more.

"When Joe Roberts came through Espanola a couple of months ago, he asked us to help him raise awareness on youth homelessness," said Franco-Ouest teacher Danielle Paquette-Raymond.

The challenge was accepted and staff and students are expected to camp out in the parking lot of Giant Tiger on April 12 starting at 4 p.m.

"Participants will be spending the night in cardboard boxes, taking the time to reflect on what homelessness feels like, being without the comfort of their bed," she explained.

As with previous events, the students will be collecting non-perishable foods that will later be donated to the local Espanola Helping Hands Food Bank (EHHFB). Any money that is donated will be in support of The Upstream Project, a school-based youth homelessness prevention model done through Raising the Roof.

Paquette-Raymond said there will be a couple of surprise guests who will be stopping by the students' homeless camp through the night.