

# Odd Thoughts: Give the Ralphies a push

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Ralphie was a rotten kid, no two ways about it.

He wasn't the biggest kid in our class, but having failed grades at least three times that we knew of, he was probably three years older than any of the rest of us.

He knew how to fight, and he didn't mind proving it. Perhaps a month into the new school year, he was suspended... the first time. He'd be back a week or two, and get the boot again. After a few times, he was expelled, gone forever. What a relief!

Ralphie wasn't his real name – I can't remember what it was.

I remember he was a terrible bully. Or was he?

Was he really the bully?

We kids all knew his dad regularly beat him up. Black eye, swollen lip, bruised cheek bones – we're not talking about spankings. Daddy used his fists.

This was elementary school.

We all knew that half the time he slept in a shed out back of his house. The other half of the time...? Sometimes he spent the night in the woods behind the school.

If the teachers didn't know, well... I can't imagine they didn't.

Nobody offered him friendship. Nobody gave him a break.

I guess, technically, Ralphie wasn't homeless. Yet. There was sort of a home... in Grade 4.

There are as many reasons for homeless kids as there are homeless kids. Ralphie's isn't the only story. Some may be less tragic, some worse.

Joe Roberts was a homeless kid. He found a way out, made a success of himself, and now he's pushing a shopping cart across Canada. He'll be pushing it through Langley on Sept. 27, just a couple of days from his destination in Vancouver.

His "Push for Change" is about helping kids like Ralphie – kids like he was – find a way out.

Langley Central Rotary Club is hosting one of hundreds of events that have helped Joe's cause across Canada. For a donation, you can Walk With Joe from Langley City Hall to Langley Secondary School at noon next Wednesday.

You can read more about Joe's campaign to help homeless youth at [www.thepushforchange.com](http://www.thepushforchange.com), and you can get directly involved in the Walk With Joe by pledging a donation at <https://chimp.net/groups/rotary-club-of-langley-central/>.

Do it for one of the Ralphies you wish you'd given a chance years ago.