


Joe Roberts “Push for Change” in Wawa!

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Joe Roberts has been in the Algoma District for a while now, but Saturday afternoon, he entered the area patrolled by the Superior East OPP Detachment. Officers PC Monique Baker (SSM OPP), Sgt Manuela Byrnes, and PC Amanda Huff joined Joe and Marie Roberts (Campaign Director and wife) in tackling Montreal River Hill. The hill, which is a six per cent grade over a distance of three kilometres took the team a mere 47 minutes to conquer. That was a 5,501 steps according to a fitness tracker worn by Sgt Byrnes. At 10' per flight of stairs, that would be 55 flights of stairs! Joe said, “Piece of cake!”.



The team did stop for a couple of minutes to do some quick drone footage of the hill. We parked safely in a driveway in order to take a couple of photographs while they were walking and droning.



On Wednesday, February 15th, 2017, Joe and his team walked down Mission Road to the Michipicoten Memorial Community Centre where lots and lots of people were waiting. Most importantly, the youth of Wawa had the day off of school to spend with Joe, and learning about youth homelessness, and the supports that our community has for them.

MC Sgt. Al Hardy (retired) introduced the morning's schedule of events, and welcomed Christina Bekintis of Michipicoten First Nation, to begin with singing and drumming. She presented two songs Rainbow Warrior and Wolf Song.



A special highlight for Wawa was the speech by Sgt. Manuela Byrnes who spoke of her walking with Joe. She took up the challenge to walk, and completed 113 kilometres. She also created a challenge for the residents of Wawa.

Byrnes wanted to do something special; and decided to collect pairs of socks. Her goal was to collect a pair of socks for each kilometre walked. Amazingly over 500 pairs were dropped off at the Community Centre.



Joe then took centre ice with his specially designed grocery cart (formerly a stroller). His speech was well-spoken, and hit the heart. He talked about his difficulties as a youth, and the path of addiction that made him homeless. He did manage to overcome his difficulties with determination and help from a police officer, and now is a successful

businessman.

Joe's goal in this walk across Canada with a shopping cart is to bring awareness, link people together in the common goal of ending youth homelessness. He made sure to offer his thanks to all who support him and his team in this quest.





After Joe's speech, O Canada was sung, and the puck was dropped by Mayor Ron Rody and MFN Chief Joe Buckell. At the face-off was Neil Mills (Wawa Legionnaires) and Kevin Sabourin (Wawa Emergency Services – WVFD Fire Chief). The Wawa Legionnaires had challenged the Wawa Emergency Services to a game. The game was a tie, and was full of action. During the game and afterwards, there were booths from services in our town, and beverages and food graciously donated by Tim Hortons – Wawa. Each student received a sandwich, bowl of chili, bun and a beverage. While visiting each booth, every student had a passport to fill out, and then entered their passport for a draw.





Organizers said that this was a great way to showcase youth services in Wawa, and that they felt that it was very well received by the youth.