

Former homeless man pushing for change

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BARRY'S BAY – Imagine going from living in normal middle-class home to scouring the city of Vancouver for bottles to fund your next fix of heroin.



Now imagine going from living on the street – under a bridge, actually – to becoming a millionaire by the age of 35.

Joe Roberts has done all that, and he wants to do more through his Push for Change campaign, which is raising funds and awareness of youth homelessness.

Roberts was in Barry's Bay on September 28 to spread a message of hope and inspiration to students at Madawaska Valley District High School.

His story begins in Midland, a community of around 8,000 at the time, located north of Barrie. His family was normal by all accounts. His dad was the breadwinner and his mom was a homemaker. Roberts felt safe, especially because his dad kept reassuring him that he could do whatever he wanted to in life. That all changed when Roberts was eight – his dad, who was only 35 years old at the time, died from a heart attack.

With no income, his mother remarried a man who was nothing like Roberts' father.

“He was violent and an abusive alcoholic,” Roberts said.

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