

Coldest Night of the Year is record-setter for Inn from the Cold



As the fundraising deadline approaches at the end of this month, Newmarket's Inn from the Cold is already looking back at its most successful Coldest Night of the Year event in its 11-year history.

The Coldest Night of the Year (CNOY) event is held annually each February, at the height of winter, urging people to get out of the warm comfort zones and into the outdoors to ?shine a light of welcome and compassion in their communities.?

This year's event came as the light continues to be shone on affordability and the day-to-day realities of the unhoused, and as we continue to settle into life much as it was before the pandemic. Over the last two years, Inn from the Cold has held CNOY in modified formats.

With a return to normal this year, the community wasn't shy to answer the call.

?We've had a modified CNOY over the past two years due to the pandemic, and this is our third year in a row we've raised over \$100,000, which is phenomenal when you consider what the world is going through at this point in time,? says Martha Berry, Finance and Administrative Manager for Inn from the Cold. ?This year's event shocked us on so many levels. We had more walkers registered than ever at 408, and we raised over \$157,000 ? and even the number of teams was up. We were at 64 teams this year, so not only was it a remarkable event on so many levels, it is a real testament to the hard work our walkers do in fundraising and their fundraising asks. We have been doing this for 11 years and this is the most successful walk since we started doing it.?

As Inn from the Cold looks back at the success, Berry says one participant described the experience as one that ?captured the soul of the community.?

?We've really built an event that is very inclusive, and that includes our current and past clients, volunteers, community partners, staff. We really worked hard to make it a very inclusive event.?

Money raised by Inn from the Cold will enable them to continue their programs dedicated to assisting homeless and at-risk individuals by offering shelter, training and opportunities to help them integrate into the community. The funds will also help their capital campaign to expand their premises and capacity.

?For those who have participated, I just want to say thank you because it is through your efforts, through your fundraising, you have made a difference,? says Berry. ?We walk again next year on February 24 and we hope they will come and join us again next year. Just a big thank you to the community for their support, because events like Coldest Night of the Year are not successful unless they

have the support of those who are not participating or doing the job of asking for their friends and family for their support.

?The stat that is remarkable is the amount of funds that were raised this year and our walker numbers, I think we had an expectation of about 250 walkers, usually about 287, so this 438 really took us by surprise ? and it was a wonderful surprise to have. It feels really good that the community supports our clients, us, and has a belief and faith in what we do.?

Participants and supporters have until March 31 to get to their fundraising dollars in.

At press time, Inn from the Cold's Coldest Night of the Year event had raised \$158,288 ? well above their goal of \$80,000.

For more, visit cnoy.org/location/newmarket.

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter