

Walk a Mile in Her Shoes raises over \$75,000 for local shelter



You can't truly understand what someone is going through until you walk a mile in her shoes ? but that's just what this community tried to do once again as Yellow Brick House this month hosted its first in-person Walk a Mile in Her Shoes event since the start of the pandemic.

Once again hosted in partnership with St. Andrew's College, the event, which also included a virtual component for those unable to be at the school's Aurora campus for whatever reason, sees participants of all genders don a pair of high heels for a mile-long walk.

The event is now in its sixth year and attracted nearly 200 in person participants who collectively raised just over \$76,000 for Yellow Brick House. Dollars raised will go directly towards essential services like funding a shelter bed.

?It costs us \$150 per shelter bed per night, supporting the shelter beds that women and children desperately need to flee a violent situation,? says Yellow Brick House CEO Lorris Herenda. ?We had St. Andrew's College students help us organize the event, and also with the support of female students from St. Anne's. We're very excited about the growth of this partnership.?

Students, she said, were ?absolutely astounded? by the statistics related to domestic violence shared by Yellow Brick House, including that one in three women and their children have been or will be impacted by violence, and how these issues were made worse due to isolation that came with the global pandemic.

?The younger people who were there for the first time approached me after the event to say, ?I didn't know how prevalent this is,? said Herenda. ?There was a young man who attended with his girlfriend and he said to me, ?I want to bring my son and daughter,? and he doesn't even have children yet. ?I want them to be a part of this movement because we need to stop violence against women and children.' That's very powerful for me because that's one person and we could have thousands of people like that who would be taking that step to raise awareness and break the silence around domestic violence. It is such a hidden issue, it has been such a private issue, yet it impacts one in three women and children.?

With Walk a Mile in Her Shoes now in the books for another year, Yellow Brick House is now turning its attention towards its holiday giving campaign, which will seek financial services again for funding shelter beds in addition to expanding counselling programs.

?We currently have a four-month wait list for our counselling programs for families who are not necessarily residing in our shelter but need the support in the community,? Herenda shared. ?We want to really focus on increasing funds for increasing our scope of services and, of course, our shelter beds. In addition to that, the families who are staying with us over the holidays do require some

support for the holiday celebration. If people are inclined, people can donate gift cards to families that have to deal with food security or getting essential clothing like winter coats, boots and hats for the kids. That's always a high priority item. People can definitely visit our website at yellowbrickhouse.org.

?If people are making a donation for our transitional package for a woman who is leaving the shelter and coming into her own apartment in the community, the transitional package will provide her with the basic necessities such as cutlery and plates, mugs and a kettle, and some towels because these families are starting from nothing. I would highly recommend people check out our website for detailed information and to see how they can support us best.?

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter