

Woodstock CNOY is back

By Eric Schmiidl

Woodstock's Coldest Night of the Year (CNOY) is back for a third year on the evening of Feb. 25, 2023.

And Scott McKague, Woodstock event director, said the local walk has gained momentum in that time.

"Momentum has grown in the first two years. We've turned a lot of heads across the country in the first two years.

"We're just getting geared up for year three. We're just getting started.

"We set our goal for \$200,000 again this time. Last time it raised at least \$211,000 and change," McKague said.

It's officially Operation Sharing as the recipient for 2023, with Operation Sharing allocating money towards the organization's programs. There will likely be ceremonies indoors at the start and finish of the event at College Avenue United Church.

The event is designed to raise funds and awareness surrounding homelessness. CNOY began in 2011 and in the last outing there were 165 events in Canada and, for the first time, there were seven in the United States. "We're hoping to increase those numbers this year."

In the first year of the Woodstock CNOY, the walk was virtual due to COVID-19. That has



Scott McKague puts on a Coldest Night of the Year toque. He heads up the Coldest Night event locally.

changed, with walkers taking to the streets of the city on varied routes.

"We're not being faced with any COVID restrictions that way," people can wear a mask if they want. "We're not making it mandatory," McKague said.

In the second year of Woodstock CNOY, there were 67 registered teams and 43 volunteers.

Coats for Kids and Adults program

Registration forms are available for Operation Sharing's Coats for Kids and Adults program.

Masks are required to access the program.

As was the case last year, it will be run by appointment throughout the program season, which started on Nov. 1. Order forms will be available Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. at the Food for Friends office at College Avenue United Church (Peel Street Operation Sharing door).

"If you have any families that need winter apparel – we can assist with this, free of charge," said Marilyn Schmiedl, program coordinator.

"You can also phone for order forms no later than Nov. 29," Schmiedl said. You can phone Schmiedl at 226-228-1022 (cell). Pickup of winter coats, snowpants, boots, hats, and mittens will take place at the Operation Sharing area of the church (Peel Street Operation Sharing door) at a pre-registered date and time.

"If there are emergencies throughout the winter ... we will attempt to meet your family's needs," Schmiedl said. If you don't have a registration form you can still get winter clothes for your family, she added.



Marilyn Schmiedl

Call 519-539-3361 for information about any of our programs.

Christmas Place shopping returns

By Eric Schmiedl

Operation Sharing's Christmas Place is returning to its roots, providing an in-person gift shopping experience for the Yule season.

"We're hoping to continue to offer a hand up at Christmas in the same shopping format that Christmas Place has had for (most of) the past 38 years," said Christmas Place coordinator Kathy Gardiner.

"We're trying to safely return to our shopping format," she said. Due to COVID-19, that format wasn't used last year.

"Parents can pre-register to shop for their kids age zero to 18." New toys and gift cards will be available at College Avenue United Church's Memorial Hall, the venue for the program (thanks go out to the church). Registrations are available at area churches and social agencies, and completed forms can be emailed to: thechristmasplace1@gmail.com, or dropped off at Operation Sharing in College Avenue or dropped off at the church's mailbox.

There won't be a day for children to shop, as "we don't have the capacity that."

The gifts are being offered for \$1 to \$3, well below their actual value. Books are being offered for free.

"Sometimes it's a bike for \$3," Gardiner said.

The Christmas Place will be open 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Dec. 13-15 for parents to shop, spending a maximum of \$4 each. Shoppers will come in on one of the three days (split alphabetically).

Donations of toys, gift cards, and funds to buy toys will be accepted by volunteers at the program from Nov. 30 until Dec. 12 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.



Kathy Gardiner

"We are looking for more volunteers." Those who would like to help can call Cathy Laye, volunteer coordinator for the program, at 519-537-7185.

"I'm a little concerned about donations this year because of a higher number of parents needing our service," due to the continued impact of COVID, Gardiner said.

Monetary donations can also be mailed directly to Operation Sharing at P.O. Box 20081, Woodstock, Ontario, N4S 8X8.

The program continues to run in partnership with the Power of Hope and the Children's Aid Society of Oxford County to help people in need in Oxford.

Call 519-539-3361 for information about any of our programs.



Lisa

New day space coordinator

Our new day space is open and operating. Lisa, our newest team member, has this to say about our newest service:

“Operation Hope is a safe space open to individuals experiencing homelessness and shelter insecurity. All Individuals will be welcomed with a warm smile, a beverage, something to eat and most importantly treated with dignity and respect. We offer ongoing support from caring and compassionate staff and community partners. Operation Hope gives individuals a place to get in out of the weather and connect with community partners.”



Cleaning up

John R. Smith, coordinator of Operation Sharing's Bullwinkle's Eatery, cleans up at the eatery after a meal.

Bullwinkle's

WOODSTOCK – Running out of College Avenue United Church, takeout lunches are available on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday (from

noon to 1 p.m.) at the Bullwinkle's Eatery.

People are asked to make a freewill donation.

Food for Friends

OXFORD COUNTY – Please

remember to contribute each time you shop at supporting grocery stores in Woodstock and Ingersoll through the year.

Your support is much appreciated.

Call 519-539-3361 for information about any of our programs.