

<http://www.owensoundsuntimes.com/2015/05/31/red-shoes-on-men-symbolize-solidarity-with-women>

Red shoes on men symbolize solidarity with women



By [Scott Dunn](#), Sun Times, Owen Sound

Sunday, May 31, 2015 4:35:19 EDT PM



These Owen Sound Police Services officers stepped up Sunday and joined the annual Walk a Mile in Her Shoes fundraising and domestic abuse awareness walk through Harrison Park. The event drew 73 men who raised money for The Women's Centre Grey and Bruce. From the left: Auxillary Constables Hermann Tatchen, Tim Walter, Rob Carr, Const. Mike Daze, auxillary Constables Josh Hoffele, Jeremy West, Thomas Harris, Martin Gates and Lakota Hill. (Scott Dunn/The Sun Times, Owen Sound)

OWEN SOUND - Men put on shiny red shoes and walked through Harrison Park Sunday in a show of solidarity with women in a world-wide drive to stop men from abusing women.

Owen Sound's third annual Walk a Mile in Her Shoes fundraiser raised \$9,700 from 73 walkers who gathered pledges to support The Women's Centre Grey and Bruce. It's a 20-bed shelter which only receives government funding for 13 beds, leaving the shortfall to be raised separately.

Patty Kelly, The Women's Centre executive director, said there are typically 15 or 16 beds occupied any given day. The shelter saw about 150 women and 65 children last year, she said. Food costs run about \$10,000 to \$15,000 annually and so it was hoped Sunday's walk would raise at least that much.

Mitchell Acton was the top individual pledge-earner with \$1,700 raised, while West Grey firefighters, calling themselves Helmet and Heels, raised \$1,900.

The walk raises awareness of the basic fact that violence isn't acceptable, respectful relationships are, Kelly said. "It's interesting because a lot of men own it, and say this is our problem."

Men who see abuse or suspect a woman is being abused must act, Kelly said. "If you think something's going on in a household, it probably is. And just let that woman know you're there for her," Kelly said.

One way to support women who are victims of sexual abuse or other violence is to ask what can you do to help, she said.

Women of ages 16 to 72 come to the shelter. But Kelly said after 17 years of shelter experience she's seeing more older women come to The Women's Centre. She suspects they've suffered abuse all their lives and have been encouraged by younger generations to escape those situations.

"I think it's about awareness, so you know, you need to get help. Because before you kept it quiet."

And women who do get help want to be role models for their children and grandchildren by setting a good example by demonstrating by their actions abuse is not acceptable, Kelly said.

Owen Sound Police Const. Mike Daze and eight city auxiliary police officers were among the men who donned the shoes and walked the half-mile course around the Harrison Park campground. It was left up to walkers whether they could manage a second loop in their red high-heeled shoes.

The sight of uniformed officers and all of the men in shiny red shoes was amusing and the mood at the event was upbeat. But the underlying message is serious, Daze said.

"It's a fun day and it's a way that we can bring attention to the matter," he said. "I think as men we have to acknowledge that there is violence against women out there."

"From an officer perspective, responding to these calls is very difficult because we have to ensure the safety of children, of the female in the household, to make sure there are safety plans in place. So it's not just a simple call of responding and arresting somebody."

Sometimes police take women and children to The Women's Centre, which offers emergency shelter and supports including counselling longer term. "Only by working together with the different community groups do we actually break that cycle. It's very difficult to do," Daze said.

Another Walk a Mile in Her Shoes event will be held in Hanover June 20.

Walk a Mile in Her Shoes was started in 2001 and has become a world-wide movement with tens of thousands of men raising millions of dollars for local rape crisis centres, domestic violence shelters and other sexualized violence education, prevention and assistance programs.

Donations to the Owen Sound walk may still be made online by clicking the "Donate" tab at www.thewomenscentre.org/events/walk-a-mile/.