



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FEB. 28th BRINGS DUNCAN'S 5TH ANNUAL COLDEST NIGHT OF THE YEAR EVENT

The Canadian Mental Health Association - Cowichan Valley Branch (CMHA-CVB) is encouraging Cowichan Valley residents to once again team up, fundraise, and walk in The Coldest Night of the Year (CNOY). This family-friendly, winterrific fundraising walk takes place on the evening of February 28, 2026, and supports vulnerable youth in the Cowichan Valley.

Tens of thousands of Canadians will take to the streets for CNOY with events taking place in 220+ cities, towns, and communities across the country. By walking together in the chill of the night, participants will better understand the experience of being on the streets during a cold Canadian winter, while raising funds to aid the work of CMHA-CVB in providing much-needed support for youth.

Since 2022, here is an update on what we have achieved together. Last year, we were able to put a down payment on a house on Hemlock Street in Duncan and began transforming the home into our Youth Emergency Shelter (YES). These funds were a direct result of our Coldest Night of the Year fundraising efforts. The Cowichan YES is the second program of its kind in BC. We also received a generous donation from the Mischa Weisz Foundation that we were able to put towards the mortgage. AMAZING! Recognizing with respect that YES Cowichan is located on Quw'utsun lands, and for the generous donation by the Mischa Weisz Foundation, the name Mischa Lelum was chosen to recognize both the legacy of Mischa Weisz and because "Lelum" is a fitting Hulqiminum word meaning home.

So, what's next? Why continue fundraising? What happens to youth once they are 19? That's where the next few years of Coldest Night fundraising comes in. We are asking the community to help us as we work to develop transitional housing for youth. Our goal will be to find and purchase a suitable building in the Cowichan Valley that will house both our Youth Drop-In Centre with its popular free hot lunch program (presently located on Festubert St and not in an ideal space), as well as provide stable housing for 19+ youth.

The Duncan walk begins and ends in the Multi-Purpose Room (opposite the arena) at the Cowichan Community Center located at 2687 James St in Duncan. Participants will walk a 2km or 5km route, can warm up with toasty drinks at rest stops along the way, and will be able to celebrate their efforts together at the finish line with a warm slice pizza complements of Panago. All those who raise over \$150 (or \$75 for youth) will earn an iconic CNOY toque as they face the cold night. **Participants must pre-register at www.cnoy.org/duncan.**

This is our fifth year taking part in CNOY, and our goal is to raise \$100,000 dollars to support our work with youth experiencing hunger, hurt, and homelessness in Duncan. An anticipated 50+ teams, with several from CMHA-CVB, will include various service providers, families, businesses, faith groups and local community groups.

CMHA Cowichan Valley Branch invites sponsors, team captains, walkers, volunteers and donors to visit www.cnoy.org/Duncan to get involved. Funds raised in the Coldest Night of the Year will benefit some of the most vulnerable youth in our community.

For further information, please contact:

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