

# Siblings raise money to buy sleeping bags for homeless people

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## 50 sleeping bags and counting

Three years ago, 12-year-old Easton McCready felt heartbroken when he walked by a person experiencing homelessness in the middle of winter.

He asked his mom if he could help somehow.

"I wanted to give them a sleeping bag when I saw them, but my mom said, that's just one, why not make it bigger?"

So that's what he did.

For the past three years, Easton and his sister Lacey, who is now eight years old, have been fundraising and buying sleeping bags for people on the streets through their initiative Warm the Streets of Durham.

And with COVID-19 making this year an especially hard one, the siblings want to make it their biggest one yet.

## Warming the streets

Homelessness hits close to home for Easton and Lacey, whose aunt has experienced homelessness throughout her life due to mental health issues.

Lacey said that just because people are on the street doesn't mean they can't be warm.

“It matters to me because some people can’t be warm during the wintertime, but people’s houses have a bunch of stuff to keep them warm. I just think it’s not fair,” Lacey said.

In years past, Easton and Lacey have collected used sleeping bags and blankets, as well as donations to buy new sleeping bags for people on the streets.

This year, the siblings launched a GoFundMe page to collect donations and are only buying new sleeping bags rather than collecting used ones due to COVID-19.

Initially, their goal was to hit \$1,500, which would buy around 50 sleeping bags. They’ve already surpassed that goal, and are aiming for \$2,000.

They take the sleeping bags they buy to the Cornerstone community outreach program in Oshawa, Ontario, which then distributes them to people in need.

## **How making a difference feels**

Although Cornerstone distributes the sleeping bags, Easton remembered a time last year where he got to give one to a woman outside a McDonald’s and how much it meant to her.

“A few months later, me and my dad were driving and we saw her with the sleeping bag clipped to her pants, and that made me feel really good,” Easton said.

Lacey has also found their work each year really rewarding.

“It makes me feel happy,” she said. “It makes me feel like I could have just changed someone’s life.”

Easton said that even if you don’t have the option to donate, it’s important to remember that people experiencing homelessness are still people.

“Acknowledge that they’re there, even just with a smile.”