

220 sleep rough at the Bethany Big Scout and Guide Sleepout



220 Scouts and Guides from Edinburgh and the Lothians slept rough in the grounds of George Heriot's School last weekend. They were all taking part in the Bethany Big Scout and Guide Sleepout.

The idea was to give them all a taste of what it might be like to be homeless. A team of over 70 adult volunteers from South East Scotland Scouts, Girlguiding Edinburgh and the Bethany Christian Trust supported the young people.



Diane Marshall, Deputy Regional Commissioner with South East Scotland Scouts said "Scouting and Guiding gives young people a positive start in life. Life is a journey and as we take each step its a huge learning curve. We are all lucky to have a warm bed to go to at night we take for granted the simple things such as nutritious food and a toothbrush and toothpaste to brush our teeth the sleepout has given us a small insight into homelessness and how vulnerable and challenging it makes everyday life."

Bethany Christian Trust organised for their Care Van to visit the event, which served soup and bread to the attendees of the event helping them to understand how it might feel to queue for food without which they might have gone to bed cold and hungry.

"The Care Van is one of Bethany Christian Trust's emergency services, providing support for homeless people in Edinburgh. Some nights the van can provide food, hot drinks, advice and support to up to 60 people. It really is an essential service for many people in Edinburgh" said Laurie Frank from Bethany Christian Trust.

As part of the event young people were asked to fundraise in support of Bethany Christian Trust, with a value of £7,500 being raised by the time of the event. Both Scouting and

Guiding are hoping to attract some additional funding over the next few weeks as more people hear about the event.



The event was inspired by a smaller sleepout organised by a local Scout Group last year. Hamish is a 12 year-old Scout. He attended the recent sleepout as well as the event last year and said : "It was an extremely fun night. It was great to have more people than last year, but we needed more cardboard. The soup and hot chocolate really raised the spirits for everyone who was suffering from the cold. It was amazing to raise such a large amount of money for Bethany".

The funding raised by the event will be used by Bethany to support the services in Edinburgh and across Scotland, including their Winter Care Shelter, which provides shelter, safety, hot food and support for those who would otherwise be sleeping rough on the streets of Edinburgh. The funding raised so far is enough for over 200 overnight bed spaces at the shelter.

Lily, a 10 year-old Guide said: "The sleepout was fun but I know now how lucky we are! Plus the soup was really nice and I think that homeless people are lucky to have Bethany. I loved looking at the stars and I actually had a good sleep. It was good experience and I think that I learnt that we are lucky to have what we have... but I still like a good warm bed!"

Anne Mackintosh, the Girlguiding Edinburgh coordinator for the sleepout, who took to sleeping rough herself at the event, said: "The ground was very hard and cold to sleep on even although we had the luxury of warm sleeping bags, camping mats and survival bags which most homeless people don't have.

"Working together with Scouting and the Bethany Christian Trust has given the Guides and Scouts a fantastic opportunity to have a lot of fun, to challenge themselves to sleep rough in a safe environment and to make a positive difference in their community by raising money for Bethany Christian Trust and raising awareness of the work they do with homeless and vulnerable people across Scotland."

Donations can still be made at <http://www.everydayhero.co.uk/event/sleepout2016>.