

Monday, November 28th, 2005

Frisbee devotees give all for good cause

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WINNIPEG'S homeless will be a little warmer this winter thanks to Manitoba's Ultimate enthusiasts.

The Forcing Home Ultimate Frisbee tournament last Friday, which attracted some 100 players, and the Warm Covers social last night at the West End Cultural Centre on Ellice Avenue, helped raise money and collect winter clothing for homeless patrons of Siloam Mission and Resource Assistance for Youth (RAY).

The events are the brainchild of Winnipegger Nancy Chippendale, who started raising money for the homeless through her contacts in the Ultimate community two years ago.

Now, tournaments and fundraisers are held in about four cities each year, including Winnipeg, Chippendale said. Organizers hope to make these events a national tradition involving ultimate players from coast to coast, she added.

The idea is to take the same joy and spirit found in Ultimate -- the game played strictly on the honour system -- out to the street to people who need a bit a warmth when the weather turns cold.

"Ultimate is supposed to be about the spirit of the game," Chippendale said. "But we can't just keep that spirit on the field. We want to be compassionate to people off the field as well."

The event in Winnipeg has taken on additional significance this year. Some of the organizers were close to Philip Haiart, the teenager who died in Winnipeg's west end in October when he was caught in the gunfire of a gang war.

Katie Boyd, an accomplished Ultimate player who Chippendale says owns a "heart of gold," got involved this year in the hopes that Warm Covers would help divert homeless youth from a life in street gangs.

Boyd said she was friends with Haiart, and his death proved to be a huge awakening about the problems of poverty and gang violence.

"Before Phil died, I lived one of those very sheltered lives," said Boyd. "I didn't know about the social problems in Winnipeg. When he was shot and killed, it was a pretty big shock to my reality.

"We believe one of the root problems of poverty is violence. When young people are out on the streets, with nothing to hold onto, they will end up joining a gang."

Donations to Warm Covers can still be made directly to Siloam Mission, 300 Princess Street (956-4344), or to Resource Assistance for Youth , 195 Young (783-5617).

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