

Women's Place of South Niagara Inc.
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For Immediate Release

Jean Vanier's 14th Annual Fundraiser for Women's Place Goes Virtual

Welland, ON, May 4, 2020 – For the students, teachers, parents and alumni of École secondaire catholique Jean-Vanier, the Coeurs en Choeur (Hearts in Harmony) fundraising walk is an important school tradition, one that is going to continue in a virtual format this May despite the challenges caused by COVID-19. Through this annual event, now into its fourteenth year, Jean Vanier raises crucial funds and awareness for the local domestic violence shelters in Welland and Niagara Falls operated by Women's Place. Since the event was started, staff and students have raised over \$100,000 to support women and children experiencing domestic violence, making them important partners in ensuring that shelter and counselling services are available to hundreds of individuals in our community each year.

While social distancing means that students will not be able to enjoy walking together or sharing a concert of live music to celebrate the end of another successful campaign, many of the usual elements Hearts in Harmony will still be in place, if slightly altered for this year's virtual approach. For instance, the organizers will officially "launch" their fundraising campaign online on Monday, May 4 instead of gathering students in the school's auditorium. The campaign t-shirts that students purchase to help raise awareness and funds will still be available for purchase, and will include the new colour and slogan that students have come to expect each year. This year's slogan is "Isolés, mais unifiés en vert foncé" (Isolated, but unified in dark green). To help build enthusiasm, organizers have also continued the tradition of choosing a campaign song, which appropriately will be "Better Days" by the band One Republic. Participants will, of course, continue their fundraising, but will move their efforts online with a digital fundraising site. Finally, while they won't be walking with their classmates, students are still being encouraged to walk when the campaign wraps up on May 29, although in their own neighbourhood, possibly with family members, and not with their fellow students.

The \$8,000 that Jean Vanier hopes to raise will, “likely have more impact than any other year in the history of Hearts in Harmony,” explains Women’s Place executive director, Jennifer Gauthier, speaking to participants by video. “With some of our sources of fundraising cut off by the current crisis, your event is more important than ever in helping to provide critical services to women and children exposed to family violence.” With events like the annual Book Riot cancelled for 2020, and services still operating 24 hours per day, funding for shelters is critical as they anticipate an increase in both the frequency and severity of domestic violence as women are isolated at home with their partners during the pandemic.

Questions regarding this year’s walk should be directed to Jessica Perrons, teacher at École secondaire catholique Jean-Vanier, preferably by email at jperrons@sympatico.ca or 905-380-9617. Questions regarding Women’s Place should be directed to Amanda Braet, Development Director at 905-356-3933 ext. 240 or Amanda@wpsn.ca. More information about the walk can also be found on Jean Vanier’s fundraising site at: <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/womens-place-of-south-niagara-inc/p2p/coeurs-en-choeur/> Organizers have also set up a student website at: cenc.ca

For photos of last year’s event and this year’s event logo, visit: <https://womensplacesn.org/jean-vanier-photos/>

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