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TENT CITY

1Mile Matters walk debuts at Tent City

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The first 1Mile Matters walk in support of local unhoused kicks off during Tent City 2010.

“This year we’re attempting to bring a little more visibility to the plight of homelessness,” said Karen Soubeyrand, chairwoman of the walk. “This is a problem that can be solved, or at least we can gain some footing, if we work together as a community.”

The walk was added to Tent City activities as a way for more individuals to get involved and help out with the unhoused, said Ken Leslie, founder of 1Matters.

“One of our biggest problems [at Tent City] was having too many volunteers, so we were trying to think of a way we could engage more people,” he said.

The 1Mile Matters walk benefits 1Matters and its partners, including Toledo Streets, LifeLine Ministries medical mobile, Food for Thought and Cherry Street Mission Ministries.

“[The walk] will be a way people can come together as a community, to tell not only the members in our community, but the world that everyone does matter,” Leslie said.

Singer John Mellencamp provided the inspiration for 1Matters after he appeared at Tent City in November 2007 and took individuals to his concert, Leslie said.

“After the concert, one of the guys came back and said, ‘John talked to us from the stage. I guess I really do matter, don’t I?’ How could anyone not know in God’s great world that they matter? So that’s how 1Matters was founded,” Leslie said.

1Matters works to provide employment, shelter or services to the unhoused locally and is building a national campaign to help the unhoused.

“I view us and our role like football players. A player may get knocked down and I’ll offer a hand to help him get back up, but I’m not going to play his game for him. That’s the difference between a handout and a hand up,” Leslie said.

Mellencamp has continued to show support to the unhoused by recording public service announcements for Tent City, 1Mile Matters and World Homeless Day. The singer also granted an exclusive interview to be used in street papers across the United States.

“I think John believes the issue of domestic autonomy is critical for people to be the masters of their own fate. He is supportive of efforts where they can have a fresh start,” said Bob Merlis, the singer’s publicist.

Mellencamp has provided four tickets to his Nov. 19 show at the Fox Theatre in Detroit and the chance to meet him for the leading fundraiser of the walk. Additional prizes are available for other top fundraisers.

Registration begins at 10 a.m. with the walk at 10:30 a.m. Oct. 30. The roughly 1-mile walk goes from Promenade Park to Tent City in a zigzag path because “life isn’t straight.” The walk concludes with lunch.

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Individuals can register online or the day of the walk. Those who raise at least \$25 will receive a T-shirt.

To show support the walk, Leslie has recruited nearly every local media outlet, including *Toledo Free Press*, to be a sponsor.

To register for the race and learn more, visit www.1matters.org"

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