



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWSLETTER

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Walk for Community Social Services promotes value of “invisible” sector

It was all sunny skies and boisterous enthusiasm as more than 300 people gathered for the second annual Walk for Community Social Services on March 27 in Victoria.

The Walk was organized as part of Community Social Services Awareness Month – celebrated throughout March – which received declarations from almost 40 B.C. municipalities.

The event included individuals receiving services, workers providing programs and support, employers, family members and community advocates. And as the three kilometre Walk wound its way down Government Street, up to and around the provincial legislature, and back to Victoria’s Centennial Square, participants were cheered on by drivers and passersby, who honked and waved their support.

HEU member Marilyn Rust, a residential support worker and the grandmother of a young man with a developmental disability, told the crowd, “It’s time for community social services to come out from under the cloak of invisibility, and it’s time for government to start funding this sector properly.”

She thanked her union sisters and brothers in HEU, the B.C. Government and Services’ Employees’ Union, the Canadian Union of Public Employees (BC) and the Health Sciences Association for helping make the event successful.

Keynote speaker Jennifer Charlesworth, executive director of the Federation of Community Social Services, congratulated participants for taking the time to help raise awareness about this largely forgotten sector.

“Studies show that 60 per cent of British Columbians are touched by community social services every year,” said Charlesworth. “We need to keep speaking up, telling the public our stories as people receiving these services and as workers.”

She said groups like the federation, community organizations and unions are all coming together “in an unprecedented way so we can be stronger together and so we can continue to make a real difference for people in our communities.”

Following the Walk, participants grabbed a barbecued hot dog and beverage, and enjoyed a varied selection of tunes presented live by Victoria’s Harris Gilmore and the Mojos.

March 29, 2010

