

## Young Muslims and Christians join in charity at the Mission

[More from Kathryn May, Ottawa Citizen](#)

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A group of Muslim students arrived at the Ottawa Mission Saturday morning to hand out bundles of gloves, socks and hats to the homeless and met up with a Christian youth group pulling up in a van loaded with bags of winter clothes to do the same.

By the time the two groups gave away all their donations, along with dozens of cookies and jumbo Thermoses of hot chocolate, they were exchanging names and numbers to talk about teaming up for a similar event in the future.

“Oh yes, that’s what it is about, giving back to the community,” said Ali Fakhri, an organizer with the charity Who Is Hussain after exchanging names with the leaders of the youth group from the Calvary Pentecostal church in Carleton Place.

“We are looking to team up others and get involved as much as possible regardless of race, religion or creed. That doesn’t matter.”

Fakhri said his organization is about humanitarianism and wants to work with groups that help others and do good deeds. The group recently held an interfaith candlelight vigil for victims of terrorism; holds an annual drive for blood donors and on Boxing Day volunteers serve hot chocolate to passersby on Rideau Street. This was the organization’s first charity event to give young Muslim men and women who set out to walk the streets of downtown Ottawa to give away bags of winter hats, gloves and socks to the city homeless

But they never dreamed they would hand out nearly all of the 55 bags at their first stop outside the Ottawa Mission. The handful of men standing outside got the first few bags and as the students headed towards Rideau Street to distribute the rest, they were quickly surrounded by men streaming out of the mission doors curious to see what was wrapped in those packages.

“I never expected that,” said Fakhri.

“We could have done more bags but this was our first time out and we didn’t have an idea of what we should expect. “But I felt it was successful. It’s all about that smile you can bring to a needy person while bringing a sense of community, holiday season and Christmas. That’s what we were aiming for,”

“That’s awesome, thanks,” said Carlos DeAngelies, who took one of the bags. He said Ottawans are generous and “so good-hearted.” He said he’s already had people bring him bags of toiletries, clothes, socks, gloves and \$5 Tim Horton coffee cards.

A little further down the street, Dave Soulliere said he was happy to get the bag but he really didn’t need socks.

“I have a lot of socks. It’s like spring here so I didn’t really need them. But,” he said, “I take everything.”

Diana Billings of the Calvary Pentecostal Church said Saturday’s clothing donation at the mission was the second one for youth group. Both times, they filled backpacks full of clothes and toiletries.

“We talk about the importance of giving with them and how it is not about us. ... so to do that practically we get them out there to give things out,” she said.

But 67-year-old Bryon Ohrling, who just moved to Ottawa from Winnipeg, took a cookie and refused anything else.

“If you do anything for me, kids, pray for me. My name is Bryon and pray some doors open up for me.”