

Men don high heels for charity

Walk a Mile in Her Shoes event is a fundraiser for Sexual Assault Centre services

BY RICHARD WATTS
Times Colonist staff

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Victoria Crown counsel Patrick Weir, who wears a size 10½ shoe, is on the lookout for something in a high heel — maybe a pump or strappy open-toe affair.

Weir is planning to walk 1.6 kilometres around Centennial Square in whatever women's shoes he can find for a fundraising effort on behalf of the Victoria Women's Sexual Assault Centre.

Male participants, and they are all male, are asked to sign up sponsors for the May 5 fundraiser, dubbed "Walk a Mile in Her Shoes."

Weir said he isn't quite sure what he's going to do about shoes.

He doesn't own any women's shoes and says he wouldn't admit it if he did. "I'm hoping to have some supplied."

But by offering other incentives, like promising to shave his legs and even wax them for extra money in pledges, Weir said he has gathered about \$700 in promised donations.

Tracy Lubick, spokeswoman for the Victoria Women's Sexual Assault Centre, said the event is intentionally lighthearted to help remove some of the shame and stigma of sexual violence.

Lubick said the centre — which offers counselling and a 24-hour crisis and information line,

as well as accompanying victims to hospital, police and court — dealt with 2,500 people last year.

But studies show the number of victims who actually report attacks is as low as six per cent, while, according to one StatsCan study, as many as one in three women experience sexual violence.

"The whole issue can be so difficult for people to talk about," she said.

Besides raising awareness of sexual assault, the goal of the event is to remind the community that while most offenders are men, most men are not offenders.

Tom Williams, founder and CEO of GiveMeaning.com — an online tool for charities — is also looking for women's shoes.

Williams said he's always been impressed with the high school education and outreach performed by the centre and is delighted to have a chance to help.

"Men need to be invited and given a chance to show their support," he said.

Williams, who is aiming to raise \$5,000, has already passed the \$1,000 mark by offering bonuses, like shaving his legs. If he reaches his goal, he has offered to shave his beard, prized for the past two years.

Still, it's a long way from Weir's promise of a wax job.

Walk a Mile in Her Shoes runs from 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Centennial Square. Everybody is welcome. For more details, go to www.walk-a-mile-in-her-shoes.blogspot.com.

To sponsor a participant, visit www.wam.give-meaning.com