

Interfaith Coalition's 2nd Annual Bed Race

Wacky and Free Family Fun

BY CHERYL STRITZEL MCCARTHY ON
BEHALF OF INTERFAITH COALITION

Turn out for some wacky, free, family fun on Sunday, September 30 at Bellingham's Civic Field parking lot to watch and cheer local teams as they compete for prizes, bragging rights, and a great cause in Interfaith Coalition's 2nd Annual Bed Race.

Up to 20 teams of five each – four people pushing, one riding atop – will compete for fastest bed, best theme, and most funds raised. The second annual event benefits the new Interfaith program launched in April that houses homeless families on a rotating basis in area church buildings.

This year's event, from 2 to 4 pm, starts with a parade of beds before the competition. "Everybody has a great time," said Konrad Kocsis, who with his wife Cynthia organizes the event for Interfaith's Family Promise. Last year's inaugural Bed Race raised \$20,000.

Kocsis was spurred to action two years ago when he read that 1,000 children in Whatcom County experience homelessness, living in cars, tents, or couch-surfing. "That was a shocking number, a Seattle number," he said. "Then, a school bus driver in Ferndale said he pulled up to a rural bus stop and saw a herd – that was the word he used – of children come out of the woods to go to school.

"Even my son, at school, said he knows kids in that situation."

Kocsis got the Bed Race idea from the national headquarters of Family Promise, which oversees similar programs in 200 cities across the country. He knew the need here was acute, so he and Cynthia jumped in to launch this Bed Race locally. Kocsis, who works as a branch manager with **Guardian Security Systems**, was a Boy Scout leader for years, and felt he could make a difference in the lives of local children in need.

Within Interfaith's Family Promise of Whatcom County, Konrad and Cynthia are among hundreds of volunteers that make this rotating



Competitors round the corner with their makeshift beds

housing work. Besides readying their church buildings for temporary accommodation, volunteers provide meals, homework help, childcare, and fun for the families staying with them.

"We are making a difference, one family at a time."

Interfaith Coalition is a group of 50 churches, synagogues, and other local partners working to end family homelessness in Whatcom County.

SIGN UP FOR THE EVENT

For companies or individuals, "It's a great way to get your name out in the community by sponsoring or creating a bed," Kocsis said. Teams, in adult or youth divisions, can form and enter through September 22 at familypromisebedrace.com. Entry fee per bed is \$100.

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