

Oakville Downtown BIA Midnight Madness and the Rotary Club of Oakville West

The Downtown Oakville BIA has been celebrating their Midnight Madness shopping, browsing and community event for over 35 years. RCOW has been there making and selling BBQ toasted ice-cream waffles for almost 20 of those years.

The event is planned each year for the third Friday night in July. The BIA closes Lakeshore Rd in the heart of downtown from 5pm thru to midnight (obviously) and an estimated 50,000 people, and some dogs, stroll the shops, the kiosks and the restaurants in search of the RCOW waffles in anticipation of a \$4 waffle and a \$1 drink. The first customers come early at 6pm and get the first samples. The crew tastes enough to be sure the quality is very 'melt in your mouth'. The big rush crowd comes about 9pm when walking hunger, the desire for a treat and the approaching time to take the kids home all happen at once. By midnight everyone is fully cooked and supplies are low; time to pack-up and store the equipment. Everyone is home by two.

We have our own 14×14 foot tent canopy, our own super-sized BBQ and three freezers on a trailer to keep the ice cream and waffles frozen until needed. We follow Halton Board of Health food management rules and we obey the fire and police patrols that check our space and safety preparedness. We locate in front of Tour d'Afrique, an art and deco store, and really appreciate their letting us use their electricity to run our freezers.

There are usually about 25 RCOW members and friends volunteering across three shifts of ten roles, sometimes well organized but more often self managed teams of independent thinkers and culinary rebels.

The outcome is annually about the same ...good fun for all, good treats for about 1200 customers and about \$3500 for the RCOW community support programs.

Recently RCOW has been favourably supported by Metro, the food store leaders, who not only donate all the working supplies but they reach out in turn to their suppliers Chapman's for the 100 or so ice cream bricks and Kellogg for the almost 2500 waffles. We do the math ourselves. Any leftover food is quickly (at 1am) donated, re-gifted if you prefer, to a local food bank or shelter.

Proceeds from our volunteer efforts enable RCOW to finance Youth programs such as Camp Enterprise, Bursaries and Scholarships, Dreams Take Fight, the Oakville Youth Development Centre and the Kerr Street Missions among many others.

Good times, good teams, good fun, good causes and good outcomes. Wow what a great event. See you there on Friday July 18th 2014.