



Homelessness Sleep Out in the Beast from the East

St. Ambrose College sixth formers felt the bitter blast of homelessness when the night they spent sleeping on the streets coincided with second coming of the Beast from the East.

Eleven brave young men and three staff slept rough outside the College in temperatures with a wind chill of minus 10 degrees C over Friday night into Saturday morning as a climax to the Hale Barns Catholic Grammar School's Advocacy Week.

The experience left the young men vowing to volunteer more in Manchester's streets and refuge centres but never to repeat their night outside.

Marcus Doohan, 17, from Altrincham, who wants to study Medicine, said: "I am never doing that again. I was still aching 36 hours later and didn't feel I had recovered fully. I just can't see how so many people do that night after night after night. It must have a dramatic effect on their life expectancy."

Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award winner and multi award winning senior venture scout Troy Wood, 16, from Timperley said: "Even though we had several layers and quality kit, it certainly made an impact on us all both physically and emotionally."

Theodore Russell, 17, from Knutsford who wants to study Medicine, said: "It was really awful especially when I woke up with snow on my face, but that's how so many people live in Manchester."

Alex Dobson, also 17 from Knutsford, another wanting to read Medicine at university, said: "We all slept in snatches, perhaps an hour or two at a time and no



one got more than four hours sleep. It certainly made me more aware of the terrible plight of those forced to live on the streets and I am still sore, aching and tired now on Monday morning."

The sleep out was the brain child of the young men in the College's Edmund Rice International Group, named after the founder of the Christian Brothers, to promote charitable causes both at home and overseas and is a key element of the faith school's mission.

In the preceding week Vice Principal Dermot Rainey with Learning Mentor Heather Burton and Biology teacher Dr. Karine Rousseau had organised visits from Wythenshawe and Sale East MP Mike Kane and a number of Eritrean and Yemeni asylum seekers from the Christian Brothers Revive centres in Salford and Manchester to discuss one of the North-West's most pressing problems.

Dermot, who was one of the staff sleeping out, said: "Many people think that once asylum status is granted that those who have been forced to flee troubles in their own lands are now in some sort of sanctuary, but shelter is a basic human right and we must do more to give them access to education, training and the work place so they be a productive part of our society."

He added: "Then there are our own citizens who may have fallen in to homelessness through unemployment, family breakdown, domestic abuse and mental illness who find themselves with no choices available."

He concluded: "This is the start and not the end of our campaign. During the week we sent a mini bus full of food and clothing to local food banks and we are still receiving items for a second. Then after attending a range of workshops our first year groups will extend their advocacy work to environmental issues such as the use of plastic, as well as the issues of homelessness and the increasing dependence on food banks."

The boys were determined to do more. Marcus Doohan added: "Our Edmund Rice International Group will be putting together food packs every two weeks to give out in Manchester and we aim to continue giving English lessons to asylum seekers at the Revive centres."

Alex Dobson added: "It's certainly a cause I want to be part of not just now but until society finds a solution."

