



CITYPAK homeless project launches in Vancouver **Exclusive Media Event Invite**

Wolfe Auto Group partners with Union Gospel Mission and not-for-profit organization to hand out 750 'uniquely designed' backpacks.

It started out as an idea to make life on the streets a little easier by providing custom designed backpacks for the homeless. Four years, 77 North American cities and 35,000 backpacks later and The CITYPAK Project will be making its debut in Vancouver, thanks to partnerships with Lower Mainland-based Wolfe Auto Group and the Union Gospel Mission.

On November 21 and 22, volunteers will be handing out 750 backpacks that feature a hideaway poncho designed to keep both the bag and its wearer dry, a cinch-top closure for extra waterproofing, a ballistic nylon outer shell strong enough to combat the elements, a reflective strip for safety during the winter nights, and anti-theft measures including a strap that can be looped around the arm or leg.

“Michael Hacquard, VP at Wolfe Auto Group, and I met while cycling in Hawaii. I always make my friends these little cycling pouches to protect their phones and small belongings so that they can connect with what we are doing with the homeless,” explains Ron Kaplan, founder of CITYPAK and renowned Chicago music agent. “Michael expressed an interest in the project and ended up donating, but he wanted more involvement and so we began discussing bringing the project to Vancouver.”

With the City of Vancouver 2016 Homeless Count reporting the highest number since recording began in 2005, Hacquard decided to see how Wolfe Auto Group could get involved.

“Latest figures show we have 1,847 people on the streets of Vancouver and in shelters. CITYPAK appealed to me because it provides a stepping stone for the homeless by giving them something that has been designed with them in mind to make life on the streets of Vancouver a little easier,” says Hacquard. “At Wolfe Auto Group we believe in giving back to our community and getting actively involved in local charitable organizations, and CITYPAK aligned with our philosophy.”

After a careful vetting process and six month of planning, CITYPAK, staff members from Wolfe Auto Group and volunteers from the Union Gospel Mission of Vancouver and Surrey are now ready to distribute the bespoke backpacks to those in need.

“It's a start and we hope to be able to partner with other organizations in the future to make it a regular thing,” says Kaplan.

“As a family business, many employees of which have spent most of their careers with Wolfe, we remain ever sensitive to all members of our community, their health and happiness,” says Tristan Schon, director of marketing at Wolf Auto Group. “A uniquely designed item like CITYPAK fulfills a need for the homeless not often addressed. A major stumbling block for those in need is finding the confidence in themselves and a feeling of self-worth that empowers them to improve their lives and move off the streets.

“Our hope is that these items will bring a sense of dignity and pride to the homeless that will be receiving them. Our whole community will benefit in the long run.”

For more details please contact Tristan Schon, Director of Marketing, Wolfe Auto Group. Office (604) 534-2660 Mobile (604) 219-2618 – Tschon@wolfeauto.com

ALERT: MEDIA EVENT

When: Monday, November 21, 2016 – 10:00am-10:40am PST

Please join Wolfe Auto Group, the Union Gospel Mission (UGM), CITYPAK, volunteers and CITYPAK founder Ron Kaplan for an exclusive media event.

Media will be present as the vehicles distribute bags to a small number of pre-approved UGM guests. These recipients will be briefed and comfortable being on camera.

Interviews can be conducted with Citypak/UGM/Wolfe Auto Group at this time. The media event ends at 10:40, when the vehicles will then leave UGM and distribute the bags to other Downtown Eastside shelters.

If you would like to attend the media event, please email: natalie@gomediapr.ca

ABOUT WOLFE AUTO GROUP

In its present form since 1989, Wolfe Auto Group represents Mitsubishi, Subaru and Mazda out of four retail locations throughout the Lower Mainland. Annual sales exceed \$100 million, and over 4,000 units new and used. Wolfe represents the top sales people in BC for each of its three brands. With Wolfe, you're not just buying a car – you're joining the family!

ABOUT CITYPAK

The CITYPAK Project, an initiative of the Selma Breskin Kaplan Foundation, was founded by Chicago businessman and philanthropist Ron Kaplan. CITYPAK provides a safe, convenient and versatile backpack that is uniquely designed to meet the constantly changing needs of the homeless. *Contact – Carrie Lombardi: carrie@liveloudco.com*

LINKS

Homeless numbers in Vancouver:

<http://vancouver.ca/files/cov/homeless-count-2016-report.pdf>