

GOOD WORK NEWS

The Working Centre, 58 Queen St. S. Kitchener, ON N2G 1V6

Issue 95

December 2008

Subscription: a donation towards our work

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Kitchener Frame Canada plant, Kitchener, Ontario, manufacturer of automobile frames. This is a view of the south side of the former Budd plant at 1011 Homer Watson Boulevard (at Bleams), Kitchener. Total sales in 2003 were \$562.1 million. Total employees 1,900 (2002). A victim of the decline in the North American auto industry, the plant is scheduled to be closed in December 2008.

The Cardinal Who Sang Alto

By Leslie Morgenson

I signed up this year to sing *Messiah* in the Mennonite Mass Choir. And, since I have always sung soprano, that is where I placed myself. But I soon discovered that Handel had something other than my voice in mind when he wrote the soprano line. I simply couldn't reach some of the notes. Before I quit however, I was encouraged to sit with the altos for one week. To my surprise, not only did I find a home, but I wondered what took me so long to see how the alto line, although challenging, resonated with my whole being.

I often find myself telling visitors to St. John's Kitchen that over time, I am drawn to stay because of the "off beat" nature of the place. In a world full of insistent social norms,

accepted small talk, and mainstream thought, I fancy the perspective from the kitchen. It's an entirely different angle, as if I'm on a moving staircase at Hogwarts or walking inside a cubist painting. The "kitchen" norm becomes something else altogether, as when learning a new language, not every word is translatable. At times entering St. John's Kitchen is like learning a new language. And there is an 18% chance that the lexicographers of this new language will be left-handed, double the frequency found in the rest of the population outside of our walls. This is clearly not the melody line.

Although I haven't asked him, I'm not certain my choir director

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Solidarity and the Reserve Labour Force

By Joe Mancini

In early November, retired Bishop John Sherlock of the Diocese of London, speaking at Resurrection College in Waterloo, offered up a concise analysis of the present economic crisis using Catholic social teaching as his guide. All things in Catholic social teachings conclude with Subsidiarity (the importance of decentralization) and Solidarity. Bishop Sherlock quoted John Paul II's definition of Solidarity to get across the deep implications of this concept in daily living:

"Solidarity is not a feeling or a vague compassion or a shallow concern for the poor but the firm and preserving determination to commit oneself to the common good, to the good of all, the good of each individual."

Solidarity was in the air when The Working Centre was established in the midst of an unemployment crisis in 1982. In Poland, at that time, the Solidarity movement, drawing inspiration from John Paul II, was

organizing to free the country from the martial law imposed by the communist government.

In 1982, layoffs in Waterloo Region had taken the unemployment rate to over 10%. Major factories had their workers on long layoffs and few had plans for new hires. Statistically the recession ended mid-1982 but, from the perspective of the unemployed, the effects of this deep recession only started to lighten around 1988. Through that period we defined Solidarity as supporting individuals through their long frustrating search for work that could easily take up to 24 months. Solidarity meant finding ways to support individuals as they held together family, kept their shelter and gained access to food with dwindling financial resources.

Even as the economy produced jobs, a new regime of high interest rates set the stage for another recession in 1990. Today economists look back at the 1990 recession as a six-

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Payback

The Shadow Side of Wealth

By Margaret Atwood

The CBC Massey Lecture Series invited novelist, poet, and essayist Margaret Atwood to deliver a surprising look at the topic of debt - a timely subject during our current period of economic upheaval, caused by the collapse of a system of interlocking debts. See page 7 for book details.

"The mills of the gods grind slowly, but they grind exceedingly small," says the Spirit. "Mankind made a Faustian bargain as soon as he invented his first technologies, including the bow and arrow. It was then that human beings, instead of limiting their birthrate to keep their population in step with natural resources, decided instead to multiply unchecked. Then they increased the food supply to support this growth by



manipulating those resources, inventing ever newer and more complex technologies to do so. Now we have the most intricate system of gizmos the world has ever known. Our technological system is the mill that grinds out anything you wish to order up, but no one knows how to turn it off. The end result of a totally efficient technological exploitation of Nature would be a lifeless desert: all natural capital would be exhausted, having been devoured by the mills of production, and the resulting debt to Nature would be infinite. But long before then, payback time will come for Mankind."

Twenty-Fourth Year

Issue 95

December 2008

Good Work News

Good Work News was first produced in September 1984. It is published four times a year by The Working Centre and St. John's Kitchen as a forum of opinions and ideas on work and unemployment. There is a circulation of 9,500 copies. Subscription: a donation towards our work.

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The Working Centre is pleased to announce that

John and Donna Weber
 will be Guests of Honour for the
 22nd Annual Mayors' Dinner
 Saturday April 4th, 2009

The Mayors' Dinner is an evening that celebrates individuals who have made outstanding contributions to our community

The Mayors' Dinner will recognize John and Donna's unique contribution to community and sports organizations by celebrating their long-term commitment combining volunteer work with genuine hospitality.

John was born in Kitchener, he joined the family business, Superior Memorials in 1954 and was President from 1973 to 2002. Donna was born on a farm outside Listowel, Ontario. A nurse by profession, she has worked at St. Mary's Hospital and later in a doctor's office for over 45 years.

John and Donna approach sports as essential community building activities and they have emphasized hospitality in their involvement. John has been past president of the Kitchener Sports Association, Kitchener Minor Baseball Association and the Inter County Baseball Association, and a long time executive of the Kitchener Panthers Baseball Club. Donna has been a fixture in the sports arena serving Minor Hockey, Minor Baseball, Tournament Baseball, Fastball and Hockey, The Memorial Cup and the World Women's Hockey Championship. Donna's hospitality and good food has highlighted all these sporting events. Currently she administers the Sponsored Children's Program for Minor Hockey.

Donna and John are active in their community. John was Past Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Waterloo County Hall of Fame. He has served his church through youth programs, finance, education and student mutual aid. Donna's volunteer work has involved church youth support, Mennonite Relief sale, and church catering. John and Donna have both been inducted into the Waterloo County Hall of Fame as a sports volunteer and for community service.

We invite you to become involved by buying tickets, purchasing a community table for your group, company or church, purchasing sponsorships, or contributing an item for the auction. For more details, please call Kara at (519)743-1151 x119.

Solidarity and the Reserve Labour Force

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month downturn that ushered in a long period of economic growth. The unemployed viewed the new economic reality as a continuation of trends that had taken hold in 1979. The job market did not even start to lighten up with more opportunities until 1996.

From the early 1980s a new economic model was taking shape. "Globalization" is its name at the international level. At the local level, I refer to it as the creation of the Reserve Labour Force. Barack Obama described the change as "shipping jobs overseas and forcing parents to compete with teenagers for minimum wage jobs at Wal-Mart."

This process began to take shape in the early 1980s as business interest groups repeatedly asked governments to penalize unemployed individuals by making it difficult to qualify for unemployment or welfare benefits. By 2000 the Ontario labour force had been well disciplined. Unemployment Insurance and Social Assistance rule changes meant that qualifying or staying on the system became increasingly tenuous. Employment Insurance, the new name for the workers unemployment insurance scheme, introduced rules that made 70% of the unemployed in Ontario ineligible for benefits. Ontario Works, the new name for General Welfare Assistance, combined an intensive bureaucratic monitoring system, a 24% reduction in rates, clawbacks on other income, and rules

that disqualified potential recipients. These changes led to a dramatic reduction in the number of individuals who rely on Ontario Works.

Workers not able to find full time work found a surplus of part time and temporary jobs. These jobs could be found either directly or through the temporary placement agencies that compete with each other to fill job orders that mostly pay \$8 - \$10 an hour. Without hope of viable income support, those in the reserve labour force will have no choice but to hustle enough work to earn the \$600 - \$800 that one needs in a month to maintain a room or bachelor apartment.

Few can flourish in a situation where they live from pay cheque to pay cheque. The reality of bills and obligations piling up without enough money coming in can easily cause a downward spiral. Many attempt to share rooms and living expenses to make ends meet. Others find a supportive community of friends or family that provides a comfort zone. However, the constant stress of job loss, rejection, and the frustration of not having enough money to pay bills can easily lead to despair.

Throughout these years, The Working Centre has witnessed the everyday struggles of job searchers trying to find jobs that will not leave them below the poverty line. Last year, over 3000 people, including new Canadians, people who face long-term unemployment, workers

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The Laurier Centre for Music in the Community and The Working Centre present MusicWorks, a project that offers low-to-no-cost **piano and guitar lessons** for youth and adults living on a limited income.

MusicWorks offers:

- ♪ Music lessons provided by students from the Laurier Faculty of Music
- ♪ Individual, one-on-one instruction for students
- ♪ Opportunities for students and teachers to learn and make music together
- ♪ Community connections and music exploration



Laurier's Dr. Lee Willingham calls MusicWorks "a dynamic meeting place for music research, dialogue, performing, and collaboration". Students are an eclectic mix of individuals who find this program therapeutic in their struggle with life issues, of new Canadians for whom it provides an avenue of creative inclusion in the community. Matty Wilson, a WLU student who researched other community music programs calls this "the most exciting initiative I have seen in my time at Laurier."

MusicWorks currently has 3 teachers and 9 students.



Call 519-749-9177 ext. 232



St. John's Kitchen

The Cardinal Who Sang Alto

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would agree with my assessment that the alto line is off beat. I imagine he would remind me that it is called "harmony" and insist that it supports and works with the other voices. Thinking in terms of the offbeat is my own idiosyncrasy that suits me in those times when I can't find my place in the world... when I recall that I came to St. John's Kitchen mostly for my own need for healing.

People come to the kitchen, some stay, some go, some return, but many of the patterns remain. We are a constant stream of cardinals who feel that red is not our best colour.


For years I have been listening to the stories of a very wise man I met at St. John's Kitchen. His favourite theme is the sad demise of incandescent lighting and the damage we may be doing to our mental and physical health because of the bright lights that essentially eliminate the much needed dark. Many,

I suspect, would ignore his ongoing tirade. But whatdayaknow! The November 2008 issue of **National Geographic** has a cover story titled "Our Vanishing Night." This story could have been written by my friend, but instead was written by Verlyn Klinkenborg, a most off-beat writer who editorializes in the New York Times about the crops and the horses in his field. There



sits his column like a sanctuary for the mind while other columnists on the same (but oh so different) page rage about the economy and the U.S. presidential election. I would rather hear thoughts that resonate with my soul.

Such as, when a woman recently came to sit in the office with us as we finished up our day's work. She had just had a fight with her boyfriend and didn't know where she would now spend the night. She made a few phone calls but mostly just sat thinking about her immediate future while we worked. Then her thoughts suddenly spilled with crystal clarity. With amazing insight she spoke of power struggles at every turn, of not wanting to be a pawn in someone else's dream, of institutions that promote women's rights but don't heed their own words, and of the importance of sitting with one's own pain. We stopped our work and listened since wisdom from the street (with its paradox and its accuracy) is always more interesting than words from those who already have a forum. In fifteen short minutes she spoke to the central dilemmas we face as a culture with more truth than any campaigning politician. There she sat, a solitary cardinal on her own delicate branch, singing her beautiful alto line with a vibrancy she doesn't



We sometimes hear of individuals claiming to fundraise for St. John's Kitchen door-to-door.

In November, we do drop flyers, and we always ask donors to mail or drop off donations to the Centre.

even know she possesses.

And now, as we approach a holiday season that is also acknowledged at St. John's Kitchen in an atypical, often grudging manner, the song line that probably best suits the mood would be the one played at the funeral of a prominent member of our community this past year. While everyone else is singing Joy to the world, the cardinals of the Kitchen will be singing something more akin to the Rolling Stone's **Paint it Black**. "I see a red door and I want to paint it black."

Thank you to Hilltop Poultry for donating turkeys for Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners each year at St. John's Kitchen.



St. John's Kitchen combines a daily meal with practical outreach supports

St. John's Kitchen is a thriving community of hundreds of people who work together for a common goal: the redistribution of food that would have been otherwise wasted. Most of the work of St. John's lies outside of the economy and completely within the community. This unique model allows people to measure goodness in themselves and each other without monetary influence. A place where time is not money.

The Kitchen, located at 97 Victoria Street North in downtown Kitchener, is a gathering place within a neighbourhood. Kitchen equipment and food is made available so that many people from all walks of life can work cooperatively in the true sense of a direct democracy, building trust, respect, and friendships along the journey.

St. John's Kitchen provides:

- Each morning up to 100 people come to St. John's Kitchen to meet others, read the paper, play chess and games, and for a simple breakfast of muffins, breads, and coffee.
- At noon, a hot dinner is served to almost 300 people five days a week. These meals consist of donated and surplus food that is turned into hardy full course meals with dessert and coffee.
- A marketplace provides fresh food items for people to take home to prepare.
- **Downtown Street Outreach** supports over 600 individuals per year providing immediate crisis support in the downtown, assisting with housing, access to health services, and advocacy. Over the last five years, Downtown Outreach has developed as a significant way to support those facing homelessness through building relationships.
- **Psychiatric Outreach Project**, working with over 400 people per year, provides a person-centred, community-based approach to helping individuals experiencing mental health problems.
- A **medical clinic** is offered on Tuesdays through the Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre.
- **Showers and laundry facilities** are on location at St. John's Kitchen.
- **Job Café** provides income enhancement and a way to participate in a broader network of community involvement for those unable to work in the full-time labour market, resulting in over 500 placements totalling 3500 hours of work. Job Café is an essential first link connecting individuals with hundreds of part-time work opportunities.



Sustainable Agriculture in Western Kenya

On November 16th, Rachel Awour and Rose Ong'ech from Ugunja Community Resource Centre (UCRC) presented a workshop on sustainable agriculture at the Queen Street Commons Cafe. Rachel, an agricultural extension worker at UCRC, was invited to Canada to accept an award from the Farm Radio Network for her radio script that teaches listeners about sustainable agriculture.



Rose has spent the last year enrolled in the Peace and Conflict Diploma program at Conrad Grebel. Rose has benefited from generous scholarships raised locally and hospitality offered by Friends of Ugunja to make her studies possible. Her presence has benefitted the partnership between UCRC and The Working Centre. Rose also completed the Diploma in Local Democracy which she received with 15 other graduates on October 26th 2008. Rose heads back to Ugunja at the end of December, where she looks forward to applying the skills of Peace and Conflict in her community development work at UCRC.



Our friends at the Ugunja Community Resource Centre in Kenya celebrated the election of Barack Obama. The village that his father comes from is approximately 40KM from the UCRC, in the town of Nyang'oma Kogelo in the Siaya District of Nyanza Province in Western Kenya.



Something Special for Mary

By Anonymous

I woke up filled with curiosity. What would I experience this day? My volunteer job as truck driver for a Worth a Second Look on Monday mornings always brings surprises. My helper is a street person whom the store hires for four hours.

To my surprise, my helpers have a strong work ethic and seek ways to be helpful. They are gracious with donors. We groan together as we move yet another heavy sofa bed—sometimes only good for the dump—from a basement through a narrow hall, around a corner and out the door, the last thrust being onto the truck!

Some of my helpers are relatively quiet, but most prefer to talk. I listen attentively to their stories, many of which prick my middle class ears. These stories cover the gamut: youths, parents, employment and unemployment, maybe a work-related accident, the struggle to live. I learn of rooming houses, alcohol and drugs. One helper picks through his plastic bag of cigarette butts as he rolls a smoke.

Bill (not his real name) is a likeable fellow. At 34, he's not on drugs or alcohol. He learned to lay flooring in college and worked at his profession for several years. The day we worked together, he was grateful for those few hours of paid work and was hoping to find employment.

"Where do you get food to eat?" I asked.

"From the soup kitchen—and we get supper and breakfast," he replied.

"Are you in a rooming house for accommodation?"

"Out of the Cold," he said.

My gut was pierced. I had been to an Out of the Cold church gymnasium. Ten of our church people volunteer there. He said this was a bit difficult for his wife, "Mary."

I thought of the guest bedroom in our home, where guests of our choosing stay when they visit. I also knew that Jesus spoke and acted with tenderness for the poor.

Bill said he would like to do something special for Mary on Valentine's Day, only two days away. Given his state, what, I wondered, could this man do for his wife?

At home after work I relayed the morning's events to my wife "Stella" with mixed joy and sadness. Then I made the proposal. "Could we have them spend Valentine's night with us?"

The response was exactly what anyone would expect—fear!

"We don't know them," she said. "Would it be safe?" She thought about it deeply the next afternoon. In the evening she asked about some details and then calmly gave her approval.

The following day I went to St. John's Kitchen and asked about Bill and Mary. I found them sleeping in

a corner of the dining room floor. I roused him and asked him what he thought of the plan. He was pleased but wanted to keep it a secret from his wife.

The next evening, a cold snowy night, I picked them up. Stella greeted them warmly and offered tea. We chatted in the living room. My wife offered them towels for a bath. Mary immediately leapt up and took a bath. The evening went well.

As we all retired Bill indicated that an 8 a.m. breakfast would work well. As of 9 the next morning, they hadn't stirred. We wondered what to do. Stella said they likely needed sleep more than anything else. At 10:45 they appeared. We had breakfast, chatted again and they signed our guest book before I took them back to the Kitchen.

Mary wrote, "Thank you so much for providing me with a peaceful shelter" and Bill added, "I thank you ... for sheltering us through our storm. May God bless you."

This event lingers in our minds and hearts. We perceived it as a great risk, yet it is an act that Jesus clearly asks of us: "Just as you did it to one of the least of these, you did it to me." (Matthew 25:40)

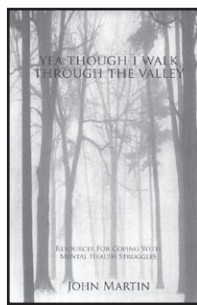
Solidarity

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with physical disabilities and injuries, entry-level workers and skilled workers used our job search resource centre.

The reserve labour force model is only viable when there are jobs that workers can compete for. What happens when over 7,000 manufacturing jobs disappear locally? What happens when the main economic assumptions of this model no longer generate new work? A major downturn will reduce jobs in retail, housing, finance and manufacturing. The way forward is murky, as all new growth will be constrained by the reality that energy supply and consumption are unsustainable. Oil at \$140 per barrel represented the last gasps of the bubble economy. With oil at that price our economy ground to a standstill. Such prices await any new growth phases.

What forms of Solidarity will evolve in an economy that no longer produces jobs so easily? What about those whose livelihood has been dependant on the availability of low wage work. We are entering an era where the economic model we have become dependant on may no longer provide our community with anything near the minimal security that formerly was available. What will this mean to our community kitchens, foodbanks and facilities like Out of the Cold? How will people fare during a major economic recession with minimal income supports? These are just some of the questions that will



Yea Though I Walk Through the Valley

Resources for Coping with Mental Health Struggles

John Martin

134 pages \$8.95 softcover

John Martin, a long time community volunteer who assisted at St. John's Kitchen for many years, has written a very personal book about his journey through mental health struggles. The book combines an honest telling of the stages and experiences that he has lived through while coping with mental health issues over 50 years. The book also contains up-to-date and thoughtful psychiatric resources. John's faith has helped him walk through the valley and he shares those resources as well. The following are some excerpts from his book. Copies of his book are available at the Queen Street Commons Café.

"Wandering the streets of Kitchener for a full night was also an excruciating wilderness experience... I had become so preoccupied with obsessive/compulsive thought patterns that I accidentally dropped my apartment key into the coin slot of the bus fare container. I was at a loss what to do since I did not have enough money for a hotel room... Therefore, I sat from eleven o'clock in the evening until one thirty in the morning in the lobby of one of the major hotels. At one thirty in the morning the night security man asked that I leave the hotel lobby. I then simply walked the streets until about seven-thirty in the morning when I suddenly recalled that I had an appointment to see one of the professors at Conrad Grebel College." (p28)

"On the subject of work and meaningful activities, all persons need a proper balance between work, philosophizing, socializing, recreation, and spirituality in their lives. Those of us with serious mental health struggles are no exception. I often think that I have discovered what I call the "monastic balance" in my own life. I have heard it said that monks had to spend two hours working in the field for every hour spent in prayer and meditation. Monasteries worked out a balance between religious, intellectual and physical activities. Although I spend an hour and a half in prayer and meditation each day, as well as time reading the Biblical passage and accompanying devotional from the Upper Room, I engage in a good deal of physical activity; as well as doing some type of intellectual work every day. I also read newspapers and watch the news for about one hour, in addition to watching sports or a movie for another hour or two. I also spend approximately one hour every day having social visits with my friends. I do all of my own cooking, washing dishes, laundry, grocery shopping and cleaning..."

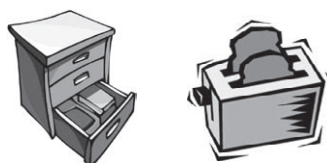
"My life is indeed much simpler, and less stressful than most people's lives. With my high level of inner mental and emotional tension, I need this simple lifestyle. It makes me less inclined to run away from reality and escape into the unreal world of psychosis." (p81)



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Regional Manufacturing Jobs Evaporate

By Joe Mancini

Manufacturing job loss in Canada is occurring at an alarming rate. The CAW's Manufacturing Matters Fact Sheet states that the Canadian economy has shed over 350,000 manufacturing jobs since 2002 through plant closures and major layoffs across the country. In 2007, 360 manufacturing jobs were lost every single day. Insecure work in lower-wage sectors is replacing high wage and value-added jobs. In Waterloo Region workers in the manufacturing sector have just faced a year where over 1,000 well paying jobs have been eliminated.

Before Christmas 2007, Lear Manufacturing started a series of layoffs that reduced their labour force from 550 to under 200 workers. The workers still employed are from the early 1980s seniority group. Lear workers know that their manufacturing facility has weathered many economic challenges while consistently producing valuable auto parts. Tony Moxey, Lear Chairperson for CAW Local 1524, stated that governments allow "foreign car makers to enter our country, sell vehicles and

not supply jobs or let us sell in their market. The corporations have lost a portion of the market which they feel can be made up by cutting wages, benefits and pensions from workers. This is not the answer. If people are working for half of their income, who is going to buy these vehicles? It is a vicious cycle that will only end with all of us losing."

At the end of their January 23, 2008 shift, 177 LEDCO workers learned that the company was terminating all employees. The next day LEDCO applied for bankruptcy owing over \$17 million with only \$7 million in assets. Although the CAW local had been pressured to accept wage cuts, such action would not have saved the company. Workers were able to realize severance pay of about \$1,183.43 per year of service after strong negotiating from the National CAW office.

On February 11th, 2008 Kitchener Frame (formerly known as Budd Automotive) announced that its Kitchener plant was slated to close by April 2009 if it was unable to secure more work, putting about 800 jobs in jeopardy. Layoffs were nothing new at Budd Automotive. The Budd plant reduced its workforce from 3200 workers in 1979 to fewer than 400 by 1982. The company retooled and by the mid 1990s was employing up to 1900 workers. Despite worker concessions that saved the company \$40 million, the company could not recover from its sale to Martinrea, its conversion to hydroforming technology, and its dependence on GM large vehicle sales. Kitchener Frame will close



Mike Devine, Tim Mitchell, President, CAW Local 1524, Jim Woods, National Representative and Carol Phillips, Assistant to the CAW National President

Community Tools projects combine skill-building, community service, and recycling

Recycle Cycles has fixed up and reused over 500 bikes this year and serviced a total of 2000 bikes, helping many get access to an affordable means of transportation.



Worth a Second Look Furniture and Housewares has become Kitchener's largest furniture and housewares recycling centre, moving over 150,000 items per year and is primarily supported by 50 volunteers per month who sort, price, and stock good quality merchandise. Worth a Second Look is a community effort aimed at recycling household goods at affordable prices.

Computer Training and Recycling: We provide a lab for self-directed computer training in a variety of subjects and for classes teaching the basics of computer use. Our Computer Recycling project offers affordable used PCs to the public and provides people the opportunity to learn about computers by volunteering to refurbish old computers.



Integrated, Supportive Housing: We now offer 28 units of transitional, affordable, social housing to the homeless, those at risk of homelessness, and women at risk in units above our buildings on Queen Street and in two houses. Last year, 46 different people accessed our transitional housing while 400 people were assisted by our Housing Desk.

Over 200 volunteers make possible **Community Tools** projects including our Second Floor Arts Space; BarterWorks - a local currency trading system; Queen Street Commons Café; Maurita's Kitchen; the Community Bake Oven; GROW Herbal; 3 Community Gardens; Computer Recycling, Worth A Second Look thrift store; and Recycle Cycles - a community bike shop.

Job Search Resource Centre

The Job Search Resource Centre assists thousands of people in their search for work

Supporting Job Searching: Last year, 3000 people used our lively resource centre, a place with multiple supports to individuals trying to earn a living while facing a tough job market.

We provide:

- employment and career counseling, resume assistance, links to employers, job leads, and workshops
- public access computers (used over 1000 times per month)
- community voice mail (with 300 users each month)
- public telephones, photocopiers, and fax machines



Helping Laid Off Workers: The Working Centre actively supports workers laid off from local manufacturing plants – helping with resume writing, job search and interview skills, and computer training – as workers face continued manufacturing job losses.

Connecting internationally trained newcomers with the necessary training, certification, and job search supports to be able practice their profession or trade in Canada.

Speak English Café, The Immigrant Loan Program and Workplace Language Coach complement one-on-one supports to help New Canadians build skills and make connections to employers.

Waterloo Region ASSETS+ (A Service for Self Employment, Training, and Support): Assists in the development of a business plan for home businesses through the 10-week WRAP course, and offers additional supports to graduates.

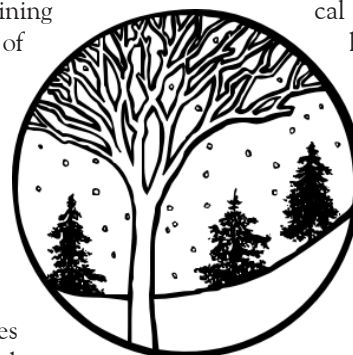


and lay off the remaining workers as of the end of December 2008.

The Kitchener plant, represented by CAW Local 1451, has a long and proud tradition. Ken Wright, editor of the local's newsletter, describes the stress of job loss that workers at Kitchener Frame are facing:

"There was a time when I used to write the Editorial for our newsletter and always had some good news to convey. This hasn't been the case for some time now but I signed on as Editor for the bad times as well as the good times. I know very well the devastation caused when a person loses a job. It happened to many of us in 1979 and 1980. There was a flood of mental and emotional breakdowns, broken marriages, substance abuse and yes, a few good people died, either by their own hand or because of the stress of being without a decent living. I know that some of you will be affected by this and I want you to remember that there is much more help available to you now than ever before. Our Union and the Company provide counselling services and outreach help and most of these services are also provided by the many United Way agencies. Privacy is always assured. If you feel yourself falling, reach up for a helping hand. Remember none of what is happening is your fault and given time and a little help, you will find your way."

On May 11th, 2008 CAW Lo-



cal 1524 members were handed a letter at the end of their shift at MTD Products informing them that manufacturing operations would be terminated. Local president Tim Mitchell describes the situation this way: "On October 31st,

2008 MTD Products will be ceasing their production lines in the Kitchener facility. They will continue to maintain the distribution and service aspect of the facility. This decision will result in 250 permanent layoffs with about 30 members left to work in the warehouse. The real tragedy is that the Kitchener facility was not losing money and is highly productive. The partial closure is the result of an American based Corporation realizing they will be selling less products in the US. Rather than close a US plant, they elected to close their only Canadian facility. It is being allowed to happen because we do not have a policy in this country that says if you want to sell a product in this country you have to build in this country."

The number of manufacturing layoffs and shutdowns in Waterloo Region and Guelph has affected well over 7,500 jobs. This puts tremendous pressure on the unemployed to find meaningful work. The Working Centre is providing job search assistance for these workers in cooperation with the Action Centres setup to provide specialized return-to-work-supports.

Speak English Café: Shaping and Creating Space Together

By Julia Beddoe

The space at the back of Queen Street Commons is very much alive every Thursday evening as people gather for the Speak English Café. The place hums with animated conversation and is punctuated with peals of laughter. Between 25 and 40 people meet each week and you can see them gathered in small groups, bent forward and engaged in conversation. A quick survey of the room offers a snapshot of our community: men and women, young families, single parents, young adults, university students, teenagers and seniors who speak a variety of languages, and hail from different countries around the world. There is a spirit of warmth and hospitality that has been built



over five years in a space carved out of time and location.

The café was started in November 2002 in response to a growing need for English conversation practice and community connections for newcomers with English as a Second Language. The Mennonite Coalition for Refugee Support (MCRS) and The Working Centre continue to Co-host the Thursday evenings in a partnership that enhances the ongoing work of both organizations. The Speak English Café and its informal approach complement the formal language learning that happens in classrooms around Kitchener-Waterloo. What is the Café all about and what makes it tick?

The concept is quite simple: English conversation that brings people together and builds community. At first glance one might mistake simplicity for a lack of structure. In reality there is a strong structure in place that guides the spirit of the Café but which is intentionally kept invisible so the focus can be on building relationships.

The Speak English Café was given its name because of the importance placed on a relaxed atmosphere. The Café creates a safe social situation where people come together to contribute to conversation and learn from each other. It is in the bringing together of people around a common goal that local democracy happens.

The first part of each Thursday evening is spent meeting new people and catching up with old friends. After some time, as the group breaks into small clusters, an activity is provided to spark conversation and, more often than not,

each group will go off on its own tangent. It is on these tangents that the most meaningful learning and connecting happens.

From a language learning perspective, The Speak English Café complements traditional classroom learning where information is transferred from the teacher to the students. The purpose of the Café extends beyond conversation practice however. It benefits all community members with its lively, fun atmosphere that draws together people who might not otherwise have an opportunity to gather.

Ray Oldenburg, author of *The Great Good Place*, would celebrate The Speak English Café as a Third Place – “a lighthearted, informal public meeting spot where people can gather outside of the more serious spheres of home and work with the purpose of exchanging stories and ideas.” We live in an individualistic society where the mainstream focus is on creating self-sufficient households for retreat at the end of a busy day. Depres-

sion, loneliness and isolation are common experiences – especially among families and individuals who are new to Canada and are dealing with settlement issues. The Speak English Café offers opportunities to connect with the wider community and ease isolation.

Helping with the nitty-gritty of the English language is perhaps the most visible way people contribute to The Speak English Café, but it most certainly is not the only way. Equally important roles include: welcoming someone who is at the Café for the first time and helping that person feel comfortable; creating a friendly atmosphere by arranging coffee, mugs and snacks; translating a few words in someone’s mother tongue to help clarify an idea; providing information about Kitchener-Waterloo for someone new to the area; and inquiring about someone’s week with a willingness to share joys and frustrations. That’s why there is no distinction made between staff, volunteers and participants. The strength of The Speak English Café lies in the fact that people support one another without putting anyone in the position of an ‘expert.’ This is another way that The Working Centre lives out the rejection of status so that all may be equal.

Consistency of time and presence have contributed to the success of the Speak English Café. Folks can depend on the group meeting every Thursday evening (perhaps even 5 or 10 years from now...). The consistent presence of hosts from MCRS and The Working Centre means that if someone misses the Café for a number of

weeks there will be another person who notices, without a formal attendance record being maintained. Simply being noticed can provide someone with a significant feeling of being connected within the larger community. I am reminded of a time when I missed two consecutive weeks unexpectedly because of an illness in my family. Jafar, a regular participant of the Café, made a special visit to The Working Centre to see me the following Friday to express concern and offer support because he noticed my absence. It was a good reminder that sometimes we have opportunities to use our gifts to support those around us...and at other times we need to accept gifts of support from others.

Flexibility is key to The Speak English Café. Each week is shaped by the people who attend. People can come every week, once a month or once in a blue moon knowing that they will be welcomed warmly each time. The evening is very fluid. People can arrive after 6:00 and leave before 8:00 as needed, allowing those with varying work schedules, transporta-

tion constraints and family commitments to participate. While there is no childcare provided, caregivers are invited to bring their children and watch over them in a child-friendly setting. This opportunity to bring different generations together adds richness to our community.

Every week brings together an interesting mix of people, which creates endless opportunities for new learning, alongside the possibility for misunderstanding and exclusion. The shared responsibility for inclusion also comes in a variety of forms. Sometimes it’s a detailed explanation of a pop culture reference; at other times the careful steering of a conversation away from a controversial topic.

The Speak English Café continues to offer a “Third Place” where people can gather to build community while relaxing with and learning from one another. Hospitality remains at its core and there is every reason to believe that five years from now you will still be able to find this lively group at the back of Queen Street Commons on Thursday evenings, filling the space with laughter and conversation.



- Fair-trade coffee
- Specialty coffees
- Fresh herbal teas
- Hot chocolate
- Apple cider



- Games Night
- Knitting/Crochet Group
- Movie Nights (coming soon!)

The Café hosts live concerts performed by local musicians such as the New Vibes Jazz Quartet.



The Café Gift Shop offers handmade items crafted in the Second Floor Arts Space

- gift baskets
- herbal soaps
- herbal products
- handmade paper
- cards
- recycled crafts

We use whole, vegetarian ingredients to serve a range of diverse foods including:

- lasagna and other pasta dishes
- a variety of salads
- pizzas
- soups of the day
- sandwiches and wraps
- cookies, squares, cakes, and pies
- bagels and breads

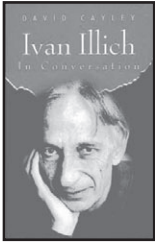
The selection of Alternative Work Catalogue books available at the Café make great gifts, and cover a range of subjects from job searching to gardening to social criticism and the environment.



43 Queen Street South
Downtown Kitchener
519-743-1151 x. 227

Monday - Friday:
8:30am - 9:00pm
Saturday: 10:00am - 4:00pm

Alternative Work Catalogue



Ivan Illich - In Conversation

David Cayley

Ivan Illich in Conversation contains the first major interviews granted by Illich in over 15 years. This book examines how institutions dominate modern life. Do advances in education, medicine and transportation systems actually liberate the human spirit, free us from ignorance, or give us independence? Illich's thesis is that institutions that grow beyond a certain scale force people to consume what institutions produce. These conversations range over the whole of Illich's published work and public career.

299 pages \$18.95 softcover



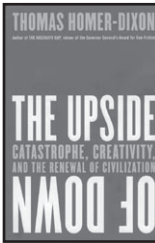
Payback

Debt and the Shadow Side of Wealth

Margaret Atwood

In Payback, legendary novelist Margaret Atwood investigates the subject of debt. She doesn't talk about high finance or managing money; instead, she explores debt as an ancient and central motif in religion, literature, and the structure of human societies. By looking at how debt has informed our thinking from preliterate times to the present day, Atwood argues that the idea of what we owe may well be built into the human imagination as one of its most dynamic metaphors.

280 pages \$10.95 softcover



The Upside of Down

Catastrophe, Creativity, and the Renewal of Civilization

Thomas Homer-Dixon

In this essential book for our times, Thomas Homer-Dixon describes his understanding of the urgent problems that confront our world, and clarifies their scope and deep causes. The Upside of Down paints a vivid picture of the immense stresses that are simultaneously converging on our societies and threatening to break our very civilization apart. This vitally important book shows how, in the face of ecological and societal breakdown, we can renew our global civilization, and avoid catastrophe.

448 pages \$24.95 softcover



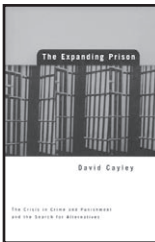
Tar Sands

Dirty Oil and the Future of a Continent

Andrew Nikiforuk

This critical exposé of the open-pit mines that have made Canada one of the worst environmental offenders on earth combines extensive scientific research and compelling writing. Nikiforuk explores Fort McMurray, home to some of the world's largest open-pit mines, and investigates this twenty-first-century pioneer town from the exorbitant cost of housing to its more serious social ills. He explains how the tar sands burn more carbon than conventional oil, poison the water supply, and wreak environmental havoc.

208 pages \$20.00 softcover



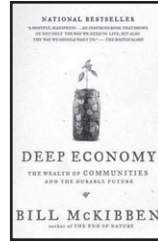
The Expanding Prison

The Crisis in Crime and Punishment and the Search for Alternatives

David Cayley

The Expanding Prison explores why prison populations in many western countries have been rapidly increasing, while crime itself has generally not. Cayley looks at the history of prison, and explains how imprisonment as a primary means of social control fails the victim, the offender, and society as a whole. He then describes a number of promising alternatives to imprisonment that could truly revolutionize criminal justice.

400 pages \$22.95 softcover



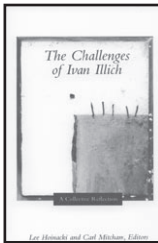
Deep Economy

The Crisis in Crime and Punishment and the Search for Alternatives

Bill McKibben

McKibben offers the greatest challenge in a generation to the prevailing view of our economy. He makes a compelling case for moving beyond "growth" as the primary economic ideal and instead pursuing prosperity in a more local direction, with more locally produced food and energy, and even culture and entertainment. Our purchases need not be at odds with those things we truly value, and the more we nurture the basic humanity of the economy, the more we may preserve our own.

272 pages \$15.50 softcover



The Challenges of Ivan Illich

A Collective Reflection

Lee Hoinacki and Carl Mitcham, Editors

Ivan Illich has been called the greatest social critic of the twentieth century. For this book, the editors have compiled a number of essays written by individuals who have been strongly influenced by Illich in their life. The book depicts how Illich's thoughts on such diverse topics as education, psychotherapy, history, technology, economics, anarchism, society in general, and more have profoundly changed the lives of those who knew him.

256 pages \$24.50 softcover

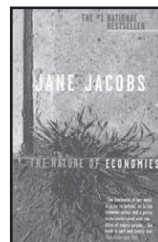


Dark Age Ahead

Jane Jacobs

A Dark Age is a culture's dead end; a result of a society gone awry. Jacobs argues that our own culture may soon be facing a dark age as we move from an agrarian economy to an increasingly technological one. How do we make this shift without losing ourselves in the process? Jacobs identifies several key aspects of society that are slowly degrading, and suggests that to reverse the decay, we must hold on to those key cultural values.

241 pages \$21.00 softcover

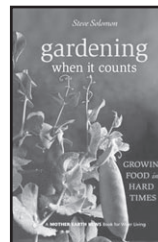


The Nature of Economies

Jane Jacobs

Jacob's premise in this book is that since "human beings exist wholly within nature as a part of natural order in every respect", we should look to the processes of nature for vibrant and flexible models of economic planning. She brings examples from fields ranging from evolution to ecology; chaos theory to cellular biology. This highly original and accessible book offers provocative, radical alternatives to running an economy with nature as a guide.

190 pages \$16.95 softcover



Gardening When it Counts

Steve Solomon

Designed for readers with no experience and applicable to most areas in the English-speaking world except the tropics and hot deserts, this book shows that any family with access to 3-5,000 sq. ft. of garden land can halve their food costs using a growing system requiring just the odd bucketful of household waste water, perhaps two hundred dollars worth of hand tools, and about the same amount spent on supplies - working an average of two hours a day during the growing season.

340 pages \$19.95 softcover

The Alternative Work Book Store at Queen Street Commons Café offers a wide selection of books on such

topics as the environment, education, poverty, social alternatives, the philosophy of work, job searching, simple living, and more!



You can place orders by fax (519-743-3840) or mail (see order form at right).

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Quantity	Title	Price

Postage: \$3 for the first book, \$1 for each additional book. Free postage for orders over \$200.

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Waterloo School for Community Development

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games, and creative but inexpensive children's play areas. The community upgraded the skating rink including taking out walls in the change room building sometimes with and sometimes without City permission. The rink has become a focal point for community activities. Collaborative neighbourhood building projects have created beautiful cob structures that add warmth and the neighbourhood's signature to the park.

Jutta has concern that an expand-

ing concept of public risk threatens this community. A composting toilet project was halted by the city building department, new regulations threaten the playground, and bake ovens are under increasing scrutiny.

Ken Westhues thanked Jutta for sharing her pictures, spirit and insights into the building of a neighbourhood park - insights that are transferable to any endeavour. He noted that Dufferin Grove Park in Toronto is the big city cousin of The Working Centre. It is a connection that we hope will grow.

To the Readers of Good Work News

Dear Friends,

The Working Centre community provides practical supports and skill building. Over 300 volunteers ensure that projects like public access computers, bike recycling, affordable furniture and housewares, computer recycling, and arts and culture projects are accessible and helpful. Queen Street Commons Café and Maurita's Kitchen is a community development effort that combines a volunteer spirit, space, hospitality, music and whole foods.

The community at St. John's Kitchen works to provide a hot lunch meal for up to 300 people. Growing outreach supports assist people through the many problems they face when they are at risk of homelessness. Our 30 units of transitional affordable housing are invaluable in this work. The Job Search Resource Centre is a hub of activity serving the growing numbers of unemployed.

We rely on your donations and contributions to make this work of serving meals, building housing, recycling bikes and creating community possible.

For your contribution to our work, you will receive our quarterly newspaper, Good Work News that tells the story of community building in downtown Kitchener with articles about community tools, simple living and innovative responses to poverty. Your support makes a difference in many people's lives. We hope that you are able to make a donation at this time to help sustain us throughout the year.

Sincerely,

Joe Mancini, Director

Yes I want to support this work in K-W!

Enclosed is my donation for:

- \$35 \$50 \$75
 \$100 Other \$ _____

Please make cheque payable to:
 The Working Centre, 58 Queen St. S.,
 Kitchener, Ontario, N2G 1V6

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Postal Code: _____

Please direct my donation to:

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 Where it is needed most

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An Alternative Christmas Gift Idea

Each year we are grateful for donations made in the name of family, friends or associates. If you use this order form, we will gladly send a Christmas card acknowledging your gift. Please fill out the form carefully. The cards that we send have been designed by Andy Macpherson.

Please direct my gift to: St. John's Kitchen The Working Centre

Please send a Christmas card to:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Postal Code: _____

Your name and address:

(So we can send you an Income Tax receipt). If more space is needed, please use a separate sheet.

Name: _____

Address: _____

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Waterloo School for Community Development Update

By Joe Mancini

50 people gathered at St. John's Kitchen on Wed October 26th for the awarding of the Diploma in Local Democracy. Marty Schreiter was the Honoured Guest who conferred the diplomas. His address to the graduates focused on the concept of inclusion in the downtown. Marty recounted the establishment of downtown outreach based on the principle that the downtown is for all. He described the process that combines rights with inclusion and opportunities to enhance diversity and new ideas. The Kitchener downtown is increasingly a model for this type of development.

Each graduate, upon accepting their diploma summarized their understanding of how local democracy comes alive. Colene described an initiative that involved racing car drivers with a neighbourhood event. Julia talked about her favou-

rite topic – the Speak English Cafe. Debra reflected on the community of traders that are part of BarterWorks. Amy wondered why the philosophy of democracy is so lacking in daily living. Rebecca considered how the big concept of local democracy can be distilled down to treating all respectfully. Norma emphasized how new Canadians in the Celebration of Foods group come together to share and support each other. Dilys described her meaningful journey exploring local democracy in community groups.

Rose described how in giving, we receive. Local democracy is about contributing and in the process, many rewards come to the community. Rose also accepted a diploma for Sylvia, her colleague from the Ugunja Community Resource Centre who participated in the fall in 2006. Sheena linked local democracy to the effort necessary to ensure the vulnerable are not excluded

from core area development. Eunice told the dramatic story of Kitchener church and community groups providing sanctuary to refugees. Sean described his friendship with a street trader

and wondered why authentic money trading on the street is discouraged. Christa read a portion of a letter to Jane Addams telling her about the citizenship initiatives at The Working Centre and asked how they compare to Hull House in Chicago in the early 1900's.

Local democracy is about practical expressions of social solidarity, cooperation, neighbourhood mobilization and personal responsibility. The graduation ceremony left all inspired about building democratic communities.

On November 19th, we held the second event in the Local Democracy series. The Working Centre welcomed Jutta Mason and David Cayley who spent the afternoon visiting the Queen Street projects before the talk in the evening. While having supper at the Queen Street Commons Cafe, it was not unlike the park atmosphere that Jutta talked about later. There was piano and guitar background music, lots of people lining up to be served, surprising conversations, people joining

the table randomly, all within an atmosphere of conviviality.

Jutta has a wonderful sense of humour and a deep analysis on why bureaucracies get in the way of community. She shared this knowledge through describing the establishment of the Dufferin Grove Park (dufferinpark.ca, celos.ca). The project has little institutional capacity, its gift has been to convert city staff to more or less follow the initiatives of the neighbours. The staff work hard to keep up

with the initiatives that just keep coming 15 years later.

Community resources like neighbourhood parks are often underutilized and fail to serve the purpose they

were designed for. Dufferin Grove Park changed that slowly but surely. Community happens when people have a reason to bump into each other. For Jutta, community happens through small things. Caring about a flower garden brings beauty while engendering respect. Conceiving of space without walls means ensuring there are benches, flower gardens, community bake ovens, pizza days, basketball courts, community dinners, board

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