

# GOOD WORK NEWS

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

Issue 89

May 2007

Subscription: A Donation Towards our Work

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Queen Street  
Commons Café  
Coffee ☕ Culture ☕  
Community ☕

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## Queen Street Comes Alive

Reflections on 25 years of Working Centre activity on Queen Street

By Arleen Macpherson

Have you been down on Queen Street South in Kitchener lately? There is a virtual many-faceted gem in the heart of downtown. Three buildings near the corner of Queen and Charles Streets and another at Victoria and Weber Streets house the projects of The Working Centre that serve hundreds of people in Waterloo Region and beyond in a variety of creative ways.

When I first joined The Working Centre in 1988, its two projects were St. John's Kitchen, located in the Anglican Church gym at Duke and Water Streets, and Employment Counselling Services in the basement and two floors of a rented building at 58 Queen Street South. There were five people employed at the kitchen and six at The Working Centre. This was a fledgling operation dedicated to the well-being of marginalized and unemployed people that depended heavily on volunteer helpers and financial support from the larger community.

It is so much fun now, a mere twenty years later, to survey the present day grown-up Working Centre, its expanded programs and buildings and the new St. John's Kitchen, a permanent home customized to serve the needs and pleasures of its patrons and workers.

It is well worth a visit to the downtown to see the transformation of four of Kitchener's historic old buildings at 43, 58 and 66 Queen Street South and at 97 Victoria Street North. They are treasures in the downtown and a monument to the imagination, skills and labour of countless paid and unpaid workers,

## Open Doors on Queen Street

Thursday May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2007

2:00 pm - 8:00 pm

Formal Presentation at

7:00pm

Come and Celebrate The Working Centre's 25 years and the completion of 66 Queen Street South

- Explore 25 years of Working Centre history
- Tour the completed renovations at 66 Queen:
  - Five new apartment units
  - Employment Counselling space and programs
  - Computer Repair and Recycling Centre
- See Community Tools Projects in action like Mauita's Kitchen, Recycle Cycles and "Mapping Transitions" art exhibition
- Local history display of Queen Street South
- Refreshments at Queen Street Commons Café

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Twenty-Third Year

Issue 89

May 2007

Good Work News

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Please join us for the  
**18<sup>th</sup> Annual Golf Tournament**



In support of The Working Centre and St. John's Kitchen

.....  
**Wednesday, August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2007**

**at Foxwood Country Club**  
 .....

**\$125 per Golfer plus a \$15 Golf Bonus Package**  
**To reserve your spot, call Kara at (519)743-1151 x119**  
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Twentieth Mayors' Dinner Highlights  
 Community Commitment



By Dave Thomas

"Call John Jackson"

That was the advice the speakers at the Twentieth Annual Mayors' Dinner gave when summing up the impact of the Guest of Honour, a mild-mannered but highly effective environmental activist who is able to work with others to mobilize for action when ecological challenges arise.

Neither a politician nor a scientist, John Jackson is a community builder. He builds relationships, and helps concerned residents work together to safeguard their communities.



Rhonda Hustler knows about that. When she banded together with fellow residents in Lambton County to fight a proposal to send Toronto garbage to their community, the Canadian Environmental Law Association suggested she contact John.

"Those three little words - 'call John Jackson' - turned out to be the best advice," Rhonda told the crowd of 600 gathered to honour John on April 14. "He came to Watford by bus, knapsack slung over his shoulder, at his own expense. He sat patiently through our completely disorganized meeting and then began to speak. He assured us that other communities were fighting megalandfill and incineration proposals for Toronto garbage, that our concerns about pollution and exploitation were entirely justified, and most importantly, that we had the resources to stop these outrageous proposals.

"By resources, John did not mean money - a good thing, since we had none. By resources, John meant our community's energy and commitment to social equity and justice. He focused us on a practical process:

- Question politicians and flawed government policies,
- Challenge conventional thinking about incineration and landfills,
- Educate ourselves on the environmental principles, and
- Build collective strength through provincial and national networks."

That's the sort of practical and thoughtful help John has been providing to groups for decades. Re-counting a similar tale, Marilyn Gracey said that she never intended to be an environmental activist. She

and her husband Clifford have a farm on the Niagara Peninsula where they led a quiet life. Then the Ontario Waste Management Corporation announced in 1985 a plan to establish a toxic waste treatment plant nearby. That galvanized Marilyn and a small group of other committed residents. And when they needed an ally to assist them in their struggle against OWMC, the government and the bureaucracy, they turned to John.

In a book detailing the battle with the suits that followed, Marilyn describes how she quickly realized that John would be a humble but powerful partner.

"[The chair] called the meeting to order and quickly introduced John Jackson: 'John is co-author the book Chemical Nightmare. He's been a professor at the University of Windsor. He did graduate work in political science and sociology at the University of California, Berkeley Campus, and is a gold medallist in both fields.'

"The name Berkeley grabbed Marilyn's attention. Hadn't Berkeley been the site of student riots, a seedbed for rabble-rousers? ... Marilyn searched John Jackson's face. He didn't look like a rioter, but then, what did she know about hotheads and dissidents?"

After a listing of his long list of achievements, John, with his customary degree of humility, "turned deep red with his embarrassment. He shed his weighty-looking knapsack and placed it to one side. From the enthusiastic applause, Marilyn realized he was a recognized and respected figure."

More than two decades later, at the Mayors' Dinner, Marilyn's respect for John had not diminished. In fact, it had grown. She presented



him with a plaque of the cover of her book, and thanked him for his years of inspiration and help.

MC Neil Aitchison

Long-time Mayors' Dinner MC Neil Aitchison has a personal connection to John. They've known each other since they were in grade one together in Harriston, Ont.

"As long as I can remember," Neil said, "John was an impassioned public speaker. He routinely won all the local, district, regional and provincial speaking contests. He was speaking about such things as phosphates and unnecessary, unhealthy chemicals in our laundry detergents that were polluting our lakes and

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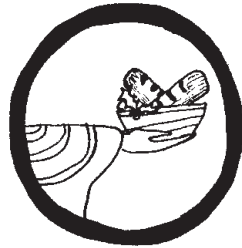


# Your Generosity is Very Much Appreciated

*The Working Centre and St. John's Kitchen are grateful for the many contributions we receive from individuals, businesses, churches, schools, groups, and organizations. It is with deep gratitude that we thank those who make significant contributions to our work. We recognize in doing so that we leave out many who contribute in so many important ways to our work.*

David Ab Moore, Lynne Alex, All Saints Anglican Church, Waltraud Anton, Uma & Ratna Arya, Audiology Services, Pauline Bauman, Blessed Kateri School, Blessed Sacrament Parish, Bloomingdale United Church, Andrea Bootsma, Paul Born & Marlene Epp, Brent's Masonry Inc, Bridgeport Lions Club, Alex Brown, Ilene Burkhardt, C3 Battler Inc, Marian Campbell, Canadahelps.Org, Coleman Equipment Inc., J. Douglas & Muriel I. Coleman, Donald Cowan, Crosby Volkswagen Ltd., Kenneth R. Davidson, Rick & Michelle Doktor, Mr. & Mrs. Steve Dosman, Roman Dubinski, Martin Edmonds, Frank & Enid Ellingham, Emmanuel United Church, Equitable Life Insurance, Ethos, First Christian Reformed, First Church of Christ the Scientist, First Mennonite Church, Christa Fischer, Patrick & Noreen Flynn, Forest Hill United Church, Steven Furino, Glen Acres Baptist Church,

Andrew Glenn, Dorothy Graham, Charles Greb, Ronald Green, Valerie Grzesiak, Walter Hachborn, Hager Hinge, Randy Hannigan, Anna Hemmendinger, Hogg Fuel & Supply, Bruce Holzworth, HBC-Home Outfitters, Bishop Peter Hundt, Hurley Corporation, Stuart Jackson, Esme Johnson, Cameron Kitchen, Greg Klymko, Knights of Columbus 1504, Lloyd & Erla Koch, Pauline & Jacobus Kok, James Kra-



kovsky, K-W Naval Association, K-W Pilates - Stephen Filipowicz, K-W Region Elks Lodge #578, Jessica Kwik, Brenda & Gary Leis, Sally Lerner, M. R. Jutzi Properties, Ron & Vicki MacDonald, K. MacIsaac, MacNaughton Hermsen Britton Clarkson Planning Ltd., Lois Magee, Manulife Financial - United Way Matching, Robert L. Martin, May Court Club of K-W, Mary-Louise McAllister, Fr. Murray McDermott, Mennonite Savings & Credit, Mersynergy Charitable Foundation, David & Sandy Milne, Peter Morris, Gary & Margaret Mousseau, Nelco

Mechanical Limited, Oecta - Waterloo, Parkminster United Church, Nancy Lou & Palmer Patterson, Brigitte Penzendorfer, Peter Benninger Realty, Plattsville Evangelical Mission, RBJ Schlegel Holdings Inc., RDM Corporation, R. A. Rickard, Ruth Ristau, Flora Roy, Marguerite Rueb, Cynthia & Peter Schaefer, Mr. & Mrs. John Scheele, Murray Schmidt, Harold Seegmiller, Serad Holdings Ltd., Glen Shantz, Mitsuru Shimpō, Sisters of St Joseph, Smith Energy Inc, Jeff Smith, Lorraine Snyder, Hamilton Diocese - Social Awareness Office, St Agatha Religious House, St Andrews Presbyterian Church, St Anthony Daniel Parish, St Mary's Catholic Secondary School, St. Agatha Church, St. Columba's Church, St. Jerome's University, St. Michael's Church, St. Thomas Moore Catholic Secondary School, Edna Staebler, John & Paula Stemp, Stirling Ave. Mennonite Church, Strassburger Supplies Limited, Swanson's Home Building Centre, Iva R. Taves, TD Canada Trust, The Economical Insurance Group, Trinity United Church, Union Gas, United Way, W. Ristau Construction, John & Patricia Wainwright, Mary Ann Wasilka, Waterloo Catholic District School Board, Waterloo Christian Reformed, Nelson Weber, Ken & Ann Westhues, Herbert & Barbara Whitney, and Tom & Rebecca Yoder-Neufeld.



It has come to our attention that from time to time individuals claim to be raising funds for St. John's Kitchen by collecting money door to door. While we do drop flyers door-to-door, we have always asked that donors mail or drop-off donations directly at the Centre.

## 2007 Coin Drive a Great Success!

This year's coin can drive was a great success, thanks to the efforts of these generous local churches, schools, and individuals: All Saints Anglican Church, Apostolic Faith Church, Bethel Lutheran Church, Blessed Sacrament Church, Blessed Sacrament School, Christ Lutheran Church, Christ the King United Church, Emmanuel United Church, Faith Lutheran Church, First Mennonite Church, Highland Baptist Church, Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Holy Trinity Anglican Church, Hope Lutheran Church, Kitchener East Presbyterian, Notre Dame School, Olivet United Church, Our Lady of Lourdes School, Redeemer Lutheran Church, Rockway Mennonite Church, St. Bernadette School, St. Daniel School, St. Dominic Savio School, St. John School, St. Louis Church, St. Luke Catholic School, St. Mark's Catholic Parish, St. Mary's Secondary School, St. Matthew School, St. Patrick School, St. Paul's Lutheran Church, St. Stephen Lutheran Church, St. Teresa School, University Catholic Community.

## Thank You to Our Most Generous Donors!

The following individuals, businesses, and groups have made exceptional contributions in support of The Working Centre.

Lyle S. Hallman Foundation, Jim & Sue Hallman, School Sisters of Notre Dame, Grey Sisters of The Immaculate Conception, Manulife Financial, Manulife Financial Food for Friends Project, Aardvark-Vanaheim Inc., Steve & Eve Menich, Robert Veitch, Victoria Electric, Canadian General Tower, Mennonite Foundation of Canada, Florence Clark, Ace Bakery, Bob & Margaret Nally, F. K. Morrow Foundation, Carl & Eleanor Kaufman, Alice Gabriel, Virginia Frank, David & Nancy Matthews, John Shortreed, John & Sandra Mooibroek-Oudyk, Pamela Hilton, Christopher Springer, Afshin Maknoni, Carmeta Abbott, Doyle Capital Corporation, William Fox, Dorothy Hallman, Gladys Porter, Grand River Rotary Club, Lear Canada, Church of The Holy Saviour, Conestoga Rovers & Associates, Diane Jones, River Of Life Fellowship, Faithlife Financial, Vernon Bowman, Dr. Catherine Mancini, Bell Community Development, City of Kitchener Upper Storey Renovation, Region of Waterloo Strong Start, K-W Community Foundation, and Ontario Trillium Foundation.

## Your Contributions Have Helped Revitalize Downtown



*Left: Weber Hardware occupying 66 Queen around the 1940s. Above & Below: 66 Queen renovations completed showing new apartment and Job Search Resource Centre.*



Over the past three years, The Working Centre has been in a position to revitalize two old downtown warehouses at 97 Victoria St. N. and 66 Queen St. S.. We have completely refurbished the buildings with all new heating, electrical, plumbing, insulation, and fire safety requirements. We have created multi use spaces that will now serve the community for many years to come. We are very appreciative of the tremendous financial and in-kind support that we have received as we took on these major building projects. We are thankful for the many donors who supported this work and who truly made the final result possible. We hope many of you will come to Open Doors on Queen Street and

tour 66 Queen St. S. which is now completed. You will see the beautifully completed loft-style apartments, the expanded employment counseling space, Maurita's Kitchen, and the Computer Repair and Recycling Centre. The support of the community made these projects possible.

## Thank You to The Working Centre's Board of Directors

- President:** Gordon Crosby
- Secretary:** Margaret Motz
- Treasurer:** Roman Dubinski
- Vice President:** Ken Westhues
- Directors:** Rita Levato  
Mitsuru Shimpō  
Arleen Macpherson

The Working Centre has been well served by its Board of Directors. Since 1988, the Board has fluctuated between 7-10 members. Many Board members have offered valuable long-term commitments and stability. The Board's main role is keeper of the Working Centre vision. This is accomplished through taking an active role in Working Centre projects, extensive discussion and debate on Working Centre priorities, full analysis of issues and constant monitoring of financial statements. We are grateful for this important community service.

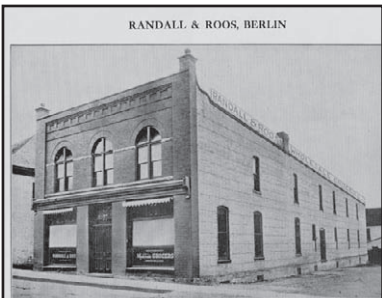


# Stories of Queen Street South

## Schneider, Nahrgang, Ahrens, and Bricker, Hotels, Fires, Newspapers, and Liquor.

By Joe Mancini

The May 10th Open Doors on Queen Street Event celebrates The Working Centre's 25 years on Queen Street. It is also an opportunity to open up our three historically significant, heritage buildings to the general public. Over the last 10 years we have renovated and occupied every last inch of these buildings. They have become an inspiration to others who want to restore vitality and



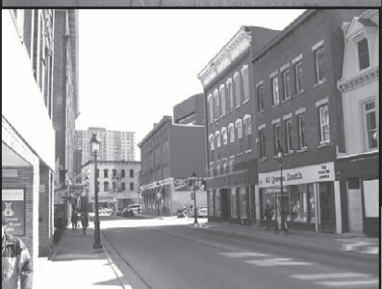
The above photo of 66 Queen St. S. (courtesy of the Waterloo Historical Society) was taken near the turn of the century when it was a grocery, liquor, and tobacco shop called "Randall and Roos". Below is a picture of that same building today.



activity to the downtown.

As part of Open Doors on Queen Street we have tried to uncover the stories and events that have shaped Queen Street South into the street that it is today.

It is easy to take for granted those things around you that become familiar. If the house you live in was built in the last 30 years, most hardly consider what occupied the land before the house. If your house was built 100 years ago, you might won-



der how the owners managed without indoor plumbing? Even when we ask these questions, the answers are hard to find.

People familiar with the history of Queen Street South tell stories about the old street. They offer hints of a past that is hard to imagine. Back in the fall of 1999, as the crane prepared to lift the old elevator engine off the roof at 43 Queen, an older gentleman informed us that there had been a hockey arena approximately where the crane was setting up. All of us looked around trying to imagine such a place right in the heart of the city.

Ted Wright, the past owner with his brother Bruce and his sister Jean of 58 and 66 Queen had many stories of life on Queen Street. He told of the tension that he experienced, when as a young man coming back from World War II, he was confronted by the realization that many of his neighbours on Queen Street were of German descent. They were the same people who were regular customers at his father's business Ontario Office Outfitters.

Ted always referred to the building next to us as the Bricker Block. Who was Bricker? Ted never gave the sense that he knew and it was never clear from our conversations whether the Bricker Block referred to the three buildings that are left on the west side of Queen Street or just one of them.

Over the years, I have asked various business owners for pictures of their stores on Queen Street from the 1940's to try and understand what the street looked like at that time. But no pictures ever turned up. One day while researching about Ken Murray and the JM Schneider Corporation for the 10th Mayor's Dinner, I opened an envelope in the Grace Schmidt Room entitled Weber Hardware. I knew that Weber Hardware was a part of the Queen Street story. In the envelope was a picture of the front of 58 Queen, Weber Hardware's location in 1923.

It is easy to conclude that the history of Queen Street has largely been ignored. The pieces of the story are scattered throughout the downtown and are waiting to be put together. It is well known that by the 1830's Schneider Road was built by pioneer Joseph Schneider to connect his German Company Tract Lot Number 17 with present day King Street. That means that Queen Street South has a history of about 175 years. It is a foundational story connected to the history of downtown Kitchener.

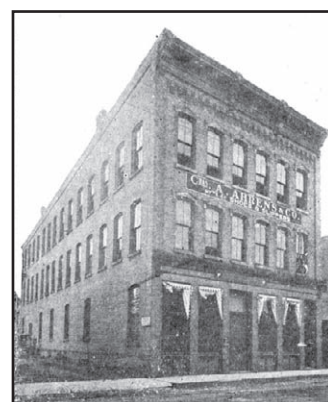
Schneider Road took shape when in 1835 Martin Anthes built a house near the present day 43 Queen Street

South. It was considered one of the best homes in the village. Soon after that other houses were built and they turned into commercial operations. The Sattler's Leather family lived at and operated their business at present day 49 Queen Street from 1885 until 1977 - 92 years.

The Nahrgangs were part of an influx of handworkers that came from Hessen Germany in 1835. Over time they accumulated property on the west side of Queen Street, site of the present day 58 and 66 Queen, where they lived and practiced the tailoring trade. Today, all of the real estate transactions on the west side of Queen South to Church Street refer to the C.K. Nahrgang survey of 1878.

A major fire on Schneider Road in September 1875 destroyed the Royal Hotel, C. K. Nahrgang's garden fences and trees and many other properties. There was great concern when the latest fire fighting equipment, the 'dampf spritze' pump failed to operate and "The Commercial Hotel and California Block were in great danger". In 1877, Aaron Bricker purchased property near the former Royal Hotel to start a Carriage and Blacksmith Shop. This is the same Bricker who built the Bricker Block some 25 years later and was the Mayor of Berlin in 1907.

There is much more to this story. It is about how the village of Berlin grew into present day Kitchener. Our Open House presentation will shed light on this history. Everyone who has seen the pieces wants to learn more. During the Open House, we are sure others will come forward with new information. This collection of Queen Street South History



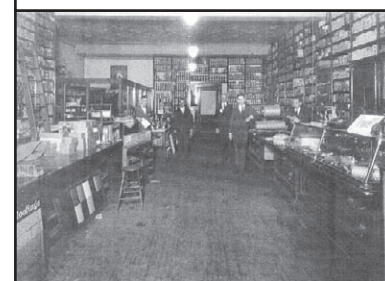
The photo above is of a shoe factory built by C. A. Ahrens around 1882. This building is now "Second Look Books" at 33 Queen St. S. The photo below shows a parade moving south along Queen Street around 1906. (both photos are courtesy of the Waterloo Historical Society)



will be located at the Queen Street Commons Café. We hope you will come and learn about this section of downtown Kitchener.



These two photos from the Weber Hardware photo archive are from around 1923 and show the interior and exterior of 58 Queen. The left photo shows the present day Job Search Resource Centre



### A History of Queen Street

You can learn more about the stories of the people, places, and events that shaped Queen Street South and the Kitchener Downtown. We hope you might have stories and pictures to add to this history.

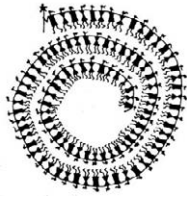
We have prepared a unique historical perspective using newspapers, written sources and books, advertisements, and photographs to document a history of our small block of Queen Street South between King Street and present day Charles Street.

See the Historical Display at 43 Queen Street South at Queen Street Commons Café at Open Doors on Queen Street, Thursday, May 10<sup>th</sup> from 2:00pm to 8:00pm.

Also included is a special collection of Queen Street South photos presented by Rych Mills of The Waterloo Historical Society and the Victoria Park Historical Committee.



# Queen Street Comes Alive



Continued from page 1

as well as to the support given by the larger community.

I am a self-appointed, enthusiastic tour guide of these very exciting new places. I am also keenly inspired by the vital, creative projects which give life to the buildings and, especially, by the many people whose vision, skills, dedication and hope make it all such a lovely place, a lively place, a people place, a human place.

I usually start a tour at Queen's Greens further down Queen Street. This 10 year old garden, a former parking lot, is a joint project of The Working Centre and the City of Kitchener, located across from the Joseph Schneider Haus and a trail leading into Victoria Park. The one-quarter acre garden is the work of volunteers who prepared the ground for planting and divided it into twenty 12' x 4' plots available for \$10 yearly to anyone wishing to grow organic vegetables or flowers for their own use. A garden shed occupies one corner and water is available from an attractive storage tank with the garden's logo painted on it.

Located near the centre of the garden is an open wood-burning brick oven for the baking of bread and pizza sponsored by the well-known Ace Bakery. All of this is framed by a low white picket fence, enhanced by colourful perennial flowers, making it an interesting and attractive sight for travellers along Queen Street.

Our tour now moves closer to King Street, to the Queen Street Commons. The three storey building at 43 Queen Street South provides transitional, shared affordable housing for six people, as well as room for Recycle Cycles, Barter Works, a group meeting space, a library of books, shelves adorned with local hand-crafted sale articles, a gallery wall for local art and a bright friendly café. The café, open daily, is where soups, desserts and delicious vegetarian entrees made of locally grown organic food are offered by staff and volunteers. Many groups meet here to share conversation, music, learn English, or plan projects. I hosted my bridge club here one recent afternoon. The beautiful refinished wooden floor, the eclectic colours, the reclaimed artifacts, the comfortable furniture, the cosy round café tables,

the delectable food and the friendly people will entice you back again and again.

Refreshed and suitably fortified, we can now walk across the street to 58 Queen Street South. This is the original rented Working Centre building that opened its storefront operation in 1982 to serve and to offer practical help to unemployed people. The recession in Ontario at that time and the consequent spike in unemployment numbers brought many people through the front doors.

There they would meet Joe and Stephanie Mancini, who started The Working Centre as recent graduates of St. Jeromes College at the University of Waterloo and the first recipients of the Father Norm Choate Award for outstanding community service.

Joe and Stephanie envisioned a grass roots community place and service that would honour and respect the inherent dignity of each person while at the same time offering them practical tools in their search for work and meaningful living. They encouraged people to recognise and

value their own skills, to approach their tasks in a step by step way and to rejoice in progress achieved little by little. They were supported by like-minded people locally and influenced by earlier writers and activists who worked at the grass roots level. Chief among these were Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, founders of the Catholic Worker Houses. The Canadian Catholic bishops' statement Unemployment: The Human Costs issued in 1980 offered a model for their work. This document emphasized the dignity and worth of the worker. These ideals, while not so tangible as wood, bricks and mortar, are nonetheless possibly the most important and distinguishing features, attributes and gifts of The Working Centre to the larger community. That The Working Centre is truly a grass roots movement is

evidenced by the original, ongoing and lively exchange of ideas among many people committed to a fair, just and inclusive society and by growing support throughout the Region.

Returning though to bricks and mortar at 58 Queen Street South, we encounter open spaces, accessible desks and chairs, computers, telephones, copy machines and all the tools needed for a job or housing search. The teaching, support and information needed to maximize their effectiveness are available from many helpers. Joe's doorless office is in this building on the third floor where this newspaper, The Good Work News, is published and mailed out to 10,000 readers and donors. This is also the venue for sociology courses taught for credit by board member Ken Westhues of the University of Waterloo. The Waterloo School for Community Development exists here as well. It currently offers an eight-month diploma Course in Local Democracy guided jointly by Ken and Joe Mancini that includes local and national speakers. Fifteen students received their diplomas last year and another fifteen are enrolled this year.

The Mennonite Coalition for Refugee support has its office in the basement alongside a sewing and craft project which has thrived since 1992 thanks to the skill and dedication of many volunteers. The very top floor includes two large, bright affordable apartments, the first assisted housing offered by The Working Centre in 1995. This building was the very first one bought by The Working Centre and restored by paid and unpaid workers. It was an exciting time that established the permanence of The Working Centre in downtown Kitchener.

A sister building at 66 Queen Street South became available in 2003 and now opens into the original building. Open offices for job counsellors and their clients occupy the main floor. Particularly noteworthy are the original, newly painted double doors opening onto Queen Street and the use of original brick and wood panelling that constitute the walls. Overlooking the main floor is a mezzanine where Stephanie and others have their offices. A long hallway takes us to a modern industrial kitchen where all the food for the café is prepared and which provides training for future chefs and restaurant workers. Maurita's Kitchen, as it is called, is named for a former long-time board member Maurita McCrystal whose support and passion for The Work-



ing Centre were alive right up until her untimely death three years ago. Maurita would have relished the delicious and nutritious offerings prepared by many willing hands.

A very busy computer refurbishing and recycling project operates in the basement while affordable apartments for single people and families in transition are located on the top floor.

We leave Queen Street now for a short walk over to 97 Victoria Street North. This old industrial building has been occupied until recently by the St. Vincent de Paul Society. Mutual interest brought them into partnership with The Working Centre and a complete renovation has resulted in Worth a Second Look, a very attractive store in which to

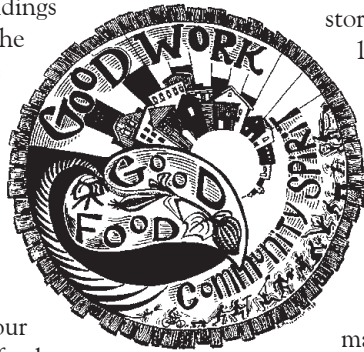
browse and shop for bargains in household goods and furnishings. A particularly exciting addition to the store is a bright corner for a good selection of used books. This is the pet project of another board member, Roman Dubinski, who in retirement continues to offer his knowledge and skills as an English professor. Sharing this space is a project called the Job Café where part time work for those seeking to augment their incomes can be found. Laundry facilities, and showers are available to provide integrated support throughout the building.

But that's not all! Ascending stairs to the second floor, we enter the most modern and efficient community kitchen you are likely to find anywhere. This is the new St John's Kitchen, welcoming people in need for breakfast and/or

a nutritious daily meal and a chance to socialize with others. Two innovative collaborative programs reach out from St John's Kitchen to people on the street. They include the Downtown Street Outreach Program supported by the Kitchener Downtown Business Association and the Psychiatric Outreach Program supported by the Region of Waterloo and The Hallman Foundation. These programs are a resource and a source of support for those with many needs.

This virtual tour of The Working Centre would not be complete

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# Champion of Downtown Kitchener

*Editors Note: This article was written before Marty Schreiter and the KDBA board decided to mutually part ways. We have left this article unchanged as it reflects an important aspect of his work at the KDBA.*

By Leslie Morgenson

If downtown Kitchener has a champion today, it would have to be Marty Schreiter, Executive Director of Kitchener Downtown Business Association. Born and raised in Kitchener, Marty has a deep-seated pride in Kitchener's downtown core which he expresses with the pure delight a parent might feel as his child matures under his watchful eye. "Waterloo Region," he says, "has unique fibres," referring to the strong social service network, the variety of faith communities and the strong Mennonite foundation upon which the city was built. Marty's tenure has nonetheless been a watershed for the development of the downtown since he started his job in 1999.

Marty says that first there were many complaints about homelessness and often misplaced worries that associated crime with a homeless population. The tactics used to manage the situation were "no loitering" signs. The irony is that crowded streets are safer streets, as we learned many years ago from the late, great urban activist, Jane Jacobs. Streets filled with people not only feel safer, they are safer. People watch out for each other and are protective of the streets they frequent. It's the quiet streets we hesitate to venture down. So if people are worried about crime, loitering's the ticket.

Marty's approach was to pose the question, "Who owns the public realm, who manages it, and who is responsible for it?" Since, as Marty says, "no one, in fact owns it," he promoted a collaborative effort to ensure that all are valued, welcomed, included and protected. A collaborative effort means the responsibility does not sit just with social services. Nor are the problems that arise the sole responsibility of the police and businesses. Marty has been known to bring a model canoe into meetings to emphasize his analogy that, "Everybody is still in the canoe," and that, despite the inevitable difficulties when something is being worked through, everyone is still talking, still progressing and moving forward. It is a perfect metaphor for a downtown, a gentle representation of what is undoubtedly a fragile endeavor if everyone doesn't work together. The entire community is accountable for what happens in the

public sphere including the care of neglected citizens.

## Job Café

In 2003 the idea of the Job Café was presented and then implemented by the Working Centre. Always an ideas man and already hiring people himself for street cleaning, Marty grabbed hold of this growing idea and enhanced the program through funding. The Job Café has been a great success linking people with employers, offering day work to people with an inadequate income and personal issues which prevent them



*Marty relates an endearing encounter with street friends familiar with his routine and habits who inquired about his recent vacation. There he is folded between the pages of a Jane Jacobs book describing the incredible rewards we find when we engage with the people who share our sidewalks. An "intricate sidewalk ballet," Jane called it.*

from full-time employment. According to Marty the sidewalk cleaning puts people in the position of being "guardians of the street." This kind of assimilation is as important to the downtown as are the new lofts bringing another group of people into the downtown. When Wilfrid Laurier University's School of Social Work moved downtown last year they met with downtown outreach workers to better understand their entry into a location that for many years has been the cherished territory, the front and back yard of street people. It was a generous example of a newcomer integrating into a neighbourhood by getting to know the community into which they're moving. As this ever-shifting dance takes place, I know Marty has his watchful eye on it all, fostering a smooth integration so all feel welcome to be part of an often misunderstood downtown.

I once wrote a poem in which I expressed my regret at throwing out my grandparents' recipes when they died. In those recipes, I imagined all the memories I had stored of hours spent around their table, the laughter, the noises and smells so different from my home. A relative read the poem and snorted, reminding me that my grandparents ate a bland simple cuisine neither worth remembering nor writing about. She totally missed the point.

*Marty's approach was to pose the question, "Who owns the public realm, who manages it, and who is responsible for it?" Since, as Marty says, "no one, in fact owns it," he promoted a collaborative effort to ensure that all are valued, welcomed, included and protected. A collaborative effort means the responsibility does not sit just with social services. Nor are the problems that arise the sole responsibility of the police and businesses.*

This is often how I feel people misinterpret downtown Kitchener. They hold it in their memory as a rundown place best avoided and therefore miss out on the colourful, growing diversity, the joy of watching the streets fill with life and the opportunity to rub shoulders with people who represent a different nationality, a different faith, or a different socio-economic bracket. And today a multitude of ethnic restaurants offering the lure of a new taste experience dot the downtown streets of Kitchener.

It is becoming once again the Kitchener of my youth, when there was no place I'd rather be than downtown sitting at the Woolworth counter, venturing to Goudies basement for something sweet, or taking in a movie at the Capitol and spying to see who would sit in the seats built for two. It was a friendly place, a public space with a high collective social

I.Q. with businesses that seemed to understand the dynamic mix of economics and sociability.

On a recent drive into Guelph I noticed the entry sign, "A Safer Community Is Your Call." For me this does not mean guarding ourselves, placing ourselves in gated communities or increasing our police force.

And being law-abiding citizens is not enough either. A 'safer community' is one where relationships are built and goodwill is extended to all. Here in Kitchener, according to Marty, we have the necessary ingredients to guarantee safety within our city. "Kitchener has a big heart; it is a city full of compassion. We desire to be different and not accept the status quo." Marty feels that these characteristics are a result of our unique history.

As a life-long resident of the twin cities, I am very aware of the mark left on Kitchener during WWI when exclusivity defined us. It was a time when the largely German population was shunned, neighbours and friends suddenly became enemies and unscrupulous behaviours were employed to distance the city from any German affiliation. It was a time few of us want repeated. But ensuring this takes work. Creating a healthy community, Marty suggests, requires the integration of economic growth and social responsibility, an idea the fruition of which is best exemplified by the development of outreach in the downtown.

## Downtown Street Outreach Worker

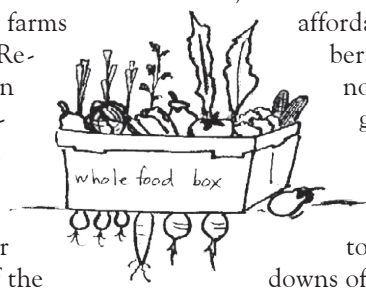
Marty, along with Karen Kwiatkowski from Kitchener Housing, Julie Dean from the City of Kitchener, and Joe Mancini from The Working Centre (all representing the Kitchener Downtown Community Collaborative, a group of many with an interest in the downtown) embarked on the brainchild that would become the Downtown Street Outreach Program. After much discussion, Marty, in 2003, invited a street outreach worker from Burlington, Vermont to promote the idea. Today, with two street outreach workers working collaboratively to bridge the downtown businesses with the street population, many concerns are being addressed in a manner that allows a more positive outcome for all. Fewer calls

Continued on page 7

# .....

## Whole Food Box Community Supported Agriculture Bringing the farm to Downtown Kitchener!

The Whole Food Box CSA program is a successful initiative that links 12 small local farms in the Waterloo Region with downtown residents. The Community Supported Agriculture model means that members pay for their boxes in advance of the season, allowing farmers to purchase the seeds, tools and supplies that are needed at the beginning of the growing year. Boxes contain top quality organically grown produce, as well as fresh herbs, berries, flowers and more. Being a non-profit program, the CSA is



able to pay fair prices to the growers, while at the same time offer affordable prices to members, many of who may not access fresh organic produce otherwise. Members "live along" with the farm, getting to know the ups & downs of the growing season through their weekly boxes, newsletter updates, and farm tours. **Boxes cost \$18.50 each for 20 weeks (full share) or 10 weeks (half share, every second week).** To register for the 2007 season or to find out more, contact Karin Kliewer at 743-1151 ext. 244.

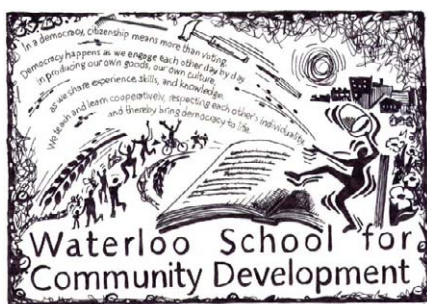


# Diploma in Local Democracy

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- ✓ Visit Waterloo School for Community Development: [www.theworkingcentre.org](http://www.theworkingcentre.org)
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- ✓ Pick up an application at The Working Centre's front desk at 58 Queen Street South

## Downtown Champion

Continued from page 6

are made to police and potentially divisive confrontations have been greatly reduced with businesses and organizations negotiating with Street Outreach Workers. Downtown businesses have, in fact, shown a deep understanding of the downtown population, at times offering money for clothing, the use of washrooms and drinking fountains, and some have generously waived fees for services.

The answers may seem self-evident and logical but we often act contrary to this logic. If we want safe streets, we don't want to keep them

empty. Instead we should fill them. If we are less aggressive with the street population and instead build relationships, we all benefit from being part of an integrated population.

Marty relates an endearing encounter with street friends familiar with his routine and habits who inquired about his recent vacation. There he is folded between the pages of a Jane Jacobs book describing the incredible rewards we find when we engage with the people who share our sidewalks. An "intricate sidewalk ballet," Jane called it. So please step onto the sidewalk; the music is about to begin.

## Queen Street Comes Alive

Continued from page 5

without brief mention of two projects far away in India and Kenya. Geeta Vaidyanathan, an architect doing graduate studies at The University of Waterloo, volunteered at The Working Centre. She lent her expertise to the planning and designing of the renovations and came to appreciate The Working Centre's philosophy, ideas for development and its grass roots, inclusive style of working. It was here at The Working Centre that an idea to benefit her home country took shape and began to grow. Eventually Geeta and her engineer husband returned to Orissa, India. They designed and were able to secure funding to create a biodiesel pump project using locally available resources to provide running water and electricity to the village. Joe and Stephanie are part of an informal international board of

directors for the project.

Similarly, an initial visit to The Working Centre by the director of the Ugunja Community Resource Centre has resulted in a student exchange program. Four Kenyans have gained experience here, while four young people from The Working Centre have volunteered in Kenya. Incidentally, a collection taken up at St John's Kitchen was given to the first Kenyan, Charles, as a going away present to sponsor the purchase of a cow for his village.

Today fifty-five full and part-time staff and over 300 precious volunteers support over twenty-five Working Centre projects and provide a very hospitable community space. Come and see!

*Arleen Macpherson is a Working Centre Board Member and was Co-ordinator of St. John's Kitchen from 1988-1999.*

# Waterloo Region ASSETS+ Project

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**Courses start in January,  
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**For more information, contact**

Bob Shantz  
(519) 743-1151 x 206  
Beth Weisberg  
(519) 743-1151 x 104  
[wrap@theworkingcentre.org](mailto:wrap@theworkingcentre.org)



The Waterloo Region ASSETS+ Project is a partnership between The Working Centre and Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) - Waterloo Chapter. Technical assistance provided by MEDA International.

## 20th Annual Mayors' Dinner

Continued from page 2

streams – about 30 years ahead of anyone else."

"The number one criterion of The Working Centre when determining whom to honour at the Mayors' Dinner is public good over personal interest. That is this man's whole life – in spite of more scholarships and degrees and opportunities to earn an impressive income. His whole life has been dedicated to democracy over bureaucracy, producerism over consumerism, and human dignity over economic efficiency."

In his remarks, John commented on how the work of The Working Centre matches his own philosophy, of wise use of resources and living simply. He thanked the cities of Kitchener and Waterloo, and the Region of Waterloo, for steps they are taking to make our communities more liveable. He also pointed out how he appreciates the small amenities of life, such as Vogelsang Green, a small parkette on Queen St. N. that is dedicated to the memory of Emil Vogelsang (1834-1894), Kitchener's first button maker. It's a small green area, but is a welcome respite from the sea of concrete and asphalt in the downtown, and John often stops there to rest and reflect.

It was a fitting way to cap the special anniversary of the Mayors' Dinner, which raised about \$30,000 to

support the operations of The Working Centre and St. John's Kitchen.

## Special Thank Yous

Thank you to Mayor Carl Zehr and Mayor Brenda Halloran for hosting the twentieth Mayors' Dinner. A special thank you to our generous patrons: Bell, Church of St. John the Evangelist, Conestoga Rovers and Associates, Erb and Good Family Funeral Home, Macnaughton Hersmen Britton Clarkson Planning Limited, RDM Corporation, Strassburger Windows and Doors, and Zehrs.

Thank you to those who purchased community tables: Bingemans, Mel Cescon and Donna Ward, Erb & Erb Insurance Brokers, Jay Fencing, K-W Naval Association, Jim Mahon, Melloul-Blamey Construction, Steve and Eve Menich, Mighton Engineering, Margaret Motz, Margaret & Bob Nally, MTE, St. Jacobs Best Western Country Inn, St. Jerome's University, The Record, Township of Woolwich, Waterloo Catholic District School Board, and Nelson Weber.

Thank you to the evening's contributors: Brava Tex, Patrick and Noreen Flynn, Cathy Gravelle & Peter Ciuciura, Gerry and Pat Grundy, John Kokko and Sue Anderson, Theron and Joy Kramer, Gordon MacKay Q. C., St. Louis Roman Catholic Parish, and Joyce and Bill Stankiewicz. Thank You to Denis Clark, St. Jeromes University Arts Co-op Student, for volunteering his co-op placement time to help organize Mayors' Dinner.

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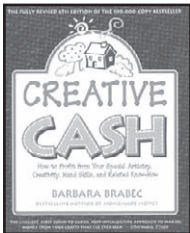
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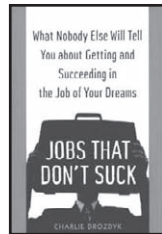
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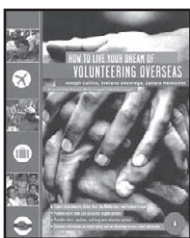
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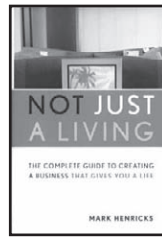


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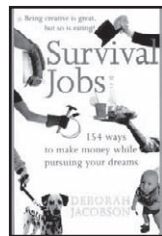
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