

GOOD WORK NEWS

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

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Subscription: A Donation Towards our Work

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Sometimes
We all need
Someone to
Sit there and listen
To us vent about
Life's problems because
Bottling Things up is
Not the best Thing
To do because that's how
People go into a
Mental breakdown
And Sometimes end up
Hurting themselves
Because They couldn't
Have Someone willing
To let them vent.

– a poem found on a window ledge at St. John's Kitchen

Interim Housing at University Avenue

By Stephanie Mancini

University Avenue housing emerged out of the intensity of the pandemic. We could identify over 200 people who were living without access to shelter even as most public spaces were closed down.

The Working Centre converted an empty student dorm (owned by WCRI) into interim housing for 80 people. With the help of the Region of Waterloo, we brought people together to create a space of stability, affordability and safety.

University Ave housing developed as an experiment to immediately expand as an interim housing option.

A 'Housing First' recovery-oriented approach centres on quickly moving people experiencing homelessness into independent and permanent housing and then providing additional supports and services as needed. Long term permanent housing takes time to build, but UA has quickly created interim housing that helps people get off the street.

Creating spaces like UA are often seen as "ghetto-izing", but we knew we had to gather together to respond to the complex needs of people who needed intensive supports and an approach of tolerance, acceptance, and love. Tolerance of complex behaviours based on past trauma, acceptance of the many substance use and mental health challenges people face, and love that comes without judgement.

Wrap around supports like the following are so important:

- A basic commitment to shelter/housing and access to nutritious food.
- Health Care services like primary care, harm reduction materials and knowledge, access to methadone and opioid replacement.
- Supports to access important

resources like dental care, emergency hospital care, COVID isolation, vaccination and testing.

- Collaboration with WRPS, courts, probation, F & CS, and others to help manage the complex systems that affect people's lives.
- Building on links to more permanent housing options for residents.

The collective care of people for each other is what makes this work – we have managed to keep on-site deaths to a minimum but only because people look out for each other and call for help as needed. We do this together – the congregate setting is important and really works.

There are many downsides to congregate living – theft driven by the deep need for highly-addictive drugs, tensions and aggressions that arise between people, damages to the space – but we continue to negotiate these issues – a person at a time, and as a community.

We continue to bring forward TWC ideas around the importance of engagement and meaningful work:

- Group activities are impossible in COVID, but we have added a small garden in the parking lot, and we do outside barbecues as we can.
- We are hiring residents through Job Café to help do cleaning, cooking, etc.
- We are furthering conversations to create a resident-staffed Discovery Team that builds on neighbourhood relationships, especially as students start to come back to the universities.
- We are hoping to build peer roles to support Harm Reduction education and distribution of supplies.

CAPTURING A COMMUNITY AT WORK



Our cafeteria style kitchen at University Ave feeds 80 people a day, 24 hours a day, for a group of people awake at all times of day. Many shelters and interim housing options this year have moved to 24/7 access which is so important for people who don't find it easy to sleep at night. A place like UA offers rest, good nutritious food, and social supports.

See more photos and read about our work during COVID-19 on pages 4 & 5

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Thirty Seventh Year

Issue 145

June 2021

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. Four issues of Good Work News constitutes our annual report. There is a circulation of 12,000 copies. Subscription: a donation towards our work.

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Editorial: The Rural Post June 10th 2021

By Peter Dunn

Many of the Region's homeless have called Kitchener's Lot 42 "home" for the last year. Unfortunately they all have to move by the end of the month, as the property has been sold.

There is a sense of urgency to find a suitable replacement location.

On June 1, Woolwich Council heard from Jeff Willmer of a Better Tent City, outlining their proposal for a new tent city to be built on land owned by the Diocese of Hamilton on Spitzig Road in Breslau.

Council also heard from a number of area residents, some in support of the plan and others against.

As Woolwich Mayor Sandy Shantz said at the meeting, homelessness is "an issue that we as a society need to deal with." Homelessness is not just a downtown problem.

There are currently about 500 people who are living rough in Waterloo Region. Some have mental problems, some have substance abuse issues and some are just down

on their luck.

Todd Cowan, our publisher, and I have had many dealings with the homeless in the Region. I met Todd when we were both volunteering at St John's Kitchen seven years ago. Every day, the homeless and hungry poor would come for a free lunch, take advantage of the counseling and medical facilities on site, and socialize.

Some had given up any hope of changing their circumstances while others sought out the support that we and the community were offering them and looked to a better future.

When I hear of Breslau residents raising fears and concerns about the relocation of the tent city, I am saddened. I know that if they got to know the homeless community, they would more than likely change their perspective.

The homeless are our fellow human beings and are worthy of our support, encouragement and love. How we deal with this issue reflects more on who we are than it does on them.

Remembering Barb Harrigan (1942 - 2020)



By Don Gingerich
& Ayman Eldesouky

Barb Harrigan was one of the first customers to enter WASL (Worth A Second Look) after we opened in 2006. She enjoyed garage sales and thrift stores and loved the treasure hunt involved. Barb was not a customer for long. She soon decided to join our efforts to recycle goods, provide items for all levels of income and to raise money for TWC. Barb was soon working as a volunteer, 4 to 5 days a week, sorting, pricing, and treasure hunting. These activities are what drew Barb in but over time she found a greater reason to stay and consequently became an important part of the WASL community for the next 15 years.

Barb found a way to practice her

deep faith in caring for everyone regardless of their circumstances, status, or abilities. Barb had a heart for everyone and many were those who lived a very different life than what she was used to. There were many times when she was amazed by the behaviours and the stories of customers and volunteers. There were a few times when Barb was stretched to the point of giving up but then she would stretch more than she thought possible.

Barb learned to appreciate and embrace the "community" that makes WASL so much more than a retail store. She befriended and cared for many people facing complex challenges in their lives. She patiently accepted and came to understand the immense obstacles that many people face. Standing at her pricing table she was always ready to listen, it was part of her work of building community. Barb was talented at inviting new people into the store and teaching them the jobs that needed attention. In this way she often helped newcomers find meaningful work that suited their abilities. She would watch out for them and build relationships that lasted years.

Barb cared deeply for people and lived her faith every day. Barb was and remains an inspiration to others. What she gave to WASL and to many of us, cannot be captured in a few words. Barb is greatly missed but very lovingly remembered.



Relocating A Better Tent City

In the days before Ron Doyle died, Fr. Toby was hosting a regular Wednesday lunchtime meeting of groups and individuals who had been the main supporters of ABTC. Ron encouraged and welcomed these meetings, as he knew this was the structure which would allow ABTC to become a long-term project.

With Ron's blessings, ABTC formed a collective consisting of Fr. Toby Collins, CR (Pastor, St. Mary's Parish), Jeff Willmer (retired CAO of the City of Kitchener), Laura Hamilton and Aleksandra Petrovic (Social Development Centre WR), and Stephanie and Joe Mancini (The Working Centre), with the goal of creating a nonprofit corporation and guiding the project over the next year.

ABTC initially only had zoning permission to establish at Lot 42 for one year. We knew that we would have to find a site where a zoning amendment could be more permanently established. During the fall and winter of this past year, we worked with Ron to conceptualize ABTC, developing a full proposal to operate in the Lot 42 site. However, in the end, it was decided that purchasing the land would have led to spending more time dealing with the details of being the landlord of a large industrial property, rather than our main goal of creating small ABTC communities.

The long term goal of ABTC is to find land where small communities of 50 tiny houses can be a safe place of shelter and community. We had a vision for the Spitzig Road property that would have allowed this concept to grow, with the Roman Catholic Diocese of Hamilton donating the land and helping to fund the infrastructure development. We continue to search out other longer-term options working with the municipalities and the Region of Waterloo.

These communities take time to form. We have witnessed how ABTC at Lot 42 changed substantially over the year, as people became more secure in their shelter and consequently formed friendships and bonds with their neighbours. This new form of shelter can make a huge difference, and ABTC is building capacity to develop this potential.

Many volunteers have been part of building and maintaining ABTC, especially the planning group who have met regularly: Jeff Willmer, Fr. Toby Collins, Laura Hamilton, Aleksandra Petrovic, Joe and Stephanie Mancini, Pat Murphy, Khaled Brik, Tony Stortz, Colleen McCann, Conor Howitt, Marion Thomson Howell, Lori Brodie, Nadine Doyle, Mitch Fortier, Nadine Green, Alvin O'Dea, and Paul Motz.



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Tuesday to Friday: 1pm - 5pm
Saturday: 10am - 4pm

Located at 97 Victoria Street North in Kitchener



Remembering Our Friend Ron Doyle (1951 - 2021)

By Joe Mancini

Though it has been many months since we lost Ron Doyle, we still walk around wondering when he will show up. Ron's heart was so big that he could fill a room with ideas and then follow through on those ideas with unrelenting energy. We couldn't help but miss Ron intensely in May and June as we looked for a new location for his beloved A Better Tent City (ABTC). It was only in mid-June, when the City of Kitchener offered the Battler Road site, that ABTC had a place to go and it was easy to imagine Ron hardly able to contain his joy. He would have loved watching the organizational precision of the volunteer crews dismantling, insulating, and loading the tiny homes on to trucks to move them to their new location.

ABTC, like many of Ron's projects, is a complicated story. It was only possible because Ron saw

It was always my impression that Ron Doyle lived his life balancing opposites. From the first time I met him, walking through the weeds of the empty lot at the back of the Hacienda Sarria, he vigorously proposed a community gardening project while making it clear that he was only interested in a productive project that would add to the beauty of the Hacienda. He had designed and created one of the most unique buildings in Kitchener-Waterloo and the gardening project, at a minimum, would have to extend that vision.

During the next 10 years, there was always a project that had to be followed. Ron was constantly advocating public-good enterprising ideas that people could learn from. He could wage a battle for the good of any project and cut a wide swath out of anyone who got in the way. He could fearlessly flout social and legal conventions that most people would not dare to challenge. In the middle

the two-acre market garden at the Hacienda Sarria. It is a work of beauty and production. Adding a windmill structure so he could tilt at it, was the kind of artistic touch that we came to expect from Ron. He liked nothing better than to watch the effort and skill of the gardeners growing food. The next project did not go as well. We debated whether we should develop a coffee-roasting partnership but TWC decided that we should install our own fluid bed roaster, which disappointed Ron, but he was often at the Commons having coffee, even if only with a jovially suspicious eye.

Soon we were off to Toronto to discover mushroom farming and indoor vertical hydroponic farming, which resulted in many years of experimentation. Ron found what he called, "a hippy commune engaged in enterprise" in an industrial part of Toronto. He loved learning about alternative ventures, always looking

well, for three years we put on a fundraising concert at the Hacienda that featured John McDermott.

The conversion of the Ardelt industrial land into Lot 42 was always germinating in the early years of our friendship. His main idea was to create an art colony. He pleaded with the city to allow zoning to create a work/live container housing project but the factors never lined up. In the meantime, he built an industrial-themed convention facility that hosted hundreds of large gatherings. In his mind, installing the 42-foot-high Mirror of Babel art structure in the Lot 42 entrance said everything about his ideas on cultural harmony and nurturing big, beautiful ideas that change the way we think.

All these projects and ideas were part of Ron's so-called retirement years. He gifted Kitchener-Waterloo with two examples of stunning and inspired property reconstruction, but



Ron with Jeff Willmer inside a newly constructed unit at A Better Tent City

for a germ of an idea that could be replicated in Kitchener.

Ron had an abiding interest in reusing shipping containers. He was always working on a laneway container project that would integrate eco ideas for saving space, material, water, and energy. The two bunkies at St. John's Kitchen were built at Lot 42 under Ron's supervision and for 5 years have been used as temporary housing. They were a forerunner to the tiny houses that emerged at ABTC.

Out of the blue Ron offered TWC a house at a time when many Syrian refugees were arriving in Kitchener. A family found a home and all we had to do was cover basic costs. As

only after fighting hard to overcome bureaucratic and zoning obstacles that can dampen creative effort. In many ways, the determination and entrepreneurship that created the Hacienda Sarria and Lot 42 were never fully recognized. Yet when he opened his door to people without housing at Lot 42, people came out of the woodwork to join or support his crusade. Ron's final year was a mysterious roller coaster ride as he lived the meaning of the Gospels and brought care and shelter to those left on the outskirts of the larger community. It was a year most people can only dream of. Ron's spirit and legacy will live on in K-W for a very long time.



Moving A Better Tent City to its new temporary location on Battler Road

an opportunity when the pandemic closed much of the city in April 2020. He gave Nadine Green the keys and invited her to support a group of homeless folks at Lot 42. Ron was putting into practice a concept he and Jeff Willmer had been working on for several months previous. They had had no luck finding a willing landlord and now Ron was the landlord to his nascent project and he fully embraced it.

Last summer, Stephanie and I were continually enlivened by Ron's weekly stories and experiences as he gave glowing detailed descriptions of the goings on at ABTC, usually with a hearty laugh.

of one of these encounters he would effortlessly tell a charming morality tale of why things needed to go the way he was thinking and then he would back up the challenge with resources, especially when there was an opening that could be taken advantage of. During discussions like these, Ron was not an intemperate successful person trying to get his way, he was following a deep social imperative to make his community better.

After Ron died we sat down and considered all the projects we had worked on together in the last 10 years. There was easily a project for every year. The first was establishing



Ron hosting a cold October evening appreciation dinner for Market Garden volunteers

Snapshots from Around The Working Centre Community During COVID-19

Medical & Mental Health Supports



Zana, one of our SOS outreach nurses, poses to display her full PPE along with her cart of testing and wound care materials as she goes from room to room at motels, responding to health care concerns, COVID, and mental health and substance use issues.



Emma, an Inner City Health Alliance nurse, stands in the medical clinic at University Ave housing, helping with wound care, COVID testing, access to methadone, and connections to primary care. She is joined regularly by the Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre primary care team, and Sanguen harm reduction team.



Harm reduction supplies are distributed throughout our locations. Harm reduction supplies are an important part of the bundle of supports that help to respond to the preponderance of highly addictive, poison drugs that often leave people very unwell. Strategies include harm reduction approaches, the CTS site offered by Sanguen/Public Health, access to methadone/suboxone, and soon Safe Supply strategies.



Ronda and Nikki form part of the Specialized Outreach Services (SOS) team that travels throughout the community. The team has leaned into the COVID response, relentlessly supporting hundreds of people who are without housing or are precariously housed, connecting people to services in a world turned upside down, and supporting wellness as people face substance use, mental health, and homelessness issues.

This photo captures the exhaustion of an outreach team after working in full PPE to support motels on a very steamy day! They are resting on the ground, under the graffiti capturing the tragic loss of a young man we supported, whose life was cut short by the other pandemic we are experiencing – the opioid drug crisis.



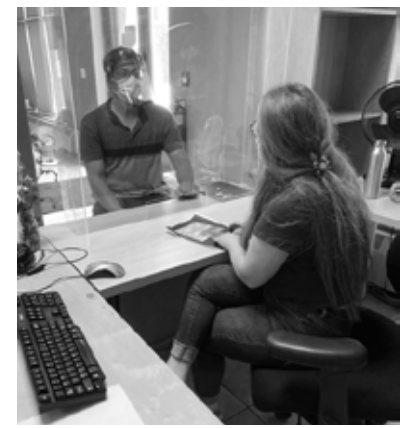
Workers at UA Residence serving meals while wearing full PPE during a COVID-19 outbreak.

Employment & Finances



Our Job Search Resource Centre has remained open throughout COVID, helping those without access to technology, supporting those who need face-to-face support in difficult times. In this photo, Sarah is greeting someone outside, determining if they need information, photocopies, mail or phone messages we receive on people's behalf, connecting those who can with virtual appointments, and screening people for indoor access to supports.

In a COVID-safe booth, set up for one-one-one support, Ala is providing financial problem-solving support, helping people to figure out the changing income support issues, to complete income tax, and problem-solve through financial challenges and government programs. This past year Money Matters has helped 2,854 people and we filed 1,685 tax returns!



Over the past year we have helped over 500 people with their job search, helping over 350 people to find work. These numbers represent about half of what we would normally do, but everything this year has been much more complicated – adding COVID-safe workplace knowledge, supporting the isolation and financial hardship faced by so many, only exacerbated with limited English language skills – over half of the people we support are immigrants and refugees.

Zoom calls have kept us connected as diverse groups, helping us to adapt to virtual and safe in-person supports. We have offered some dynamic youth supports using Zoom gatherings, explored the world of Zoom interview techniques, providing one-on-one sessions to support people in their active job search. This photo is just one of our meetings. Employment, Money Matters, IT, and Infrastructure groups work to receive updates and align our work together.



Phone support has become an important tool – answering questions, offering a friendly voice, listening.... We bemoan the loss of our active Job Search Resource Centre, but work hard to offer hospitality and a friendly ear, whatever the question. We often return 20-60 phone messages per day.

Ian helps at the front hosting desk at the UA Residence door.



Are you interested in working or volunteering?
working@theworkingcentre.org | genmail@theworkingcentre.org

Food Distribution & Delivery



Every week day, tucked into our commissary kitchen at Maurita's Kitchen, 500-600 delicious and hearty meals are prepared, packaged up for distribution to St. John's Kitchen, University Ave housing, our supportive housing locations, and motels. Berenice helps to load the bins.



Our partnership with the Food Bank of Waterloo Region makes sure our shelves are stocked with snacks, drinks, and hamper items for take away. We may be in the middle of a pandemic, but we have been working to be sure people have enough food and snacks. With access to many spaces limited, this determined distribution of food helps to keep people nourished and comforted.



Inside St. John's Kitchen, around 200 people a day come in, 30 people at a time, to eat a meal, find support to connect with community services, use the washrooms (there are very few public washrooms for people who are without housing), access laundry, the hamper room for take-away snacks, and drinking water.

This photo shows the importance of coffee – a definite favourite. But COVID practice means we have to put the cup down and let the person pick it up! So many new routines for safety and wellbeing. After coffee, milk has to be the next favourite drink – people can never get enough.



Outside at St. John's Kitchen, in The Garage, 200 individually packaged meals are shared each day, with friendly connections and supports – a hard thing to find during COVID, especially for people living alone in rooms or small apartments.

Nico, as part of the Street Outreach team, is shown here distributing food to the motels. Through much of the past year we have delivered daily meals to motel, just slowing this down in the last two months. The recent Outbreak in the outreach community has meant we have stepped up to daily meals again, supplementing with electrolyte drinks, protein drinks, fruit cups, yogurt, and other foods that are easier to eat while sick. The Delta variant has hit our community hard this past month.



This photo shows the hotel pans being carried into University Avenue housing. We have used this distribution system to deliver 600 daily meals. The food is prepared and packaged into hotel pans at Maurita's Kitchen and then loaded into a delivery van. Hotel pans are warmed up at UA before residents are served individually. Deep appreciation to all the workers and volunteers who have made this distribution project possible!

Interim Housing

continued from page 1

- We look forward to the time when we can eat together, walk together, have workshops and onsite activities like movie nights.

So much learning! So many people have leaned into this work, building their learning as they commit to the work and dignity of housing.

The journey continues!

Reflections from Working at UA

Sarah Guttin – works the afternoon shift at UA

UA has provided an opportunity for many individuals that were considered 'too problematic' for shelter, couples that were forced to be apart, and furry friends to all have a place to call home. While there are still rules, like don't set fires in the building, keep the hallways and stairwells clutter free, the individuals staying at UA get the chance to make this space their own. There is no one telling them they have too many belongings, they can decorate their rooms however they want, they can leave the light on all night without having to worry about keeping someone else up, they can keep it as messy or as clean as they want, it is theirs.

During COVID, many people have felt the effects of isolation. None more than this community; where public spaces and services they frequented have closed their doors.... At UA, residents no longer need to choose between sleeping inside or staying with their animals.

UA has allowed many of its folks this feeling of unconditional love as well. If you walk the halls of UA, you'll be sure to be greeted with a meow from Griswald or see Spitfire darting by. Just be careful when you head to the 4th floor as you might trip over the friendliest long-haired black cat you've ever met that is waiting for belly rubs. Hang out on the main floor and it's almost a guarantee that

Buddy and his wagging tail will make his way over for a quick pet before he plays fetch outside.

You might not know it, but behind many of the doors are more cats and dogs, hamsters, bunnies, and even a few guinea pigs. Seeing the pride the folks at UA take in not only caring for but showing off their animals, never ceases to bring a smile to my face. Even those that don't have pets of their own seem to reap the benefit of having them around. When someone is unwell or in hospital, there is never a short supply of folks willing to step up and offering to help watch over these family members until they get back.

By welcoming these four-legged friends into UA, it has created a space that feels more like home and not just housing.

Jay Straus – UA Project Lead

This is hard work. That is the first thing I say to individuals that join in our work here at UA. It's not to scare them. I tell them this because the next thing I introduce is the concept of looking for beauty.

What I have learned working at UA is that you need to be at your best to work in this space. It can be hard as you receive the trauma of the folks that we work beside. This can burn you out quickly if you are drawn only to the issues, the outbursts, the incidents. These situations can't be ignored though. The tool that I have found handy is to constantly remind myself to look for the small moments of beauty. These moments cannot be forced, although you can be a part of it. The only way we can see these is by being present in the everyday.

These moments can be celebrating an achievement with someone that lives here. Witnessing an act of kindness. My favourite was receiving an apology for property damage caused during a rough period they were going through. An apology that I didn't seek out. It came to me out of concern that our relationship was strained.

Without continuing to look for these moments of beauty, this work can't be done. It's hard work, but so worth it.

Residents Comment on Why UA Is Important

- A proactive and dignified approach to deal with the issues related to housing, mental health, and addiction and a step towards a more lasting solution.
- Cause it's a home or supposed to be. My room is a home, glad I was allowed to make it my own, not everywhere else would do that.
- Because I have my own place now; I have no family and don't want to feel alone; I finally have a roof over my head.
- I'm not homeless anymore; I think that the medical services provided by the harm reduction team are really helpful.
- Not being homeless, having the chance to get a house and get my kids back. I have 2 cats, medical services provided.
- It has helped people ground themselves and create a life for themselves with routine. Has gotten a lot of people on the right track to deal with their mental illnesses and substance abuse.
- We need a place to live.



Soil is a Critical Part of Our Wider Ecological Community

Soil Deserves Our Attention

By Isaiah Ritzmann

To save our soils is to save ourselves. We all know that in order to live we need to eat, and in order to eat we need good soil. But soil means much more than good food. Soil is also essential if we want clean water, a stable climate, and physical and emotional health. Soil is a critical part of our wider ecological community, living in reciprocal relationship with humanity and the rest of nature. In our first article of this series we explored the critical dimensions to good soil - soil organic matter, soil structure, and microbiology. In this article we will explore the ways soil relates to the rest of nature, and in turn to us as human beings. We will see how conserving and building good soil can have a multiplier effect. Healthier soil means healthier waters, healthier bodies, and a healthier climate as well.

Soil - Threatened at an Unprecedented Rate

But before we explore these great gifts of soil it is important to understand how worldwide soil is being threatened at an unprecedented rate. Levels of organic matter are dwindling, microbiology declining, and erosion continues at alarming rates. Topsoil, the top 15-30cm of the soil, is where much of organic matter and microbiology - and consequently, fertility - reside. Half of the topsoil on the planet has been lost in the last 150 years. Every year approximately 24 billion tonnes more of it is lost due to erosion - that's over 3 tonnes for every person on earth, every year. Furthermore our population is growing. According to some this will lead to a situation that by 2050 we will be trying to feed twice as many people, with half as much topsoil.

While these threats are real, the situation is not hopeless. Our World in Data critiques the frequent stated statistic that, due to soil erosion, the world has only sixty harvests left. "Sixty harvests" is true only as an average. As an average "Sixty Harvests" greatly distorts the differences in average soil lifespans. It is true that about 16% of soils have a lifespan of less than

This second article of a three part series explores the importance of soil in the way that it relates to the rest of nature. The final article in the series will explore ways of healing the soil in our backyards, and in our wider agricultural practices.

a hundred years - but many have lifespans much longer. Some well-cared for soils are even thickening, in a process of soil regeneration. In some ways Canada bears out this optimism. Due to major changes in farm practice through the 1990s and early 2000s, by 2011 the majority of farmland (74%) in Canada was considered to be at very low risk from soil erosion. The work is by no means done, and other risks remain - both at home, and abroad. Nevertheless opportunities do exist to conserve and build soil health.

Soil - Conserving and Building its Health

These opportunities are critical as healthy soils are an ally in our fight against climate change. Worldwide, more carbon is stored in soil than in plants, animals, and the atmosphere combined. As plants grow, they photosynthesize. Through photosynthesis they take carbon out of the air (in the form of CO₂) and send it down to their roots, where in part it is fed to microorganisms. It's estimated that worldwide soils could help store (sequester) 3 gigatonnes of carbon a year (compared to about 36gt emitted each year). This is especially true in degraded soils which have more capacity to store more carbon through regenerative practices. Before they were used agriculturally, many of the soils of the world once had a carbon content of up to 20 percent - today their content is estimated to be between 0.5 to 5 percent. Thus the capacity for sequestration, while not a panacea, is significant. For example, soil scientist Rattan Lal estimates that soils in the United States could store more than 300 million tonnes of carbon a year, enough to offset the emissions from all vehicles in the United States.

Soil - Drenched in Chemical Pollution

How we work with soil also affects our waters - for better or worse. When managed poorly, soil can often contribute to water pollution as nutrients meant for plants leach out or are lost due to erosion. By some estimates, as much as 50 pounds of synthetic nitrogen of the over 200 applied to the typical acre of corn will enter the surrounding environment. So much phosphorus and nitrogen (key fertilizers) end up in our water ways that they cause significant problems. These fertilizers start a chain reaction that ends up with massive dead zones - oxygen deprived areas absent of wildlife. Due to run-off from the Mississippi watershed, a giant deadzone appears each year in the gulf of Mexico. There are times in the last decade the dead zone has been the size of Massachusetts.

The same problem with water pollution affects the Great Lakes. The dead-zone in Lake Erie each summer can be 10,000 km², and an Algae bloom in 2014 shut-down the water supplies for over 400,000 people in and around Toledo, Ohio for over three days. Elsewhere across the continent water pollution costs municipalities thousands of dollars annually. Des Moines, Iowa - for example - spends \$300,000 every year to clean waters of nitrate pollution from surrounding farms.

Soil - Properly Cared For

While these threats to our waters are real, the situation is not hopeless. In fact, when cared for, soil can help make our waters cleaner and healthier. When soils have good structure then they can actually clean the water of toxins and contaminants as water moves through the soil. Organic particles, fungi, bacteria, and plant roots work together to remove minerals, nutrients, and pollutants from the water before releasing purified water into nearby streams. To illustrate just how powerful an ally soil can be for our fresh water needs, consider the example of New York City. Each day millions of the city's inhabitants use more than a billion gallons of water. Most of this water comes from over two hundred km upstate,

Worldwide, more carbon is stored in soil than in plants, animals, and the atmosphere combined. As plants grow, they photosynthesize.

Through photosynthesis they take carbon out of the air (in the form of CO₂) and send it down to their roots, where in part it is fed to microorganisms. It's estimated that worldwide soils could help store (sequester) 3 gigatonnes of carbon a year (compared to about 36gt emitted each year)

and almost none of this passes through water treatment plants. A few decades ago officials noticed the quality of the city's water was declining - a fact they attributed to intensive suburban development upstate. Original plans were to build a water treatment plant at an initial cost of over \$10 billion dollars (not counting future staffing and maintenance costs). An alternative was proposed - instead of building the plant, New York City should purchase the development rights to the myriad of farms upstream. By preserving these farms as farms, with their forests, fields, and pastures, the city would be preserving these soils, with their water-cleaning powers. The city went ahead with the alternative proposal, at a tenth of the cost, but with the same benefits. In doing so it lived a truth: if we save our soils, we save our water.

Soil - Critical for Human Health

As if the climate and water work of soil wasn't enough, soil also is critical for human health. First, and most obviously, we need to eat. It is from the soil, more specifically the top 15-30cm of it, that we (ultimately) derive all our food. Without food we can't be alive, and without being alive, we can't be healthy. Beyond such truisms, it's important to see the connections between healthy soil and good quality, highly nutritious food. In the past fifty years nutrients in crops have declined significantly. One survey reports that

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Gardeners work at The Working Centre Market Garden

BOOKS FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVING

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Less Is More

How Degrowth Will Save the World

Jason Hickel

The world has finally awoken to the reality of climate breakdown and ecological collapse. Now we must face up to its primary cause. Capitalism demands perpetual expansion, which is devastating the living world. There is only one solution that will lead to meaningful and immediate change: DEGROWTH. If we want to have a shot at halting the crisis, we need to restore the balance. We need to change how we see nature and our place in it, shifting from a philosophy of domination and extraction to one that's rooted in reciprocity and regeneration. We need to evolve beyond the dogmas of capitalism to a new system that is fit for the twenty-first century. But what does such a society look like? What about jobs?

What about health? What about progress? This book tackles these questions and traces a clear pathway to a post-capitalist economy. An economy that's more just, more caring, and more fun. An economy that enables human flourishing while reversing ecological breakdown. An economy that will not only lift us out of our current crisis, but restore our sense of connection to a world that's brimming with life. By taking less, we can become more.

320 pages | \$19.99 softcover



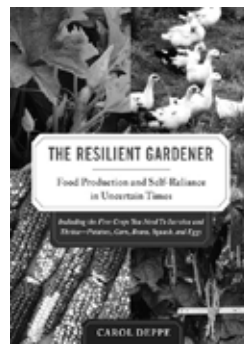
Gardening When It Counts

Growing Food In Hard Times

Steve Solomon

Grow all your family's food with just hand labor, four basic hand tools, and with little or no electricity or irrigation. Gardening When It Counts helps readers rediscover traditional low-input gardening methods to produce healthy food. Currently popular intensive vegetable gardening methods are largely inappropriate to the new circumstances we find ourselves in. Designed for readers with no experience and applicable to most areas in the English-speaking world except the tropics and hot deserts, Gardening When It Counts is inspiring increasing numbers of North Americans to achieve some measure of backyard food self-sufficiency.

360 pages | \$21.95 softcover



The Resilient Gardener: Food Production and Self-Reliance in Uncertain Times

Carol Deppe

Scientist/gardener Carol Deppe combines her passion for organic gardening with newly emerging scientific information from many fields — resilience science, climatology, climate change, ecology, anthropology, paleontology, sustainable agriculture, nutrition, health, and medicine. The Resilient Gardener is both a conceptual and a hands-on organic gardening book, and is suitable for vegetable gardeners at all levels of experience. It is a supremely optimistic as well as realistic book about how resilient gardeners and their vegetable gardens can flourish even in challenging times and help their communities to survive and thrive through everything that comes their way

384 pages | \$41.95 softcover

Soil is a Critical Part of Our Wider Ecological Community

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zinc, magnesium, and iron levels in vegetables have fallen by an average of 50%. While the reasons for this are not singular or certain, scientists believe a significant cause has been the decline in soil microbiology, both in sheer mass and in healthy diversity. While it remains in large part a mystery, the dependence of human health on soil microbiology is becoming clearer and clearer. Studies have shown that people who are in regular contact with soil are more resistant to allergies and



asthma, whereas experiments with mice show contact with soil biology strengthens their immune systems against parasites, bacteria, and viruses. With this in mind, perhaps we can imagine that lockdowns helped prevent the spread of COVID-19 by sending more and more people into their backyard gardens? Maybe that's fanciful. Maybe not.

Soil - Critical for Human Mental Health

Yet healthy soil isn't only good for physical health. It's also good for mental health as well. Although it is complex and mysterious there seems to be strong connections between healthy soil biology, our own gut biologies, and our mental and emotional well-being. As we work with soil, or even just eat food coming from healthy soil, we ingest some of these soil microbes which become part of the flora and fauna in our digestive system. Some bacteria in

the soil - especially Mycobacterium Vaccae - has been proven to help produce serotonin, a neurochemical that can make you happier and less stressed. Furthermore a lack of serotonin has been linked to all sorts of mental health challenges, ranging from anxiety and depression, to obsessive-compulsive and bipolar disorders. In other words exposure to soil microbiology can work somewhat like an antidepressant. So next time you're feeling low, why not go and garden for a bit? Of course no one is saying soil is the panacea - for mental health or physical health. Nevertheless it is becoming clearer and clearer that good soil strengthens our bodies and our souls.

Soil - A Collective Imperative to Conserve and Enhance it

With such diversity of benefits - food and health, a stable climate and clean waters - how else can we respond but by cherishing and honouring the soil? Furthermore how do we respond to the grave threats against soil health globally, especially the loss of topsoil? As has been hinted at in this article already there exist many ways, as individuals and as societies, to care for and regenerate the soil. Our collective task is to choose methods that conserve the soil rather than damage it. In the last article of this series, to be published in the September Issue of Good Work News, we explore these methods. What does it mean in our backyards and our neighbourhoods to care for the soil? At a larger scale what does it mean for farmers to conserve the soil, and in what ways as citizens and consumers can we support them in this work? This is no small task. After all half of the topsoil on the planet has been lost in the past 150 years, with billions of tonnes being eroded yearly. Yet as we will see, although the threats are real the situation is not hopeless. We can still save ourselves by saving our soil.



The Market Gardener

A Successful Grower's Handbook for Small-Scale Organic Farming

Jean-Martin Fortier

Making a living wage farming without big capital outlay or acreages may be closer than you think. Growing on just 1.5 acres, Jean-Martin and Maude-Helene feed more than 200 families through their thriving CSA and seasonal market stands. The secret of their success is the low-tech, high-yield production methods they've developed by focusing on growing better rather than growing bigger, making their operation more lucrative and viable in the process. The Market Gardener is a compendium of proven horticultural techniques and innovative growing methods.

224 pages | \$24.95 softcover



The Global Forest: 40 Ways Trees Can Save Us

Diana Beresford-Kroeger

Renowned scientist Diana Beresford-Kroeger presents an unforgettable and highly original work of natural history with The Global Forest. She explores the fascinating and largely untapped ecological and pharmaceutical properties of trees: leaves that can comb the air of particulate pollution, fatty acids in the nuts of hickory and walnut trees that promote brain development, the compound in the water ash that helps prevent cancer, aerosols in pine trees that calm nerves. In precise, imaginative, and poetic prose, she describes the complexity and beauty of forests, as well as the environmental dangers they face. The author's indisputable passion for her subject matter will inspire readers to look at trees, and at their own connection to the natural world, with newfound awe.

192 pages | \$21.00 softcover



The Green New Deal

Why the Fossil Fuel Civilization will Collapse by 2028, and the Bold Economic Plan to Save Life on Earth

Jeremy Rifkin

A new vision for America's future is quickly gaining momentum. The Green New Deal has caught fire in activist circles and become a central focus in the national conversation, setting the agenda for a new political movement that will likely transform the entire US and world economy. Although the details remain to be hashed out, it has inspired the millennial generation, now the largest voting bloc in the country, to lead America on the issue of climate change. In The Green New Deal, New York Times best-selling author and renowned economic and social theorist Jeremy Rifkin delivers the political narrative, technical framework, and economic plan for the debate now taking center stage across America. The concurrence of a stranded fossil fuel assets bubble and a green political vision opens up the possibility of a massive global paradigm shift into a post-carbon ecological era, hopefully in time to prevent a temperature rise that will tip us over the edge into runaway climate change.

304 pages | \$37.99 hardcover

Supportive Housing at The Working Centre

Below is an overview of different Working Centre projects that provide a home or shelter for 200 people



Affordable Housing

For 25 years, we have been providing very affordable housing, with rents that work with people's income, in buildings and houses that The Working Centre community purchased and renovated. These places are home to over 30 people; people looking for housing affordability and stability, as well as refugees in need of stable housing in a community of supports.

Supportive Housing

For those facing more challenges to finding and maintaining housing, we offer supportive housing (mainly funded through the Region of Waterloo), with a 24/7 housing team helping to problem solve, support, and connect people to wider community services. Approximately 20 people live in these spaces, offering deep support and relationship building. We also offer two bunkies at 97 Victoria.



Partnering with Thresholds

In one of our houses, we serve as landlord to Thresholds, who offer the Extraordinary Needs Program for up to 7 individuals who need a highly supportive environment, with individual bedrooms and a shared common space, designed to support those with complex needs, many of whom are unable to leave hospital without this supportive housing environment.



Motels

The past 18 months have seen a consistent increase in the numbers of people we have been supporting in motels (now approaching 60 people, who often support their friends through these units). Before and during the pandemic, we have seen a significant decline in the health and wellbeing of people who are unsheltered. Mental health and substance use combine to leave people vulnerable, and a lack of housing only exacerbates the challenges and instability that people face. These temporary rooms support people who are unable to access shelter or housing, while dealing with complex health and concurrent challenges. Our SOS and Street Outreach teams have been on the ground responding. While an inadequate response in complex times, these motels have served to impact the lives of people who have often camped or couch-surfed in better times. We continue to work on viable housing alternatives.



Hospitality House

Nestled into the community at our Victoria Street campus, Hospitality House (funded through Ontario Health) is a congregate setting home for 6 people who were previously homeless/precariously housed and who are living with complex medical challenges, including palliative situations. A warm and welcoming space, our 24/7 house hosts help to create a family-like atmosphere – lots of challenges, but also lots of love and laughter.



Water Street House

Water Street House continues to develop and strengthen. The 8 units of housing will align with the Safer Supply project, helping to provide deep wrap around supports for people who are looking to stabilize their substance use through this creative supportive housing context. The Safer Supply team is also using the front of the house as the base for their outreach team that will work throughout the community of the Inner City Health Alliance. We continue to learn about ways to be helpful and supportive as people navigate the power of highly addictive and toxic drugs.

University Avenue (UA) Residence

University Avenue housing is an innovative interim housing option that found life in the midst of the COVID outbreak, as we invited 80 people into this dorm-style housing option. It was made possible by the Region of Waterloo committing COVID-19 funds to this initiative. We have customized the supports and approach to meet the needs of a group which was unable to access housing and shelter options. It has been a complex journey for all of us – residents and space hosts together. We are seeing the challenges of welcoming people back into shared space after an extended period of living rough. See the reflections in this issue of Good Work News that describe why this housing is so important as we build community together.



Support to A Better Tent City (ABTC)

This photo shows A Better Tent City as it settled into its new location at the Battler Road site. ABTC is hosted through the initial vision of Ron Doyle at Lot 42, supported by Jeff Willmer, St. Mary's Church, the Social Development Centre, and The Working Centre as it develops into an incorporated non-profit. The year long housing projects at ABTC and University Avenue have shown that people want to participate in their housing and they want to be involved in making it better. ABTC is exploring how to solidify this example of free standing, tiny home structures where residents are committed to holding the community together, while outside groups and neighbours add resources and supports to help the community grow.

Learn more at: civichubwr.org/a-better-tent-city/



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