

GOOD WORK NEWS

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

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The 35th Mayors' Dinner

The Working Centre is pleased to announce the 35th Mayors' Dinner

Take Courage, Take Care

How do we react to current uncertainties and anxieties afoot in our world, communities, and hearts? It takes courage to take care, to respond to risks and suffering. It takes irrepressible hope. The world we create, the future we choose can be rooted in practical actions. Let's draw our hope into active responses.

Saturday, April 6th, 2024

Marshall Hall | Bingemans

Tickets are now available for purchase. Join us for this celebration and invite your friends to come along. All proceeds support The Working Centre.

See more details on Page 8

Determined Hope

By Rebecca Mancini

This year, the Mayors' Dinner helps us to reflect on the importance of determined hopefulness in the face of despair. Determined hopefulness is not a gentle wish for the future, it is an intentional act to choose the kind of world that we want to live in. It will take courage and it will take care.

Looking at the world around us, the need for courage is clear. The fact that the climate is changing is no longer deniable as ecosystems around the world show the impact of rising temperatures and we see increasing forest fires, floods, species going extinct and large swaths of lands no longer able to sustain life. We see increasing numbers of wars, of unequal justice being meted out, of resources being withheld, of people being displaced, of politics being played out while people die.

In the face of these horrors we are constantly asking, how can we keep looking, keep listening? If you have the choice to look away, then you are in a position of privilege. These catastrophes don't effect everyone equally. We are witnessing the growing gap between those who can close their eyes, and those who live the consequences.

And so, we must take care. Take care of earth, take care of all life. To take care is to choose to not turn away, to choose to act with intention, to infuse our systems with compassion. As Astra Taylor says in her Massey Lecture:

"Taking care is a revealing phrase. It implies forethought and vigilance while also reminding us that by providing care for others, we are, at the same time, receiving something in return. When we say we are "taking care", we can mean we are being careful or, alternatively, that we are giving care; to take care of

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Throughout history, there are many beautiful examples where people have acted into what seems impossible and created positive change... These ideas have inspired the theme chosen for the Mayors' Dinner this year. To Take Courage, To Take Care is a daunting and bold attestation to our commitment to hope.

a person, animal, plant or place is to protect and nurture something beyond ourselves. But as we all know from experience, this is not an entirely selfless enterprise. Taking care of others rewards and replenishes us, and helps ensure we are cared for in return."

By taking care, we are embedding ourselves in community, and in community, we can often find the first steps that bring us towards responses to some of our greatest challenges.

Often in times of insecurity, of deep grief, of growing anxiety and of complexity, people turn to systems to make sense of things. We are seeing this in the rise of bureaucratic systems and programic models that aim to reduce complexity and create quick answers. While this may seem like it will make things easier, it actually creates more hardship by reducing the capacity for creative response, wider participation and the stretching of resources that is a

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Read an update about the Making Home Project on Page 3

Thirty Ninth Year

Issue 156

March 2024

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 13,000 copies. Subscription: a donation towards our work.

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Thank You for Your Generous Support!

We want to thank all the volunteers, donors, and community partners who have supported our efforts to produce and distribute over 700 meals each day during the past year and provide shelter to 230 people a night.

Thank you to all those sharing the spirit of community, especially the 1,800 people and groups who donated over the Christmas season.

The Working Centre's Community Support



The Waterloo Region Association of REALTORS® (WRAR) donates over \$63,000 to six shelter-based organizations in Waterloo Region

As part of this donation, The Working Centre has received \$12,562.25. The grants were made possible through WRAR's participation in the Ontario REALTORS® Care Foundation's (ORCF).

Pictured above: Jason Van Amelsvoort, President-Elect (WRAR), Christal Moura, President (WRAR), Joe Mancini, Director (TWC), Megan Bell, Past President (WRAR), and Katherine Bitzer, Project Developer (TWC).



Flanagan Family Foundation Donates \$6,000

Jill Flanagan, Chair of Grants Committee, Jeff Flanagan, President, Sarah Flanagan (who nominated The Working Centre to the Grants Committee) and Murray Flanagan (a Foundation Director who is not shown, as he is taking the photo) visit the Job Search Resource Centre to present a cheque to Joe Mancini for \$6,000.



Melloul-Blamey Donates \$5,000

Joel Melloul, President, CEO of Melloul-Blamey presents a 5,000 cheque to Joe Mancini that will help support housing projects at The Working Centre.



Warming Centre Donations

When the weather got cold, a group of lawyers, paralegals and legal aid workers at the Kitchener courthouse joined together to raise funds and purchased needed items for The Working Centre's pop-up warming centre at 87 Victoria. Within 24 hours they raised \$2800.

Special thanks to Candace Pitvor, Baylie Burns, Hal Mattson and Pete Mattson for the cup-of-soups, snacks, water, pop, coffee and juice boxes, including a special juice donation from Central Market.

Determined Hope

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happy result of community action. Instead of throwing our hands up and saying it's impossible, we as a community can come together to create change.

We start the work by focusing on the tangible things around us that seem most pressing. The fact that people are living outside in temperatures that feel like -16 degrees should be something we all care about, something we might be able to do something about. We have done much locally, invested \$20m in local taxpayers' money to shift the impact of homelessness, far more than most municipal governments, and yet the issues rage ahead of us. More people are living without shelter than we can accommodate in existing responses. Again and again, we face feeling powerless to make meaningful change happen. But when we hit a cold snap and sent out a request, we quickly had enough people who gave of their time to make sure that people could come inside to our warming centre. While the negative narrative is often given a stronger voice, there are even more people who are committed to acting with compassion and integrity to share the resources that we have.

The Working Centre has recently been set back by the end of our experiment at University Ave housing. The Region has opted to award this agreement to SHIP, a Peel-based agency newly active in Waterloo Region. University Ave has been an experiment in the practice of radical love, of a Housing First approach that works, not to kick someone out for behaviours, but to hold space for them over time and through great complexity in order to invite them back into meaningful engagement, particularly in the face of the ravages of homelessness. The change in this contract signals that we have stretched this radical love beyond the scope of our funding partners, who are seeing the importance of well-maintained property as a measure of care for people. We are proud of the knowledge that we

By taking care, we are embedding ourselves in community, and in community, we can often find the first steps that bring us towards responses to some of our greatest challenges.

have offered housing to a group of people who would not have found another place to live, people who have been unable to manage impulse control due to brain injury, drug use, mental health challenges and trauma.

The loss of this approach is deeply worrying as we witness daily the suffering of people who are living without housing or shelter in our affluent world. We need to act into creative solutions that surround people with love and hope and the knowledge that they are cared for. We have despaired this change and we have learned so much. We continue to challenge our system partners who are often unable to engage with us in these deep learning experiences as we all work to respond to the harsh realities of homelessness and a toxic drug supply.

We are constantly challenged to explore how we can live and act into irrepressible hope – a hope that acknowledges the realities around us and continues to act into the change we need with optimism. Throughout history, there are many beautiful examples where people have acted into what seems impossible and created positive change. As Toni Morrison said “No more apologies for a bleeding heart when the opposite is no heart at all. Danger of losing our humanity must be met with more humanity”.

These ideas have inspired the theme chosen for the Mayors' Dinner this year. To Take Courage, To Take Care is a daunting and bold attestation to our commitment to hope.

Join us for the Mayors' Dinner, and in the ongoing editions of Good Work News, as we lean in together to learn and practise what it takes to be people of hope.



Serving Christmas Dinners

To celebrate the Christmas season, 800 Christmas meals were prepared at our commercial kitchen on Queen Street and were served at four different locations during the Christmas season. Chef Michael Bertling and volunteers cooked and chopped hundreds of pounds of turkey, potatoes, carrots and bread so that they could be served at four Christmas meals.

On Thursday December 21, about 550 meals were served at a special Christmas dinner at St. John's Kitchen. The annual St. John's Christmas dinner has a special focus for those living in encampments and the wider community who regularly use St. John's Kitchen. It was memorable to once again serve the Christmas meal in the gymnasium of St. John's Anglican Church. The Christmas meal, Michael Bertling stresses, “is a chance for people to have a hot meal, that reminds

Photos above: Tables set up for over 100 people to eat Christmas dinner at the King St. Shelter; Michael Kelly plays guitar at King St. Shelter

people of home, reminds them that they're loved.”

The other 250 meals were served on Christmas Day at the three shelters. All three shelters set up to offer a Christmas sit down meal. The King Street Shelter set up tables for 100 people and Michael Kelly offered music. Both University Avenue Dorms and the Erb's Road Shelter also offered a full Christmas meal. Chef Michael has been doing Christmas Dinner for the last three years and describes it as “the best job ever. It fulfills me in my heart.”

Food and celebration are the foundations of community.



Making Home Project Update

It is an exciting time at 97 Victoria as we begin construction. This past summer we were pleased to confirm that Govan Brown would manage the onsite construction work. The project is complex as it involves the renovation of the 2 story warehouse building, the addition of a third story for housing and a new mass timber building in the parking lot as the new home for St. John's Kitchen. Govan Brown is a large construction management company that has set up a Kitchener office. They have committed to managing all the construction contracts at a substantially reduced cost.

We have relied on the work of Adrienne Bobechko of Perimeter Development who has coordinated all the behind the scenes work that was necessary to get to the site

plan. Three local companies also contributed to this process including Gary Keller from Sorbara Law, Chris Pidgeon from GSP Group and Paul Eichinger from MTE Consultants. Perimeter Development has also guided the process to get completed architectural and engineering documents that are necessary for building permits. We are deeply grateful for the leadership role that Perimeter Development has taken in the process of Value Engineering which resulted in many cost savings. The Tendering process was another learning journey that has been led by Perimeter Development construction coordinator Dennis Masotti. With so much of the planning work completed, we are excited to see the construction crews at work.

Free Walk-In Income Tax Clinic



The Working Centre is once again hosting an Income Tax clinic during March and April for people living on a limited income.

Due to the high numbers of people hoping to access supports, our tax clinic support is walk-in this year.

You can see a tax clinic helper to review your completed intake form and required papers starting on **March 4th, 2024** in person. We also offer an electronic drop-off option.

Volunteers registered with the Community Volunteer Income Tax Program will help to complete your income tax return.

More information and eligibility requirements available online at www.theworkingcentre.org. If you have questions, please contact us at taxclinic@theworkingcentre.org



Learn more about the project or donate at:
www.97victoria.theworkingcentre.org

What Addiction Does to People’s Brains and How to Help Them

By William Andereck, David Smith & Steve Heilig

Originally published in San Francisco Chronicle, July 2023

Sadly, they are called “frequent flyers” — severely ill patients with serious medical conditions who routinely cycle in and out of hospital emergency departments. On any given day, their affliction could be an overwhelming infection, festering wounds or even a coma. Sometimes they require a ventilator and ICU care.

These patients may not come to the hospital voluntarily, and if they do, they usually want to leave quickly. They are helped as much as possible but, despite ongoing medical needs, they leave the hospital against medical advice as soon as they begin to feel better — only to return soon after in even worse shape. The pattern continues while their suffering endures, health care staff get frustrated, and costs pile up. This sad dynamic has continued for decades in hospital emergency departments, but fentanyl and methamphetamine are making the suffering increasingly worse.

That’s because the disease underlying many of the problems these patients face is substance use disorder (SUD), more widely known as addiction. SUD is a chronic, relapsing and potentially fatal condition characterized by compulsion, loss of control, and continued use despite adverse consequences. The disease gradually overcomes our ability to control it — those of us who suffer from it cannot stop using drugs even though we know it is harming our

Now we have fentanyl and methamphetamine. While the neuroscience of addiction and recovery is complex and still developing, fentanyl is over 50 times more potent than heroin, and it is safe to suggest that resultant withdrawal and craving is magnified proportionately.

health, work, family, social life and even our freedom.

One could characterize SUD as an ongoing cycle of a period of intoxication followed by a period of withdrawal. The withdrawal state has physical manifestations that are often quite evident — shaking, fever, nausea and vomiting, intense headaches, anxiety and, especially, a craving to do anything to feel better, including finding more of the drug one is addicted to. It’s often said that addicts don’t die from withdrawal but often wish they could.

These symptoms can become more intense after each exposure to the drug in question and each attempt at withdrawal. Repeated episodes of withdrawal begin to change the very nature of the brain and transform it in subtle and nefarious ways. The withdrawal response activates pathways in the most primitive levels of the brain’s subcortex (where the conscious brain never goes), inducing a profound sense of desire and craving for the addictive substance in question. An individual’s capacity to make rational decisions becomes overwhelmed by these cravings.

This positive feedback loop of intoxication and withdrawal,

followed by craving, is heightened in duration and intensity with continued use. Intense craving uniquely characterizes what we call addiction.

Studies based on longstanding experience with heroin and alcohol show that it can take at least 90 days of sobriety for the brain to begin to stabilize and for cravings to begin to dissipate. Although not as recognizable as withdrawal to the observer, craving is intense, and diminishes slowly over months to years. It is the most common cause of relapse.

The power of craving is well known to any former cigarette smoker who enters a room 10 years after quitting and is triggered by a familiar old friend, situation or place where they used to smoke. Likewise an alcoholic who even walks by a bar can experience intense desire to drink.

Now we have fentanyl and methamphetamine. While the neuroscience of addiction and recovery is complex and still developing, fentanyl is over 50 times more potent than heroin, and it is safe to suggest that resultant withdrawal and craving is magnified proportionately. Methamphetamine withdrawal and craving, meanwhile, can result in hyperactive and dangerous behavior. This has disrupted care in hospitals, frustrating and endangering everyone.

SUD develops gradually. It also takes time to treat and recover from. Though there is variation among patients, vast clinical experience shows that in general, the longer one stays in treatment, the more likely that long-term success will result. Because our brains are essentially “reprogrammed” by addiction, they need to be “deprogrammed” by abstinence. That often requires medication, residential treatment, and prolonged participation in support programs.

Unfortunately, the standard 28-day residential SUD treatment

program stay is not enough.

Treatment needs to be revamped to reflect current science. More rehabilitation programs are also needed. Likewise, we need more addiction medicine professionals embedded in hospitals and clinics.

Despite these obstacles, there is good news on three fronts:

There have been significant advances in understanding the neuroscience of addiction. Newer medications can help people resist and control their addictive behaviors. Finally, elected officials are recognizing that we need to confront addiction with newer approaches, rather than simplistic “drug war” failures.

Change will not be cheap, but studies show every dollar in treatment saves seven dollars in criminal justice costs.

What is needed now at all levels (of government in California) is heightened commitment to substance use treatment and recovery. This requires the recognition that those who are caught in an addiction cycle as not “frequent flyers” but human beings, disproportionately poor and suffering from a disease, that needs specialized supports.

Inaction isn’t just counterproductive and costly, it is immoral.

William Andereck is an internist and chairman of the ethics committee at Sutter Health/California Pacific Medical Center. David Smith was founder of the Haight-Ashbury Free Medical Clinics and is past president of California and American Societies of Addiction Medicine. Steve Heilig is director of public health and education for San Francisco Marin Medical Society and a former Robert Wood Johnson drug policy fellow.

The opinions stated in this piece are those of the authors.

www.sfchronicle.com/opinion/openforum/article/drug-addiction-science-fentanyl-meth-san-francisco-18211099.php

Worth A Second Look & Recycle Cycles Are Open at New Locations



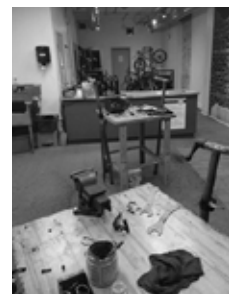
Worth A Second Look Furniture and Housewares Thriftshop has re-opened at 37 Market Lane (formerly Recycle Cycles and The Green Door). Thousands of affordable items available for purchase.

Furniture & Small Appliances | Housewares | Jewelry
Electronics | Linens | Mattresses | Books | Toys | Tools

Come check out our new store!

Shop is open Tues - Fri: 9am - 5pm, Sat: 10am - 4pm

Volunteers and donations are welcome. We offer pick-up and delivery services.



Recycle Cycles Community Bike Shop puts a focus on promoting cycling by making bicycle purchase, maintenance and repair accessible and affordable. Come visit our new shop at 256 King St East!

Recycle Cycles is open Tues, Thurs, Fri: 9am – 4pm,
Wed: 11:30am – 6pm, Sat: 10am – 4pm



Contact us at: wasl@theworkingcentre.org | recyclecycles@theworkingcentre.org



Voices From Tent City

By Zack Mason

Working a service job next to the encampment has been, at times, hard. Residents come in high and unwell all the time: my coworkers and I have been shouted at, spat on, and had things thrown at us. More importantly, we've been put in positions we are neither professionally, nor emotionally prepared to handle, like when people lock themselves in the bathrooms to do drugs.

In the past, I considered this to be a bleak reality of living and working in a city. As I'm sure most people have noticed, issues of homelessness, addiction, and poor mental health have become commonplace everywhere over the last few years. I considered a lot of my experiences with homeless people downtown to be a sad, but normal part of life. The terrible things I saw and continue to see blended into the landscape. In a way, they became acceptable to me because I accepted them.

My attitude shifted on November 16th 2022, when I received a text message from a coworker. She told me that a man had died on the GoTrain platform, and that she could see his body from her position behind the espresso machine. He died there in the night, and early that morning, the police came, taped off the scene, and wrapped the body into a black rubber bag.

In a culture that generally touts compassion and connectivity, the people living at our margins go by largely voiceless.

The cops wheeled the man's shopping cart full of belongings to the train station dumpster where it sat for about a month, the number of things inside slowly shrinking, until it was tossed into a garbage truck and hauled away.

Now, I don't know the circumstances of this man's death, but I'm pretty certain that they weren't peaceful. Whether he was attacked, overdosed, or froze, nothing about his death was what I would consider dignified. For me, the bottom line is that he was alone and in public. Unfortunately, I'll never actually know for sure what happened: I scoured the internet for months following this incident and found nothing. Nothing in the news, nothing in public police incident reports. Nothing at all.

Over the following weeks, I became fixated on who this body was. I watched the shopping cart obsessively, and eventually built up the initiative to riffle through it. I found a piece of paperwork inside with a name that impossibly yielded no google search results. Still curious, I brought the name to

The Working Centre, only to find out that the man it belonged to was alive and well— his support worker had seen him recently. The body on the platform didn't match the paper in the cart, and I was back to having no idea who this person was.

Later still, in preparation for writing this article, I walked down to the central division of the WRPS and asked the officer at the front desk whether there was any record of a body being found at the train station. Because the death wasn't deemed suspicious, he told me, he couldn't even confirm whether it had happened at all. It was like my co-workers and I were suffering from a mass hallucination. At this point the cart was long gone, eliminating the last trace of the death ever having happened.

This incident opened my eyes to a problem I find hard to negotiate. In a culture that generally touts compassion and connectivity, the people living at our margins go by largely voiceless. The issues I see include the pragmatics: people are living on the streets, they are unwell, poor, sick, and suffering. However, the part that bothers me even more is that these people are ignored by the general public. Many of us (myself included) have passed someone high on the curb and scratched our heads, thinking "how do people let themselves fall so far?" The truth is that a person doesn't just wake up one day and decide to live on the streets. It happens incrementally by a combination of bad luck, poor decisions, and systemic failures, blends of bad luck and poor decisions. There is a seed



of dysfunction within a person's life (this could be poor mental health, bad social ties, drugs, whatever) and as that seed grows, the person's support systems— their friends, co-workers, family members, communities— start to slip away (if they were really there to begin with). Desperate for peace, happiness, pleasure, love, comfort, the list goes on, that person may gradually turn to more dysfunctional means to feel better. This is when drugs, for example, might come into the picture. The issue is cyclical: the further into dysfunction you fall, the more isolated you become and the harder it is to live in society with others.

The people living in the encampments are there because at this point in their lives, they have nowhere else to go. The encampments are a place of marginalization and isolation that deepens dislocation. Often, living in an encampment results in identities get mixed up, obscured, lost. I witnessed a death go largely unspoken. For the last 20 odd years, The Working Centre has been writing to memorialize this reality and I want to add to that tradition. I want to talk to the people in the encampment and offer the opportunity to tell their stories, not just record their deaths, but their day to day lives.

Our homelessness crisis is a symptom of a sick, disconnected community. I believe that communities are built, both on the stories they tell, and the ones they refuse to tell. When we know one another, we become closer to each other, we inspire empathy, we inspire action.

The Working Centre, along with many community partners, work to support people facing the challenges of poverty, homelessness and a poison drug supply. In our community, we hold a tradition of naming each person who has died, remembering their spirit, and marking their loss.

Zack Mason is an aspiring writer who grew up, lives, and works in downtown Kitchener.

Warming Centre at 87 Victoria N Offers Support to the Unsheltered

This winter, outreach workers have estimated that more than 150 people are homeless without a place to live. This means that daily shelter for this group is a constant battle for survival. Sometimes they will get a place at an emergency shelter when there is an opening, other times they stay with a friend, other times they gather in a room where others are squatting or winter camping.

This winter in cooperation with the Region, winter warming packages were distributed to those who are camping in Waterloo Region. The packages included insulated blankets, sleeping bags, arctic lights, tarps, boots, and warm clothing.

The issue of homelessness will always be acute in the winter. Luisa D'Amato described the issue well in a Record Editorial.

"Meanwhile, other problems, like the flood of mental health problems and drug addictions, made it more difficult for some homeless people to get into a supportive program that would help them find a room somewhere."

"Homeless people aren't all the same. Some quietly manage, sleeping on a friend's couch, or in their car. Some get a place in a shelter. With help from staff, they can work toward starting a new life, in affordable housing. They're the lucky ones."

"But another group, the most vulnerable of all, can't get to a shelter. Maybe they aren't welcome, because their mental health challenges mean their behaviour is difficult to manage. Or they are afraid. This is the group that most needs a warming centre — just a place to get warm and sit for an hour with a cup of coffee."

As the temperature dropped below -10C and lower, The Working Centre developed a plan to set up a warming centre for those who had few options in the freezing cold. We extended the hours at our 87 Victoria St. N house to open as an emergency warming centre for 9 days between Sunday Jan 14th and Monday Jan 22nd. 87 Victoria N has been operating as a day time warming centre offering washrooms, showers, laundry, harm reduction and a place to warm up during regular hours.

We outfitted and staffed the space when we moved St. John's Kitchen back to St. John's church during the construction of our new housing. Extending the hours during the cold snap was an important message of right action with 30-40 people spending the night in circumstances that are not ideal, (and 80-90 people visiting per day). We watched tough people cry in pain as their fingers thawed in the warm space; people huddled together with determined calmness as we celebrated this small act of welcome - an act of solidarity and care.

Thank you to everyone who helped to extend this hospitality. In the most recent cold bout in February we have extended some of our ongoing shelter spaces to offer a warming space as temperatures felt like -16 without triggering an official cold weather response.

The Age of Insecurity: Coming Together As Things Fall Apart

Book Review by Joe Mancini

The main message of Astra Taylor's *The Age of Insecurity* is How Can We Come Together.

When **CBC IDEAS** asked Astra Taylor to give the Massey Lecture, they were inviting a Canadian who has been acting on the insecurity that has provoked the Occupy generation. Since her Occupy days, Taylor's projects include the Debt Collective, a US based operation which supports those who have taken on overwhelming debt to pay for education, rent or bail. Taylor is very familiar with the causes of the insecurity she writes about.

Her underlying message is one of hope. Taylor focuses on Insecurity, Inequality, the Commons and the Environment, analyzing the reasons behind insecurities while searching for positive alternatives. She concludes by describing how our culture can integrate a deeper meaning for the word Care.

Insecurity

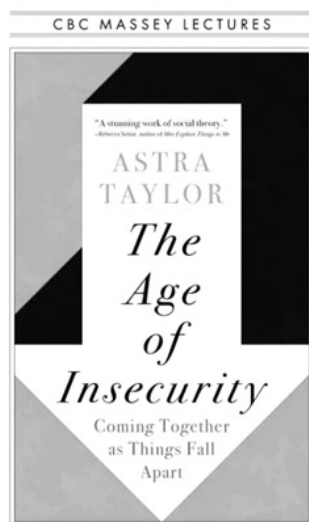
Insecurity is at the root of our discontent in this decade. There is so much work to do to lessen insecurities on all levels through choices for better housing, fair incomes and a healthy environment.

Yet, the real insecurity is that our society generates tremendous wealth and rarely distributes it fairly or rationally.

This becomes a deeper and more personal issue as insecurity arrives at each individual's doorstep. We carry that insecurity when we seek to gain the advantage of more wealth, more power, more security for ourselves to the detriment of others. Taylor reminds us that Adam Smith, in the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, said exactly that, "Money and things cannot buy happiness."

Our insecurity grows when we witness the startling contrast between one group of workers who are chasing more wealth for goals like bidding up the price of housing, buying more expensive cars and working longer hours to pay for it all, while other workers are left working longer hours just to pay for rental housing that takes up most of their income.

Robert Frank addressed these issues in a 2007 book, *Falling Behind*, where he makes the point that a society that encourages "keeping up with the Jones", will in the long run lead to losses like reduced leisure, increased stress on families, dislocation and fewer dollars to support the environment we live in. Rather than investing in green infrastructure like heat pumps, solar panels and batteries, society's efforts are wasted on the treadmill of keeping up or trying to



Her underlying message is one of hope. In each area from Insecurity, Inequality, the Commons and the Environment, Taylor analyses the reasons behind our insecurities while searching for positive alternatives. She concludes by describing how our culture can integrate a deeper meaning for the word Care.

get ahead. The option of rationally reducing insecurity is hardly considered.

Inequality

Over the last four decades, housing in Canada has gone from being attainable by all to the costs of even the most basic housing being out of reach to anyone earning in the bottom third of the labour market. For example, presently the average price for a one bedroom rental in Waterloo Region is \$1927, which is 100% of a worker's after tax \$18/hour, 40 hour/week monthly income.

Housing was historically built so that the majority working class could afford to purchase and own. This system served Canadians well, resulting in minimal homelessness and all could afford some kind of housing even at minimum wages. This is clearly no longer possible, and Canadians feel the sting of inequality when so many are left out.

While it may seem obvious that the solution to this obvious issue of inequality is to build more housing, this is only possible if the housing built is affordable and accessible to all.

Taylor points out that countries such as Finland or Austria have a long history of investing in public housing built as a community asset that is beautiful, durable, and affordable. It is not a second rate option, it is the means for many to attain long term affordable housing. She laments the lack of imagination

that North American's have for understanding housing as a basic human right. It should not be a primary investment vehicle but the means for building a stable society where all can share the benefits of a place to call home.

The Commons

Taylor captures the contradictory nature of political options:

"Ours is a strange and scrambled political moment, at once prosperous and precarious, encouragingly open-minded and dangerously reactive."

She does not fear the hard work of culture building, the sacrifices necessary to work and create opportunities, but she is cognizant that there are forces that move in a negative direction. They are not about expanding the welfare commons, but about stroking competition against one another, promoting an individualism that is increasingly separate from the common good. She summarizes this feeling concisely as, "the resulting insecurity has left us feeling like we are never enough, have enough, or know enough."

Taylor's fear and her strongest insight is that we are caught between two conflicting pathways as to how humans are motivated in our society. One posits that "material security is the basis for social and personal growth" and the other is the need to manufacture "insecurity to keep people anxious compliant and striving." She emphasizes the interrelatedness of these complicated paths, as seen through her description of the insecurity of the Great Depression that resulted in hard won social policy gains in the following decades.

Taylor wants us to visualize a new kind of commons, a wider political space where inclusive supports are integral. She wants us to envision the strength of the underground root systems that hold up massive trees, allowing them to stand firm and sway at the same time.



*Astra Taylor is a filmmaker, writer, and political organizer, born in Winnipeg. Her other books include *The People's Platform: Taking Back Power and Culture in the Digital Age* and *Remake the World: Essays, Reflections, Rebellions*.*

Taylor's CBC Massey Lectures are available online at: <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/interactives/ideas/2023-cbc-massey-lectures-astra-taylor>

"Sometimes their roots intertwine with other trees' for mutual reinforcement, and as Canadian scientist Suzanne Simard discovered, they also share nutrients through underground networks. This is not the competitive capitalist freedom of the "self-made" individual, but the kind of freedom enabled by community. It is the security that helps us pursue what Albert Maslow called higher needs: beauty, self-expression and creativity."

The Environment

When it comes to the Environment, Taylor does not spend time describing the potential disruptions of ongoing climate change. Her focus is on the wider lens of how humans can cooperate to make the environment better. The Occupy generation knows that human security at the expense of nature is an illusion. There is no turning back, ecology is complex and all the actors have to be taken into account. This includes finding ways to avoid incinerating the planet, keeping fossil fuels in the ground rather than continuing our 100-year quest to unearth and burn 100's of millions of barrels of fossil fuels each week.

Taylor spends her energy describing the underlying changes humans must make to our relationship with the natural world. It is now time to lose old conceptions. Less than 50 years ago it was gospel in western societies to place "man" at the top of the chain of beings, now we slowly see that the human being is integral, one of, in the inclusive circle of the natural world. This significant change gives new reverence to the waters, mountains, forests, wetlands and all that inhabit these spaces and places. When the rivers have rights, they cannot be polluted. Taylor describes how society must develop rules to safeguard the whole natural environment in ways that will change our economy and the way we live.

Conclusion

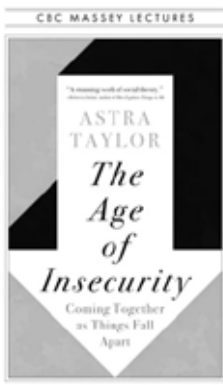
Taylor completes the lecture by helping the reader re-imagine the meaning of Care.

"To be vulnerable and dependent on others is not a burden to escape but the essence of human existence, as well as the basis of an ethic of insecurity – a potentially powerful source of connection, solidarity and transformation."

Taylor calls on Canadians to think about the meaning of Care. How do we interpret care for the environment and care for those most vulnerable? What kind of society relaxes environmental protection for the sake of greater economic development? What kind of society leaves its homeless out in the cold in the winter? Taylor describes ideas towards reducing insecurities, especially through a commitment to develop a wider meaning of Care. Taylor offers a path towards building a society for the common good.

BOOKS FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVING

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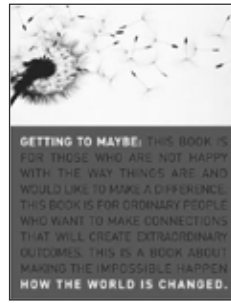


The Age of Insecurity Coming Together As Things Fall Apart

Astra Taylor

In this urgent cultural diagnosis, author and activist Astra Taylor exposes how seemingly disparate crises—rising inequality and declining mental health, the ecological emergency, and the threat of authoritarianism—originate from a social order built on insecurity. From home ownership and education to the wellness industry and policing, many of the institutions and systems that promise to make us more secure actually undermine us. Mixing social critique, memoir, history, political analysis, and philosophy, this genre-bending book rethinks both insecurity and security from the ground up. By facing our existential insecurity and embracing our vulnerability, Taylor argues, we can begin to develop more caring, inclusive, and sustainable forms of security to help us better weather the challenges ahead.

352 pages | \$24.99 softcover

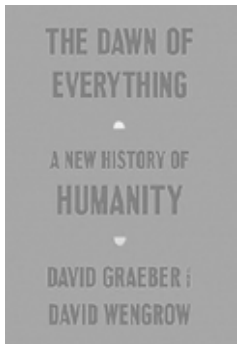


Getting to Maybe

Francis Westley

Many of us have a deep desire to make the world around us a better place. But often our good intentions are undermined by the fear that we are so insignificant in the big scheme of things. We tend to think that great social change is the province of heroes - an intimidating view of reality that keeps ordinary people on the couch. But social change is about harnessing the many forces around us. The trick in any great social project is to stop looking at the discrete elements and start trying to understand the complex relationships between them. Getting to Maybe studies real-life examples of social change through this systems-and-relationships lens, teasing out the rules of engagement between volunteers, leaders, organizations and circumstance.

272 pages | \$22.00 softcover

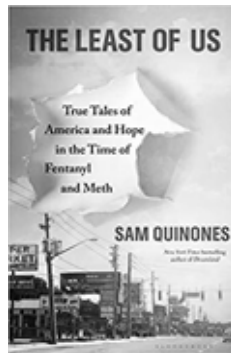


The Dawn of Everything The New History of Humanity

David Graeber and David Wengrow

For generations, our remote ancestors have been cast as primitive and childlike, either free and equal innocents, or thuggish and warlike. Civilization, we are told, could only be achieved by sacrificing those original freedoms, or alternatively, by taming our baser instincts. The authors show how such theories first emerged in the eighteenth century as a conservative reaction to powerful critiques of European society posed by Indigenous observers and intellectuals. Revisiting this encounter has startling implications for how we make sense of human history today, including the origins of farming, property, cities, democracy, slavery, and civilization itself. The Dawn of Everything fundamentally transforms our understanding of the human past and offers a path toward imagining new forms of freedom, new ways of organizing society.

704 pages | \$29.95 softcover

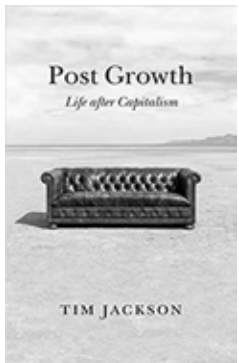


The Least of Us True Tales of America and Hope in the Time of Fentanyl and Meth

Sam Quinones

From the New York Times bestselling author of *Dreamland*, a searing follow-up that explores the terrifying next stages of the opioid epidemic and the quiet yet ardent stories of community repair. Quinones hit the road to investigate these new threats, discovering how addiction is exacerbated by consumer-product corporations. "In a time when drug traffickers act like corporations and corporations like traffickers," he writes, "our best defense, perhaps our only defense, lies in bolstering community." Amid a landscape of despair, Quinones found hope in those embracing the forgotten and ignored, illuminating the striking truth that we are only as strong as our most vulnerable.

432 pages | \$24.00 softcover



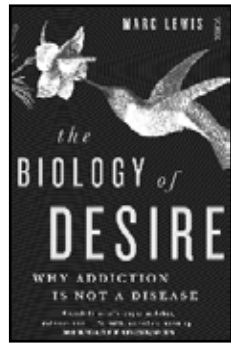
Post Growth: Life after Capitalism

Tim Jackson

Capitalism is broken. The relentless pursuit of more has delivered climate catastrophe, social inequality and financial instability - and left us ill-prepared for life in a global pandemic. Tim Jackson's passionate and provocative book dares us to imagine a world beyond capitalism - a place where relationship and meaning take precedence over profits and power. Post Growth is both a manifesto for system change and an invitation to rekindle a deeper conversation about the nature of the human condition.

Tim Jackson is Director of the Centre for the Understanding of Sustainable Prosperity (CUSP) and Professor of Sustainable Development at the University of Surrey in the UK. For over three decades, he has pioneered research on the moral, economic and social dimensions of prosperity on a finite planet.

256 pages | \$23.95 softcover



The Biology of Desire Why Addiction is Not a Disease

Marc Lewis PhD

"Informed by unparalleled neuroscientific insight and written with his usual flare, Marc Lewis's *The Biology of Desire* effectively refutes the medical view of addiction as a brain disease. A bracing and informative corrective to the muddle that now characterizes public and professional discourse on this topic." —Gabor Maté, M.D., author of *In The Realm of Hungry Ghosts: Close Encounters With Addiction*.

237 pages | \$22.00 softcover

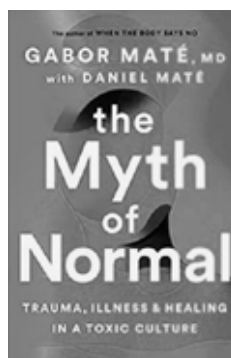


Finding the Mother Tree Discovering the Wisdom of the Forest

Suzanne Simard

Simard describes up close—in revealing and accessible ways - how trees, living side by side for hundreds of years, have evolved; how they perceive one another, learn and adapt their behaviors, recognize neighbors, and remember the past; how they have agency about their future; how they elicit warnings and mount defenses, compete and cooperate with one another with sophistication: characteristics previously ascribed to human intelligence, traits that are the essence of civil societies. And, at the center of it all, the Mother Trees: the mysterious, powerful forces that connect and sustain the others that surround them. Her powerful story is one of love and loss, of observation and change, of risk and reward. And it is a testament to how deeply human scientific inquiry exists beyond data and technology: it's about understanding who we are and our place in the world.

368 pages | \$23.00 softcover

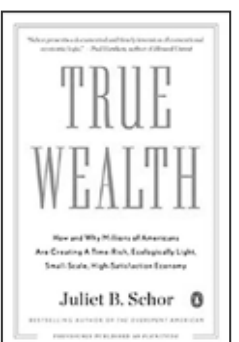


The Myth of Normal Trauma, Illness and Healing in a Toxic Culture

Gabor Maté

Gabor Maté's internationally bestselling books have changed the way we look at addiction and have been integral in shifting the conversations around ADHD, stress, disease, embodied trauma, and parenting. Now, in this revolutionary book, he dissects how in Western countries that pride themselves on their health care systems, chronic illness and general ill health are on the rise. So what is really "normal" when it comes to health? In *The Myth of Normal*, co-written with his son Daniel, Maté brings his perspective to the great untangling of common myths about what makes us sick, connects the dots between the maladies of individuals and the declining soundness of society, and offers a compassionate guide for health and healing.

576 pages | \$39.95 hardcover

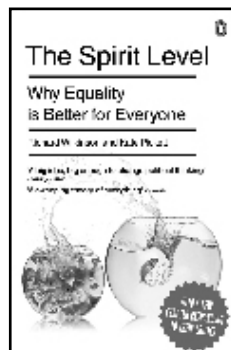


True Wealth A Time-Rich, Ecologically Light, Small Scale Economy

Juliet B. Schor

In *True Wealth*, economist Juliet B. Schor rejects the sacrifice message, with the insight that social innovations and new technology can simultaneously enhance our lives and protect the planet. Schor shares examples of urban farmers, DIY renovators, and others working outside the conventional market to illuminate the path away from the work-and-spend cycle and toward a new world rich in time, creativity, information, and community.

272 pages | \$24.00 softcover



The Spirit Level Why Equality is Better for Everyone

Richard G. Wilkinson and Kate Pickett

One common factor links the healthiest and happiest societies: the degree of equality among their members. Further, more unequal societies are bad for everyone within them—the rich and middle class as well as the poor. The remarkable data assembled in *The Spirit Level* exposes stark differences, not only among the nations of the first world but even within America's fifty states. Renowned researchers Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett lay bare the contradictions between material success and social failure in the developed world. They suggest a shift from self-interested consumerism to a friendlier, more sustainable society.

368 pages | \$23.00 softcover



The 35th Mayors' Dinner

Dorothy McCabe
City of Waterloo

Berry Vrbanovic
City of Kitchener

Jan Liggett
City of Cambridge

**The Working
Centre**

Cordially invite you to attend the Thirty-Fifth Annual Mayors' Dinner

Take Courage, Take Care

How do we react to current uncertainties and anxieties afoot in our world, communities and hearts? It takes courage to take care, to respond to risks and suffering. It takes irrepressible hope. The world we create, the future we choose can be rooted in practical actions. Join us as we draw our hope into active responses.

Saturday, April 6th, 2024

Marshall Hall, Bingemans | Kitchener, Ontario

Cocktails & Social 5:30 PM | Dinner 6:45 PM

Program to Follow

Join us for this celebration and invite your friends to come along.
All proceeds from the Mayors' Dinner support The Working Centre.

Individual Tickets | \$150

Includes tax receipt of \$55

Community Group Package | \$1100

Includes eight dinner tickets, one tax receipt for \$340

Contributor Sponsorship Package | \$380

Includes two dinner tickets, recognition,
and one tax receipt for \$190

Patron Sponsorship Package | \$2500

Includes ten dinner tickets, preferred seating,
recognition during event, and tax receipt for \$1550

Tickets can be purchased online at www.theworkingcentre.org/dinner

For more information, call 519.743.1151 x154 or email: mayorsdinner@theworkingcentre.org

Started in 1988, The Mayors' Dinner has evolved into a yearly community wide fundraising event that has successfully raised money for the projects of The Working Centre and St. John's Kitchen. The annual dinners have honoured an outstanding group of K-W citizens dedicated to building community. The majority of dinners have attracted over 700 guests, but more so, a spirit of good will and community commitment has been emphasized and celebrated.

Remembering the 34th Mayors' Dinner: Responding to Homelessness

On April 15th 2023, the 34th Annual Mayors' Dinner welcomed over 800 guests to celebrate examples of people working to respond to the challenges of homelessness in our community.

The messages were strong and many people expressed a sense of hopefulness in the face of the complex issues of homelessness, recognizing the importance of community collaboration.

The dinner's online auction was organized around the theme of "Reclaim Social", and helped to raise \$9,000.



Left: Mayors McCabe, Liggett, Vrbanovic stand with the groups delivering the main message for the evening including Nikki Britton SOS worker, Craig Beattie from Perimeter Development, Jeff Willmer, Laura Hamilton, Fr. Toby Collins, Marion Thomson Howell from A Better Tent City, and Joe and Stephanie Mancini | Middle: Neil Aitchison welcomes Nadine Green from ABTC | Right: Craig Beattie from Perimeter Development