

GOOD WORK NEWS

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

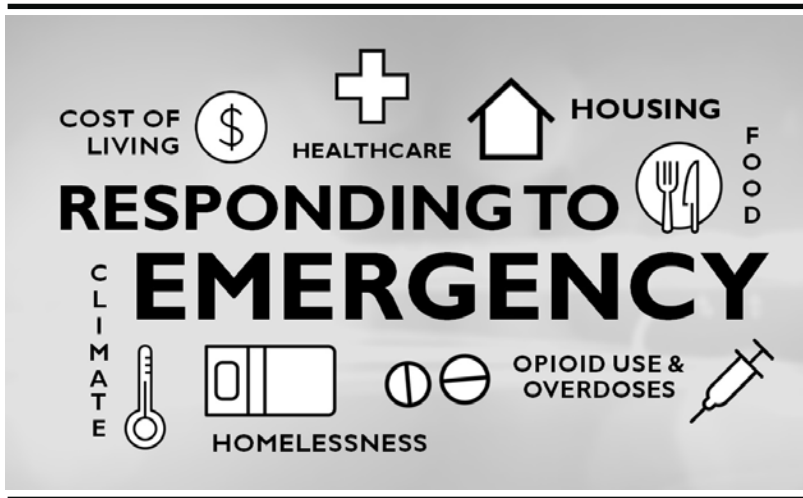
Issue 150

September 2022

Subscription: A Donation Towards our Work

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The Climate Emergency is Here

By Isaiah Ritzmann

We are living through a climate emergency. At least that's what we've been saying. Whole sectors of society, including governments, are recognizing climate change as an existential threat. The government of Canada declared a climate emergency in June 2019. Other nations, as well as the European Union, have made similar declarations. In Canada, 384 local jurisdictions have declared climate emergencies including the Region of Waterloo. As of this past summer, over 2,000 local governments in nearly 40 countries have made climate emergency declarations.

We are living through a climate emergency. But are we acting like it? Imagine you are in a crowded building – a school, a mall, maybe an office. The fire alarm starts to sound. But nobody does anything. They just keep doing what they were doing before: the students sit in class, shoppers keep shopping, and the office workers go about their business. It's an emergency. But nobody is acting like it. To keep doing what we were doing before is not what we need to do now. Is this a parable for an age where we declare climate emergencies and go on acting like we always have?

In his book *A Good War: Mobilizing Canada for the Climate Emergency* (2020), Seth Klein explores Canada's emergency mobilization during the Second World War as a model for today. At the beginning of the war our governments declared an emergency. And acted like it. Based on this experience Klein develops

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four markers to help tell us whether governments are actually acting like it's the emergency they say it is. Governments that act like they are in an emergency:

1. Spend what it takes to win,
2. Create new economic institutions to get the job done,
3. Shift from voluntary and incentive-based programs to mandatory measures,
4. Tell the truth about the severity of the crisis and communicate the urgency about the measures needed to combat it.

Based on these indicators, is our government acting like it's an emergency? Klein doesn't think so. Take spending as an example. Nicholas Stern, former chief economist at the World Bank, has said that governments should be spending at least 2% of their GDP on climate mitigation efforts. In Canada this would amount to about \$50 billion a year. Compare this number to the climate spending from the 2022 federal budget. Economists at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives crunched the numbers and identified total

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Growing Homelessness in Times of the Pandemic and Addiction

By Stephanie & Joe Mancini

The Working Centre has been walking with the reality of homelessness for a long time, as the contours have been developing since the 1980s. Over the years there have been times when the issues causing homelessness are lessening, but they never fail to begin to rise again. It was only in 2014 when it seemed that homelessness was declining. There was hope that 100 units of social housing would make a decisive difference. By 2019, The Working Centre was counting more than 250 people outside the shelter

system who were without housing just around downtown Kitchener. That number now exceeds 1,100 people in the shelter system or experiencing homelessness in the Region.

It must be understood that homelessness is not just about the need for housing, there are deeper societal trends that contribute. When these trends are observed together, one can understand where this continuous upward trajectory is leading. We can see that over 40 years there has been a consistent degradation of

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Renovations at 44-54 Queen St.



Work is progressing at our Queen Street South renovation project that will provide 21 units of affordable housing

Read updates and see photos on page 4



Support our Making Home campaign responding to the homelessness emergency in Waterloo Region

More details on page 8

Thirty Eighth Year

Issue 150

September 2022

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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150 Issues of Good Work News

This issue marks the 150th issue of Good Work News. The first issue was back in September 1984 and except for one issue in 1991 we have managed 4 issues every year. We are grateful to our readers who have followed The Working Centre story and its philosophy of social change. We continue to focus on precarious workers, the unsheltered, and those most marginalized. We challenge bureaucracy and institutional thinking that leaves out people and relationships. We write about projects and ideas that support the regeneration of culture through alternatives to economics, service to the other, the search for limits, and a commitment to fairly sharing resources. On our new website, we will soon have a database of searchable articles that we have been digitalizing. These articles tell a story of Working Centre ideas over these 38 years.



Affordable items available at Worth A Second Look

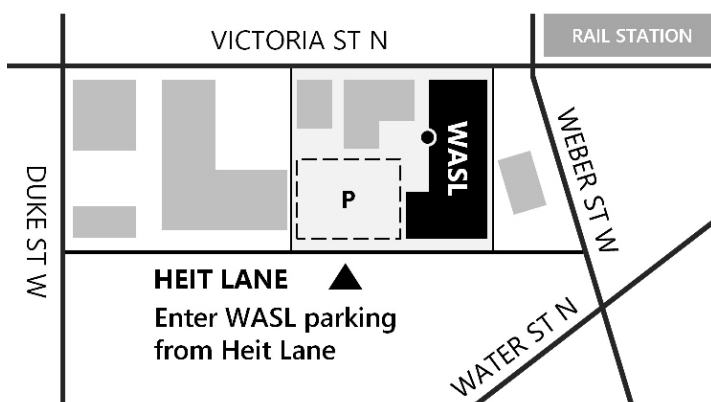
Furniture & Small Appliances | Housewares | Jewelry
Electronics | Linens | Mattresses | Books | Toys | Tools

We are following COVID-19 safety precautions.
Please wear a mask inside the store.

Store and items drop-off hours:

Tues - Fri: 1pm - 5pm | Sat: 10am - 4pm

Limited pickup available, but only for larger furniture items



Located at 97 Victoria St. North in Kitchener

Thank You for Your Generous Support!



In early September when we realized the new emergency shelter would be located further out of the downtown, we started looking for a passenger van as a shuttle vehicle to drive those in the downtown to the new nightly shelter. We were overjoyed when Jordan and Steve Scherer phoned to provide a donation of a 7 seater 2016 Dodge Caravan. This is a tremendous gift, considering how many people will be able to use this van especially during frigid winter nights. A deep thank you to Scherer Chevrolet Buick GMC Ltd. for this timely and generous donation.



We are grateful to Dave Rutherford, who was our contact with Trinity United Church, when he gathered information about the new apartments on Queen Street and coordinated a donation of \$60,000 from Trinity United. This summer, Dave came up with the idea of making tables and end tables from left over wood flooring at the Kitchener Waterloo Woodworking and Craft Centre. Dave has found 12 volunteer woodworkers and he has secured enough left over Brazilian Cherry wood to make 21 tables and end tables for the new units.



Paul and Colleen Bulla along with their son Nathan presented a \$7,500 cheque to St. John's Kitchen from the proceeds of Bullafest 2022, a yearly fundraising party and concert that they host in their backyard. They also raised the same amount for the The War Amps Child Amputee Program. This is the 19th edition of Bullafest and it was its most successful. The photo of the cheque presentation was taken at the St. John's Kitchen garage where Gwen, Mikhail, and Bancroft have been a wonderful team looking after the daily distribution of 225 meals each day. From left to right: Paul Bulla, Mikhail Beijbom, Joe Mancini, Gwen Gerencser, Colleen Bulla, Bancroft Nicely.



Arleen MacIntosh, president of The May Court Club of Kitchener-Waterloo presenting Joe Mancini with an \$850.00 cheque towards purchasing stainless steel containers and lids for distributing meals.

Growing Homelessness

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meaningful connections around work, community, and family. Work is where integral meaning can be found yet many are left out, others try to get in but their skills are wasted, those that are in are forced to engage in relentless competitions. The commitment to engender meaningful work is barely addressed in our society. The same analysis is true about community. While efforts are made to build community, it is easy to see what a low priority that has become as people struggle to make ends meet. Families need strong communities and rooted work opportunities but increasingly as these ties weaken, we see thinner family relationships.

When we look around we see a society with greater mental health challenges and greater dependence on drugs of all kinds. The new synthetic drugs prey on this shattered landscape of broken relationships. Meth and Fentanyl have capitalized on this environment.

Bruce Alexander, author of *The Globalization of Addictions, A Study in to the Poverty of Spirit*, introduces his website with this warning,

“Global society is drowning in addiction to drug use and a thousand other habits. This is because people around the world, rich and poor alike, are being torn from the close ties to family, culture, and traditional spirituality that constituted the normal fabric of life in pre-modern times. This kind of global society subjects people to unrelenting pressures towards individualism and competition, dislocating them from social life.”

We see the growing encampments and the growing numbers of people who are homeless in the light of this harsh analysis. The Working Centre has responded throughout the pandemic even as we have seen encampments develop around St. John's Kitchen.

- This September, we have served almost 700 meals a day through the daily work of the St. John's Kitchen and outside through meal distribution at the garage. Everyday our washrooms, showers, laundry, and extended drop in hours are constantly in use.
- The University Avenue Interim Housing project has supported 80 in housing since it opened in October 2020
- We continue to support up to 60 rooms in different Kitchener motels, resulting in support for 80 people with acute medical issues.
- Since December 2021, we have supported a nightly emergency shelter of about 60 beds, first at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church at Queen and Weber, then at the former EdithMac daycare, and we have now moved to a longer

Global society is drowning in addiction to drug use and a thousand other habits. This is because people around the world, rich and poor alike, are being torn from the close ties to family, culture, and traditional spirituality that constituted the normal fabric of life in pre-modern times.

term, larger shelter at the former Schwaben Club. Every night there are twenty more people waiting outside than we can bring in because of space capacity limits. The new shelter will allow for a greater number of beds, as the need is greater than ever.

In all of this work, tremendous credit and gratitude must be offered to the workers and volunteers at these four projects who have all responded to the dictates of hospitality in ever generous ways.

We see in our work an increasing despair about what is before us and we must constantly ask the question - what does it mean to work with eyes wide open in these times? What we see is an increasing despair about what is before us:

- Mass supplies of synthetic drugs (fentanyl and meth) have devastated the lives of growing numbers of people who rapidly become homeless and face deep mental health issues and substance seeking activities.
- A lack of housing options for people living on the margins, and a growing number of people who are living precariously week to week, vulnerable to becoming homeless. This is both an issue of affordability and the need for alternatives to shelters.
- Times of scarcity where people are competing for basic needs.
- We stand as witness to people injecting drugs into their bodies in the desperate need to satisfy an addiction, watching their breathing, their heart rate, becoming first responders when overdose happens, working to help people to stay alive in spite of the drugs that demand everything.
- Drugs that create compulsive hoarding, dislocation, psychosis, theft, and self-negating activities that help to produce the desperate need for money to satisfy the drug need.
- People who used to live in solidarity have now become competitors for scarce resources - people steal from each other, demand increasingly unbearable things from one another - all to satisfy the desperate longing

for a drug that pushes people far beyond human tolerance.

What do we do as we stand with eyes wide open, and strive to embody and support the complexity of the work?

- We get to know people as unique and beautiful individuals - ones who are so dear, ones who deeply love their pets, ones who look out for others, ones who have a wicked sense of the ironies of life. Deep layers of conversation and engagement through good and bad days as we work to help people keep safe, avoid overdose, access showers, laundry, and bathrooms.
- Create spaces where people feel welcome, where we don't react when oppositional behaviour surfaces, where we have access to shelter, food, showers, washrooms, harm reduction, and community connections.
- Work diligently to connect people to supports - mental health, legal, health, hospital, and community services.
- Walk with each person, a moment at a time, an incident at a time, seeking the next step, the best resolution, the kindest way to resolve complexity that layers upon complexity.
- Create shelter options that are low/no barrier - how do

we welcome people to spaces where they are not excluded, and are not pushed away?

- Tend the many wounds that come from aggression, fighting deep infections that come from living in insanitary conditions.
- Support safer supply options for responding to addiction, support access to methadone and suboxone, working with all available options to help people to manage the depth of addiction that rules their lives.
- Create housing options, or access to housing options, where people are accepted in spite of complexity, where they can count on a space that can serve as home to them for now.
- Constantly call people back into community, to collective care, to living the life we all hope for ourselves.
- Bringing health care and mental health supports into the dynamic spaces of street, encampments, motels, and fragile housing situations, constantly connecting people to services and supports.
- Providing food - a crucial support - in the form of daily meals, take-away meals, hampers delivered weekly to motels, precarious housing, and interim housing.

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'DTK Street Team' will provide peer support and outreach services in the downtown core



Hello downtown businesses!

We are members of the DTK Street Team, a Working Centre initiative supported by the City of Kitchener and the Waterloo Regional Police Service.

We provide peer support and outreach services in the downtown core, seven days a week.

The street team includes an outreach worker plus a Job Café Worker (someone with lived experience).

The two-person team will:

- Provide local businesses with a centralized phone number where they can request non-police assistance if required.
- Link individuals in need of supports with existing community supports including specialized outreach and health teams.
- Connect with WRPS and other teams to access services when people are facing complex mental health/substance use issues.

This program will help achieve a tiered response as we respond to increasingly complex community needs.

Contact the DTK Street Team: (226) 476-0831

Sunday to Friday, 3:00 – 9:00pm | Saturday, 1:00 – 9:00pm

Renovations at 44-54 Queen Street South



Above: Workers build the upper floor of a loft style unit; A small crane lifts materials up to the second and third floors



Above: Workers remove debris and inspect the ceiling; Project supervisors look at plans; 3rd floor space that will become two loft style units



Above: Workers prep materials; Kelvin Chatinyara and Joe Mancini look at details of the new framing; A worker sits on an old office chair
Thank you to Douglas MacLellan for his photographs of this project

We are excited to see the new housing developing at 44-54 Queen Street South. We are making space for safe housing for immigrant and refugee women, as they settle in Waterloo Region. Much of this housing will help single refugees/immigrants with children who face stresses and losses. Affordable housing is important for settling into a new culture. Our Queen Street hub offers multiple ways of connecting to wider supports that complement these apartments.

Construction of the 21 units is progressing well – we are creating beautiful and bright loft units with generous windows. The project has moved rapidly, in spite of the regular construction obstacles.

Funding through the Federal government’s Rapid Housing Initiative hosted by the Region of Waterloo has a goal of achieving occupancy within a year. The project is complicated as it encompasses two buildings – 44-54 Queen South and 58 Queen South. Both buildings are three stories and this project will integrate the entrance, exit and main corridors on the two top floors across the two buildings.

We received our building permit at the end of March, with the final Site Plan approval in April. We were pleased that during this time the City of Kitchener and Region of Waterloo waived most of the Building Permit Fees and Development Fees that in total saved this project \$150,000!

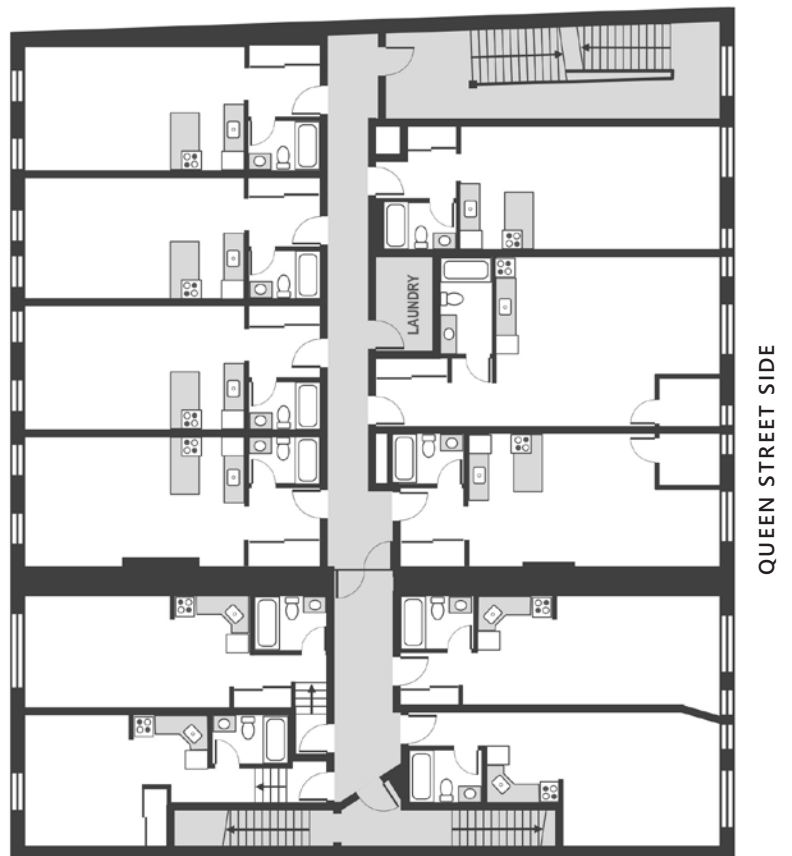
With an earlier demolition permit, the two floors of both buildings were completely stripped down to steel beams, joists and bricks. This process revealed the structure of

how 58 Queen was constructed. When Aaron Bricker built 44-54 Queen in 1910, he left about 24 feet between 66 Queen and his new building. In 1918, when he built 58 Queen he integrated the walls of 66 Queen and 44-54 Queen. The old exterior bricks which had long been covered up are now a feature in many of these new apartments.

We are pleased to be working with general contractor Just Working Construction. In 2018, we worked successfully together on the Water Street House project. Based in New Hamburg, Just Working Construction is a socially-minded construction company founded by Jeff Van Gyssel. Just Working seeks to share their social principles, rooted in gospel principles, in the field of construction by focusing on hiring newcomers to Canada and providing a safe and ethical work environment. We have seen this in action on Queen Street with so many of the construction crew getting a first-time chance to learn Canadian construction skills. The on-site lead of the project, Kelvin Chatinyara came to Kitchener in 2015 as a refugee from Zimbabwe and used the services of The Working Centre and MCRC. Now he is leading the project which will help other newcomers to our community.

Thanks to our main floor tenants, Black Arrow Cycle and ABC Surplus, for working with us through the construction complexities.

This project is another aspect of The Working Centre’s strategic efforts to build more affordable housing units in our community.



The second floor layout showing 11 of the 21 total units. The units range from 330 to 580 square feet in size, will include a three piece bathroom, and a full kitchen. A shared laundry is available off the main hallway. The units in the 54 Queen building (top) will have loft spaces over the washroom and entrance area.

Four Foundational Pillars of University Avenue Interim Housing

By Megan Heck

University Avenue Interim Housing (UA) is an apartment complex that consists of 80 dorm units meant for those who were unhoused and in need during the height of the COVID pandemic. At UA, shelter, a consistent food source, and community-based resources are available for all residents. It has been operating for almost two years, enabling a community to foster and a support system to be built.

When speaking with individuals employed at UA, I asked what they believe are the foundational pillars of UA that are most important to the overall functionality and success of interim housing:

Consistency in Support and Belonging

Due to an increase in housing instability, many community members rely solely on UA housing as their place of residence. Given interim housing brings people together from all walks of life, who each have experienced their own journey to UA, there are bound to be escalated, emotional moments. What is important about UA volunteers and employees is that they allow people to react, in whatever capacity it may occur, while also ensuring that they will continue to have a place to sleep, eat, and belong.

Escalations can occur, as everyone is bound to have moments of intensity, but that does not negate the fact that each deserves basic human needs. Shelter, food, and safe drinking water are not privileged resources and should not be treated accordingly. Instead, the support offered is reintroduced at a later point when emotions have de-escalated, and it is more likely to have a positive interaction occur.

For example, on one of my first days in the UA kitchen, a community member approached the window to ask for toast and eggs. While the eggs were ready right away, we had to wait on the toaster to serve their food completely. While this community member was waiting, another member approached him. While the details of the situation are unknown to me, the original member got very angry, which resulted in an escalation consisting of aggressive language and threatening comments. During this escalation the toaster popped, which caught the community member's attention; I silently buttered the toast and presented their plate of food. While they were still angry, they stopped yelling long enough to take the food and thank me for it. The escalation concluded soon after, but I found it fascinating that while this community member

UA can be defined as a relationship-based project, as it functions based on providing support that caters to both the basic and individual needs of community members. To create and then maintain the trust necessary for UA to be successful, significance is placed on the presence of employees and volunteers.

was angry, they were still able to express gratitude and appreciation to me, as opposed to projecting their frustration to everyone around them.

The Working Centre Philosophy at UA

The Working Centre (TWC) prides itself on being a community and people driven organization by aiding anyone and everyone who seeks help regarding many things, one of which being housing. The year prior to UA's opening, TWC outreach workers identified 250 unhoused individuals who exceeded the limitations of pre-existing housing projects. The opening of a two week warming centre at St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church, plus the time at the vacant Tim Hortons offered space to approximately 120 people a night in November 2019. Motel rooms provided some relief as well. However, when the COVID-19 pandemic closed all public spaces, the need for housing options persisted.

The owners of UA's building identified that the site would be vacant, which presented the opportunity of interim housing for those in need. The foundation of UA was to provide support and residence to any community members who had nowhere else to turn, while also offering them the room to express themselves in whatever capacity required. It is experimental in nature, yet just as much an extension of TWC's philosophy as well. By being flexible, UA is able to listen to the residing community members and cater operations to their needs as they are voiced. This open environment allows changes to be made quickly



and when necessary. These changes include, but are not limited to, the way in which food is served and the availability and accessibility of community supports and employees onsite.

While UA is relatively new - it is quickly approaching its second birthday - there is always room for improvement. This desire for better ensures that community members are being supported in the best way possible, within the abilities of those supporting them.

Presence

I have observed that one of the central ways to build rapport and maintain connections between community members and staff is by being present. Showing up, remembering names and details about peoples' lives, and being a familiar, friendly face goes a long way to indicate ongoing support. For example, knowing food preferences, medical needs, or one's coffee order clearly shows that community members are not only supported but cared for by those around them. There is a drastic difference between a community member being told that support is available for them and being shown the support every day.

UA can be defined as a relationship-based project, as it functions based on providing support that caters to both the basic and individual needs of community members. To create and then maintain the trust necessary for UA to be successful, significance is placed on the presence of employees and volunteers.



In a conversation with an employee at UA, I was told that when UA opened many employees were new to the environment of being present during any type of behaviour and remaining calm. They were there to help but community members did not see them as trustworthy yet; this lack of trust was confusing for some employees, as they believed themselves to be trustworthy people who were trying to offer assistance. What these employees were missing is that the life lead by the community members prior to residence at UA was potentially riddled with manipulation, distrust, and fear. Trust must be earned, and, at UA, it has been over time. Employees have identified a drastically positive difference in the overall behaviour of community members towards each other and employees. By being present, being continually supportive, and being persistent with kindness and compassion, employees and volunteers at UA have fostered an atmosphere for community members to trust others and feel supported.

On my first day volunteering at UA, the employee who traditionally works in the kitchen was sick, so I was placed in the kitchen, briefly told what to do, and left to my own devices. I was unfamiliar with any of the individuals asking for food, the equipment to be used, and the standard of what I could or could not give out. While it was overwhelming at first, I was given patience and appreciation from the community members, which allowed me the room to figure things out. Some individuals even verbally guided me to help find items they were looking for, as they were more familiar with the kitchen than I was. As I was a new face around UA, community members expressed curiosity about who I was and why I was present. Similarly, the more I volunteered, the more comfortable I was with my role, and the more community members were comfortable with me.



The Power of Discourse

Edward Bulwer-Lytton said, "The pen is mightier than the sword". The power of language is often forgotten, given its everyday use, but UA employees and volunteers emphasize this idea through the particularity of the words they choose when addressing community members. As indicated earlier, while there is room for individuals to express themselves, employees and volunteers actively use language that expresses support and care to ensure community members feel heard.

The discourse that is practiced within community spaces, such as UA, is intentional to avoid the imposition of judgement. This is especially important as many community members are dealing with sensitive issues, such as addiction and/or mental health. Ensuring one speaks in an understanding, respectful way, with tone and body language in mind, can be the difference between a successful and an unsuccessful interaction. One employee described their role in relation to community members as walking alongside them through life; each community member has a life of their own and UA employees are not there to change their lives, just exist within it offering support when necessary or sought out. Another employee expressed that each resident has their own goals in life, whether it be finding a stable job, transitioning to permanent housing, or living their life; however, it is important to understand what a community member's goal is and avoid the desire to make the member's life "better", as everyone's perception of "better" is different.

Serving Others at St. John's Kitchen Garage

By Megan Heck

As a stay-at-home mom, Gwen Gerencser held several part-time jobs prior to St. John's Kitchen (SJK), such as a bus driver for her children's elementary school and a retail employee at The Beer Store. When her children began to get older, she started to look for an organization to volunteer with where her availability could be flexible, and SJK was the perfect fit.

Gwen describes volunteering at SJK as incredible, as she was able to cater her volunteer hours to her schedule, and the time she dedicated was met with immense gratitude. She wanted to provide help wherever needed, which is exactly what she did - through serving food to community members and washing dishes, a role that always needed more hands. Over time, Gwen began to learn the philosophy of TWC, which she identified as taking everyone at face value, treating everyone with kindness and respect, and treating everyone equally. As TWC's philosophy lined up with her personal ones, when a part-time opportunity became available, Gwen jumped at the chance and was grateful to have been given the position.

Gwen's contributions to SJK are a long list that shows her willingness to help and dedication to each and every community member who visits. She begins each morning providing breakfast and coffee to community members, and then



Gwen (left) and volunteers prepare items for distribution

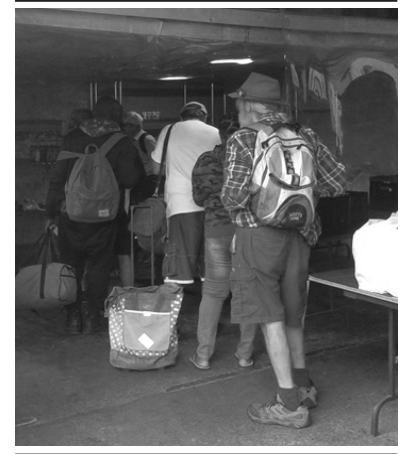
helps package hot lunches, dessert, and buttered bread to be taken down to The Garage for take-out food distribution. When The Food Bank delivers non-perishable goods once a week, she is there to help unload and organize the food onto the pantry shelves. She has been described as patient, strong, respectful, and kind-hearted by SJK volunteers and employees, which enables her to positively impact those she interacts with. Seeing Gwen in action is a treat, as she speaks with such patience and kindness, and she ensures that there is enough food for everyone. Gwen mentioned that if she cannot do something for everyone, she struggles to do it for one, showing her ongoing attempt to treat everyone equally and respectfully.

For those unfamiliar with The Garage, it is an extension of St. John's Kitchen that opened during the pandemic to provide take-out meals. SJK usually serves 250 to 350 people, but when indoor public spaces were closed and when

indoor capacities were limited, SJK had to adjust to continue output. The Garage became a take-out alternative to serve food quickly and within the restrictions created to prevent the spread of COVID. The Garage also has a pantry section that stores non-perishable food items for community members to choose from and take with them. Gwen was one of many essential team players in the opening and continuation of The Garage!

When asked if Gwen had experienced any special moments during her time at SJK, she mentioned that there have been so many over her eight years, but one that occurred recently stood out to her. One day, she was approached by a man who had driven an unhoused community member to SJK. This community member had been tenting in his backyard as the man and his wife wanted to support him through his journey to find a stable job and residence. They had gotten to know this community member and wanted him to know about the resources available to him within Waterloo Region, which is why they introduced him to SJK. They had even invited him into their kitchen where he had cooked them a fabulous Thai meal. Random acts of kindness are always a pleasure to hear about, and Gwen was happy to be a part of such a special moment.

Every individual, whether



volunteer or employed, contributes positively to the work of SJK. Gwen described the staff, the volunteers, and the community members as pieces of a puzzle that work amazingly when put together. When speaking about The Garage specifically, she said that we "could not do it without the hard work and dedication of each volunteer." Gwen wanted to specially mention two volunteers who have been with her every step of her journey and who have provided her with immense support and devotion. Bancroft and Mikhail have been volunteers for as long, if not longer, than Gwen has been involved with SJK; they provide assistance in the kitchen, package and transport meals to The Garage, and distribute take-out meals to community members. During the pandemic, volunteer help was not encouraged to limit the risk of exposure; however, Bancroft and Mikhail were adamant about continuing to volunteer and help, showing their passion and determination to provide aid.

Megan Heck is an MA English student from Laurier who completed a six week writing placement at The Working Centre.

Moving the Emergency Shelter to 1668 King St. East

Have you been following our journey of creating low-barrier shelter options for the growing numbers of people living outside? We started with a pop-up shelter at St. Mary's Church in 2019, and then moved to the old Tim Hortons at the corner of Frederick and Lancaster. These were temporary, open-space attempts to ensure people were safe in the winter months.

In October 2020, we opened University Avenue Interim Housing, demonstrating the model of interim housing as an alternative to the traditional shelter options. This model of housing for 80 people coming directly from the streets has been widely successful.

The need has only continued to increase, so we leaned in to the formal shelter system and made an Emergency Shelter happen at St. Andrew's Church in December of 2021, and when our time there was up, we moved to the Edith MacIntosh daycare centre on Stirling Ave in July of 2022. We continue to support

over 60 people in various motels.

We now have a new home for this shelter, located at 1668 King Street East, in the old Schwaben Centre, renting space from Stephen Litt of Vive and Woodhouse Properties who are working towards a condominium complex on this site with construction to start by June of 2024.

Along with the Region of



Waterloo, we are actively working with neighbours to understand what it means to welcome a shelter to their neighbourhood. It is very complex work to find potential space that also balances community needs and capacity. We are holding a firm ethic that leaving people outside in the winter months is an unacceptable situation. Most people who are living in encampments are there from necessity, not choice - we don't have affordable housing for growing numbers of people. We don't treat lightly the complexity of neighbourhood challenges, and we are inviting the K-W

community to help us to navigate the impossible complexities we face as a community.

It was with a feeling of joy (and exhaustion) that we managed to turn this space into a shelter in less than a week, necessitated by the end of our agreement at Edith MacIntosh. So many people leaned in to make the space into a congregate shelter. For now we are in the door, but so much more work to do to add showers, talk with neighbours, and to move this emergency shelter into a more stable 24/7 operation that gives shelter residents a place of stability through the winter months.

This one space is not enough, and the Region is inviting people to lean in to expanded shelter/interim housing options. The cold weather is here. Warm clothing, blankets, food to the Foodbank, shelter, housing - a place of welcome - such basic necessities. Waterloo Region has always been a place of welcome. Yet the challenge of increased numbers of people experiencing long-term homelessness, the impacts of drug addiction, and the reality of the rising cost of renting an apartment are all contributing to a new environment that calls for wider community responses.

The Climate Emergency

continued from page 1

mitigation spending in Canada to be around \$2.9 billion this year – a gap of over \$47 billion. Clearly, Canada is not putting its money where its mouth is. It has pulled the alarm but is refusing to leave the building.

And this is just with spending. Klein notes that during the Second World War the federal government established a remarkable 28 crown corporations to meet the needs of the war effort. When it was necessary, it rationed essential goods like food and energy. It didn't rest its hope on voluntary and incentive-based programs. Too much was at stake. Lastly it told the truth. Leaders regularly communicated the urgency of the crisis and what measures were needed to meet the challenge. In other words the government not only said but acted like it was an emergency. Is government acting today like climate change is the emergency it says it is?

Government plays a critical, irreplaceable role in responding to the climate emergency. Yet governments are not the only actors in society. All our institutions and all of us as citizens have a role to play. And happily countless individuals and many sectors – including schools, businesses, and religious communities – are recognizing the existential threat of climate change. But are we – non-governmental organizations and ordinary citizens – acting like it's an existential threat? And what might indicate that we are?

Klein's four markers are helpful, but they are government-specific

(federal government in particular). They are easy to remember and can be used by pretty much anybody. Could we have similar indicators for our major social institutions? And for ourselves? These would be short, rule-of-thumb type measures that help us determine whether our schools, our hospitals, our religious and business communities are acting like we are in a climate emergency. Right now if we asked whether our institutions are acting like it's an emergency we would unlikely be able to find a clear, simple, agreed-upon answer. Common measures that are easy to use, easy to remember, and easy to share with others would go a long way to help remedy this situation.

Governments have sounded the alarm but are refusing to leave the building. For the most part they have not acted like it's the emergency they say that it is. In light of this, perhaps civil society and all of us as citizens need to get a start – pressuring governments to catch up. If you are in a crowded building, the alarm is sounding, and nobody is doing anything – do you just wait around? Of course not! You start acting like an emergency, even if those in charge aren't. And you don't abandon those around you. You encourage them also to start acting like it's the emergency that it is. This is a call for deep soul searching. To all levels of government, to all civil society organizations, and to all of us as individuals: are we acting like climate change is the existential threat that it is? We have no time to waste. Let's start acting like it's an emergency now.

FALL 2022 LEARNING SERIES



DOCUMENTARY NIGHTS

At Kitchener Public Library Central Branch

Anthropocene: The Human Epoch | Mon Oct 17th, 7pm

Necessity: Oil, Water, and Climate Resistance | Mon Nov 14th, 7pm



COPING WITH CLIMATE CHANGE WORKSHOP

Climate Change can be difficult to deal with: personally, emotionally, and existentially. This workshop engages on all these levels. We explore four themes: Gratitude, Honouring our pain for the World, Seeing with New Eyes, & Going Forth. **RSVP as space is limited.**

Queen Street Commons | 43 Queen St. South in Kitchener

7pm – 8:30pm | Thurs Oct 13th | Thurs Nov 10th



READING GROUP: THE HIGH PRICE OF MATERIALISM

Author Tim Kasser shows that people whose values center on the accumulation of wealth or material possessions face a greater risk of unhappiness, including anxiety, depression, low-self-esteem, and problems with intimacy – regardless of age, income, or culture.

We are receiving interest for this group until **Wed, October 12th.**

Book clubs will be in-person and online.



GREEN WALKS WATERLOO REGION

Exploring sustainable lifestyles and climate action close to home

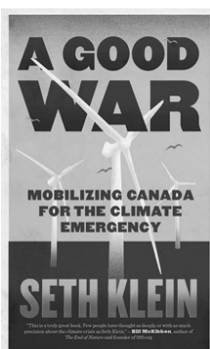
The next walk will be held on **Sunday, October 23rd, 1pm** in the Victoria Park Neighbourhood and will focus on energy at home and in our communities.

For more information or to RSVP, contact

isaiahr@theworkingcentre.org

BOOKS FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVING

You can place orders by phone (519-743-1151 x111), or by visiting catalogue.theworkingcentre.org



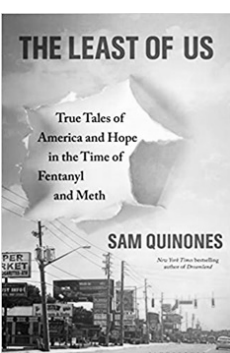
A Good War

Mobilizing Canada for the Climate Emergency

Seth Klein

Canada is not on track to meet our climate targets. To do so, we'll need radical systemic change to how we live and work and fast. Policy analyst and author Seth Klein demonstrates how wartime thinking and community efforts can be repurposed today for Canada's own Green New Deal. He shares how we can create jobs and reduce inequality while tackling our climate obligations for a climate neutral or climate zero future. From enlisting broad public support for new economic models, to job creation through investment in green infrastructure, Klein shows us a bold, practical policy plan for Canada's sustainable future. Moreover, *A Good War* offers a remarkably hopeful message for how we can meet the defining challenge of our lives.

464 pages | \$24.95 softcover



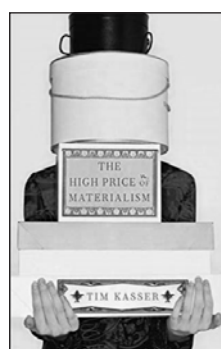
The Least of Us

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

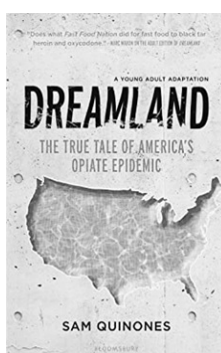


The High Price of Materialism

Tim Kasser

A scientific explanation of how our contemporary culture of consumerism and materialism affects our everyday happiness and psychological health. Other writers have shown that once we have sufficient food, shelter, and clothing, further material gains do little to improve our well-being. Kasser goes beyond these findings to investigate how people's materialistic desires relate to their well-being. He shows that people whose values center on the accumulation of wealth or material possessions face a greater risk of unhappiness, including anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and problems with intimacy, regardless of age, income, or culture.

165 pages | \$33.95 softcover



Dreamland

The True Tale of America's Opiate Epidemic

Sam Quinones

With a great reporter's narrative skill and the storytelling ability of a novelist, acclaimed journalist Sam Quinones weaves together two classic tales of capitalism run amok whose unintentional collision has been catastrophic. The unfettered prescribing of pain medications during the 1990s reached its peak in Purdue Pharma's campaign to market OxyContin, its new, expensive—extremely addictive—miracle painkiller. Meanwhile, a massive influx of black tar heroin—cheap, potent, and originating from one small county on Mexico's west coast, independent of any drug cartel—assaulted small town and mid-sized cities across the country, driven by a brilliant, almost unbeatable marketing and distribution system. Together these phenomena continue to lay waste to communities from across the United States.

400 pages | \$22.00 softcover

Growing Homelessness

continued from page 3

The complexities in the ethics of eyes wide open are immense, and we constantly question:

- When does our support feel like enabling? Are we remembering the vitality and strength of the community and continuing to lean in to this strength?
- People are resilient, how do we build on this resiliency?
- When we hold the importance of ethic in our work, how do we forgive ourselves when we are feeling less than the situation?
- How complex is it to become first responders to life threatening issues?
- How do we remind ourselves constantly of the need to act

as a team, as a group, as a wider community feeling the ebb and flow of capacity, and supporting one another?

- We repeat these questions over and over. How do we balance and act into the deep complexities that overlap.
- Continue to celebrate and foster moments of mutual care, music making, community building that sustain us as a people.

“To paraphrase the comments shared by one of our shelter workers in a recent meeting: “The level of care we offer caught me off-guard; this level of love and respect follows you into the times you are not working. Some days are exhausting – it can be heavy work receiving other people’s heaviness; it is hard to turn people away. But I love coming into work every day.”

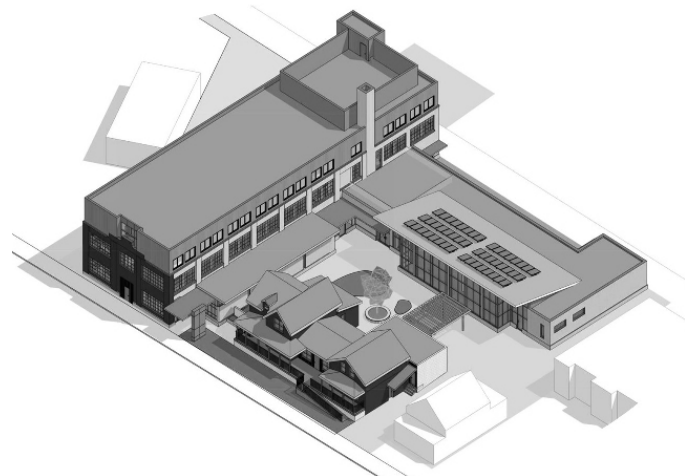


Making Home at 97 Victoria St. N

After our June announcement describing our re-envisioning plans for 97 Victoria St. North, we have received strong, community wide support for the project. Our Making Home campaign is off to a good start. We will have exciting news and updates in the December issue.

Project Plans for 97 Victoria St. North

- The current St. John’s Kitchen space on the second floor will be converted, and a new third floor constructed to add 44 units of supportive housing
- Ground floor renovations will add a health clinic, outreach supports, and bike storage for residents
- A new modern building will be built for St. John’s Kitchen with a large glass front exterior and solar panels on the roof
- A new central courtyard will be a focal space on the site
- Environmentally conscious and energy efficient building materials and infrastructure will be used



Homelessness in Waterloo Region

Individuals experiencing homelessness

1,085

412 Living rough in encampments, on the street, or in a vehicle

335 Hidden homelessness

191 Emergency shelter

84 Transitional housing

63 Institutions (Hospital, Police custody, Women’s Crisis)

from the Region of Waterloo’s Point In Time Report, 2021



225% increase over three years

333

2018

2021

813 Homeless for more than six months



NinetySeven Victoria
Making home.

Support the campaign

www.97victoria.theworkingcentre.org

Looking for a way for your team or group to contribute to this important project?

The Making Home BINGO Fundraising Kit is designed as a one-stop shop for running a fundraising program within your organization, business, or community group. The kit makes it easy for you to get involved, make a difference, and have a little fun while raising money for a critical cause in your community.

Go to www.97victoria.theworkingcentre.org to request a kit.

The Making Home BINGO Fundraising Kit includes everything you’ll need to get your team started - from educational materials on the 97 Victoria Project, to a fully designed team challenge BINGO game, to prize ideas and even social copy to share your team’s success with the greater community.

Every dollar makes a difference. Your efforts help.

Thanks to Vidyard for their work on this campaign.