

# GOOD WORK NEWS

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

Issue 157

June 2024

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Over 830 guests attend the 35th Annual Mayors' Dinner on Saturday April 6th, 2024; Tara Butler performing a dance; Kitchener Mayor Berry Vrbanovic, Cambridge Mayor Jan Liggett, Waterloo Mayor Dorothy McCabe welcomed guests at the Dinner.



Members of the KW Symphony, Grand Philharmonic Choir, and New Vibes Jazz join together in a performance of Leonard Cohen's "Anthem"; Jamie Schlegel speaks on behalf of the Schlegel Family Foundation, the main sponsor for the Dinner; Neil Aitchison and Mike Farwell shared MC duties during the Dinner.

## Determined Hope at the 35th Annual Mayors' Dinner

By Kara Peters Unrau

On April 6th, we celebrated the 35th Mayors' Dinner in Marshall Hall at Bingemans. With over 830 guests, the room was bubbling with energy. The subtle lights and a full house of people in conversation enhanced the warmth of the evening. It is always heartening to see so many longtime supporters of The Mayors' Dinner who each year commit to participating in this community building fundraising event.

This year we continued our exploration of social issues. We have slowly evolved The Mayors' Dinner to focus less on individual accomplishment. While recognizing community contribution is an important component of community, there is also the need to explore how groups and individuals together engage the social issues of our times. This year we highlighted the importance of acting in determined hope in this age of insecurity that we find ourselves enveloped by.

The hosts Mayors Berry Vrbanovic, Dorothy McCabe and Jan Liggett offered greetings and genuine insights into how each of the cities are responding to the issues of our times.

The goal of the evening was to see the significant personal action

needed as we face the challenges of refugees, homelessness and climate change and to reflect on how we can act into these issues. In the March issue of Good Work News, Rebecca Mancini described this as exploring,

"[...] how we can live and act into irrepensible 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."

The Mayors' Dinner program uniquely incorporated music, dance and a range of reflections. The performance of Leonard Cohen's song *Anthem* highlighted the theme and embodied the spirit of the call to action. To start the evening members of the Grand Philharmonic Choir, KW Symphony and the New Vibes

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**Do you have Bike Mechanic skills, or want to learn Bike Mechanic skills?**

Recycle Cycles is looking for volunteers at our community bike shop. Read more on page 8.

## Fortieth Year

Issue 157

June 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.

**Editors:** Joe Mancini, Stephanie Mancini

**Contributors:** Kara Peters Unrau, JP Smola, Richard Albrecht, Greg Kennedy, Rebecca Mancini, Christina Mancini

Editorial comments, changes of address and new subscriptions should be directed to:

## The Working Centre

58 Queen St. S., Kitchener, Ontario, N2G 1V6

Phone: (519) 743-1151 • Fax: (519) 743-3840

E-mail: [kara@theworkingcentre.org](mailto:kara@theworkingcentre.org)Web: [www.theworkingcentre.org](http://www.theworkingcentre.org)

Canada Post Bulk #05306256

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### Computer Recycling Receives Computer Donation from City of Kitchener

The City of Kitchener made a first donation of 40 laptop and desktop computers to The Working Centre's Computer Recycling Program as part of a newly expanded city program. Earlier this year Kitchener City Council approved the program's expansion to redirect end-of-lifecycle laptop and desktop technology assets from e-waste providers to make them available to local community groups and programs to be repurposed to support the local community.

"This donation exemplifies the City of Kitchener's commitment to climate action by improving and expanding our waste diversion programs," said Mayor Berry Vrbanovic. "Through The Working Centre, we are giving computers a second life while providing residents access to affordable technology."

The Working Centre accepts technology donations, and sorts the equipment, harvests reusable parts, builds and tests refurbished laptop and desktop computers. Donated equipment is wiped to ensure confidential data is protected. TWC then provides these low-cost computers to people living on a limited income.

*Photo above: Mayor Berry Vrbanovic and IT workers from the City of Kitchener deliver computer equipment to The Working Centre's Computer Recycling Shop in the basement of 66 Queen South.*

## Grateful for Your Community Support!



### Guys Who Sing Concert Raises \$7,000

A concert by The Guys Who Sing was sold out on Sunday April 14th at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church. The concert brought in nearly \$7,000 in donations. Conductor Gord Burnett built the concert theme around nature and spring. The Guys Who Sing have a main focus of providing high-level performances of male choir repertoire and to raise funds for local charities.

Burnett, who conducted the concert along with Peter Nikiforuk and Gerald Neufeld, said the conductors and all performers including Laura Pudwell and Daniel Lichti donated their services, in order to provide The Working Centre with the maximum amount of donated funds possible.



### Comedy Show Raises \$3,500

\$3,500 was donated to The Working Centre from a Comedy Show Fundraiser held at the Button Factory on March 30th. The MC for the event was Evan Dunne. The Musical Guest was Tessa Bobessa - a long time friend of The Working Centre who lead the Waterloo Region Crossing fundraising walk for many years. The Comedians were Paul McCullum, Nader Mansour, Tige Wright and Dylan Lindsay. We are so grateful for all the effort that went into organizing this event and for the generous donation to The Working Centre.



### New Apostolic Church Concert Raises \$3,100

On Good Friday, the Soul Purpose Choir of the New Apostolic Church of Kitchener/Waterloo and surrounding area performed Amazing Grace, A Passiontide Concert with over 90 volunteer singers and musicians. Soul Purpose is dedicated to touching souls, one song at a time and spreading the message of God and His love through music.

During the concert, Joe Mancini presented on The Working Centre's response to homelessness. After the concert, a free will offering generated donations totaling nearly \$3,100 for The Working Centre.

## HOCKEY HELPS THE HOMELESS



**11TH ANNUAL WATERLOO REGION TOURNAMENT**  
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 25TH, 2024 | RIM PARK

Over ten years, Hockey Helps the Homeless Waterloo Region has granted over \$2,000,000 to local charities to support the work of providing safe shelter beds.

You can support the Tournament through fundraising for a team, sponsorships, providing auction items or volunteering.

FOR MORE INFO, CONTACT ERIK LUCZAK | [ERIK@HHTH.COM](mailto:ERIK@HHTH.COM)

# The 35th Annual Mayors' Dinner



## Determined Hope

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Jazz Quintet under the direction of conductor Mark Vuorinen, gave a full rendition of *Anthem*. Local contemporary dancer Tara Butler, an accomplished Canadian dancer, formerly with the National Ballet of Canada, interpreted *Anthem* from the stage.

Cohen's song *Anthem* gave structure to the reflections that followed. The familiar chorus was sung repeatedly after each reflection.

Ring the bells that still can ring  
Forget your perfect offering  
There is a crack,  
A crack in everything  
That's how the light gets in

Greg Kennedy and Rebecca Mancini led us in three separate reflections on Lament, Courage and Determined Hope, emphasizing that the work of justice requires gritty determination, stubborn optimism and collective steps forward to create new ways of being.

These reflections were interspersed between stories of the courage and the experience of working with refugees, of working with those experiencing homelessness and the work of engaging the climate crisis and the environment. We could have invited

so many more people to reflect the many ways this courage lives in our community, and those who stood with us showed the beauty of this determined effort.

These testimonials from the Mayors' Dinner are shared in this issue of Good Work News. They are the stories of our community and reflect the work and depth of courage that we must continually summon.

Donna Dubie from the Healing of the Seven Generations, started the evening with opening comments, inviting us to make decisions that "provide good choices in taking care of our next 7 generations." "[You] will know that you are strong enough, and instead of asking for strength, ask for direction, knowledge, understanding and acceptance."

Thank you to Luisa D'Amato, Barbara Hankins, Andy Macpherson, Tara Butler and Mark Vuorinen for bringing together the music, the musicians, the singers and the dance to perform *Anthem*.

We are grateful to RBJ Schlegel Family Foundation for generously contributing as our main event sponsor. In his opening remarks, Jamie Schlegel described his grandfather's work supporting troubled youth as the wellspring of the family business.

This litany of determined hope and responsible action was reinforced throughout the evening in word, reflection and song.



RBJ Schlegel Family Foundation was our main sponsor for the 35th Mayor's Dinner. RBJ Schlegel is a local three-generation family business started by Wilfred Schlegel in the 1940's, built upon by Ron Schlegel and by Jamie, Rob and Brad Schlegel.

## Acting Into Justice Provokes New Ways of Thinking

Remarks by Joe Mancini

Pope Francis calls the beatitudes the path to joy and true happiness for all humanity.

What is the work of shelter – it is walking with those who are left out, it is the call to be merciful, it is mourning those who die, it is seeking right action for those dispossessed.

During these last five years, The Working Centre has walked with thousands dealing with homelessness, many of whom are caught in the concurrent cycle of mental health and addictions.

This journey comes with a deep commitment, a holding of a heavy weight. This extra work is a necessary start to change this structure of injustice.

It has meant working 24/7 providing wide reaching supports with an infrastructure designed to react to complex problems. This intensive work is done in the midst of a drug crisis that continues to grow.

So much has been accomplished and so much more to do. Let me reflect on The Working Centre's accomplishments these past few years:

- The development with the Region of 230 shelter spaces has changed Waterloo Region.
- Developing the ability to produce and distribute over 700 meals a day, 200,000 meals a year using over 800,000 pounds of food from the Waterloo Region Foodbank.
- Maintaining and growing our employment work, last year helping over 5000 people with their job search.
- Building 21 units of housing on Queen Street South. In June, a year after construction started, 34 new tenants moved in. They included single women with children who were living in shelters or were precariously housed, coming to Canada from countries like Peru, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, Somalia, Albania and Kosovo.
- Working with Perimeter Development to start construction on 44 units of specialized housing for the long term homeless and a new home for St. John's Kitchen.

In a former time, Emerson said, "Souls are not saved in bundles but one by one." In the work of shelter, it is about the person who is in front of you. It is not about saving, it is about offering a pathway back to the common good.

We are in awe of our workers who open their hearts each day as they;

- deal with addictions and mental

health episodes like delusions, anger outbursts, paranoia, and violence;

- respond daily to multiple overdoses and deal with long-term effects like acquired brain injury;
- respond to those who need a bed when the shelters are always full
- deal with head lice, bed bugs and cockroaches;
- provide meals and support for up to 400 people each day at St. John's Kitchen;
- Accept the harshness of winter which means there is a desperate urgency around the meals, washrooms, showers, and harm reduction supports;
- Doing the work of opening up warming spaces by taking extra shifts during frigid cold spells;
- Visiting encampments to support those who are living in inhuman conditions;
- Providing care to those with medical needs such as congestive heart failure, diabetes, punctured lungs, incontinence, amputations, frostbite, and cancer;

Yet in the midst of all this, shelter workers have assisted 75 people this year to move from shelter to various social or supportive housing.

TWC has specialized in providing spaces that are low barrier with deep harm reduction. This is the work of building a community of trust for people who could not make it in the shelter system.

It is here that we witness the piling on of trauma, anxiety, confusion, and drug seeking. Dealing with the violence, the hoarding, the bone crushing pain of drug withdrawal. It requires a commitment to hold people with compassionate loving care. It is necessary work. To NOT

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Joe Mancini, Director of The Working Centre, speaking at the 35th Annual Mayors' Dinner

# Acting Into Justice

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do this means pushing people out into the cold. The despair, embitterment and abandonment will only pile higher.

The despair is already there – the lack of housing options, the scarcity of meaningful work, the lack of nurturing relationships – are voids that drugs fill, that worsen mental health. The drugs merely mask over what has been lost.

Is addiction, mental health decline and homelessness the definition of chaos, or is chaos a society that allows these realities to proliferate?

Determined Hope is partly the ability to see far down the road, to hold on to the belief that change happens over time. It is people acting into justice that provoke new ways of thinking. It is the culture that changes over time, as more people grasp the change that is possible.

When there were 250 people without shelter in November 2019, change was coming. TWC responded, working with the Region to open up shelter spaces. The narrative was no longer who deserved shelter and who did not. The question was how to create low barrier spaces that recognized a crisis that was leaving hundreds of people in the cold. Out of the depths of despair, new systems of justice and equality emerge. The work is just starting.



*Tara Butler performing a dance during the 35th Mayors' Dinner*

ting with our sorrow, listening to its sobs, embracing its afflictions are first steps to coming home to a place grown alien and frightful. Paradoxically, dwelling in the love that gives birth to grief pulls us out of the damaging isolation that results from dwelling on the bruised skin of our searing losses. An in-dwelt grief can be home to action.

**R:** Nigerian thought leader Bayo Akomolafe says, grief can be our chrysalis, our cocoon that we dwell in, where we can ask questions prompted by the pain, where we realize this interconnectedness with all life. From this chrysalis, our grief and outrage can give us energy, compassion and determination as we emerge to find a new way forward.

## Part Two: Courage

**G:** I can't run no more with this lawless crowd

**R:** While killers in high places say their prayers out loud

**G:** Well they've summoned up they've summoned up a thundercloud

**R:** They're going to hear from me.

**G:** Nothing says paradox better than silence. Silence can be the voiceless sound of complicity, of resignation to wrong that fears reprisals or reductions of comforts. Silent acquiescence to the status quo can choke out the scream in us that rises in our throats at the sight of what turns our moral stomachs. Wherever power suppresses, silence sides with the center, not with the margins. This is where the thundercloud needs summoning. This is where they—those high-placed killers of people, Earth, harmony, wellbeing, goodness and imagination—need to hear from us.

**R:** The root of the word courage comes from the Latin word for heart: cor. To act with courage is an act of the heart. That is to say, when our hearts are broken open, when we recognize our solidarity together as

life on this earth, courage is to act despite the despair, fear and anxiety. It is to make a conscious choice to engage with what is before us.

Each of us can make this choice, but courage grows in meaning when we have courage together. To have courage to address the great changes before us, we will need to be unified. That doesn't mean that we will always agree, but we will need to hold deep listening, transparency, understanding, compassion and commitment to work together despite our differences. This is not token listening and saying "we hear you" and then doing what we originally thought. It is allowing ourselves to be changed by the listening and committing to finding a path forward together.

How do we do hold this courage together when our paths feel so divergent? The intentional silence of reflection can help us find our inner strength. This is not to be confused with the silence of complicity that comes when we are so overwhelmed and overstimulated. We seek silence that strengthens our capacity to act with courage.

**G:** It takes courage to keep silent. This is the other end of the paradox. Not just challenging, silence can be downright uncomfortable, especially if it opens up space for listening to things we'd rather at times not hear. Such as our breaking hearts. Such as our conscience. Silence can make us squirm. In these instances, only brave souls can remain silent. When all the distractions fall away; when the habitual inner prattle that insulates us from reality goes still; when we dare to sit in the company of others without advice, comment, judgement, or authority; when we recognize that my worth is no greater or lesser than yours, then a courageous silence can take hold. From this clearing can grow the clarity of insight needed to speak out boldly and compassionately. Silence of this kind has nothing to do with complicity and quietism. It speaks loudly of solidarity. Here's yet another angle of the paradox. Few things contain the power of a silence deeply, authentically observed together. At the same time, nothing is more fragile, for any single member of the group can easily shatter it. Fragility itself gives silence its power.

**G:** Already we've heard much tonight that begs for courageous lis-

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# Lament, Courage, and Determined Hope

Presented by Rebecca Mancini & Greg Kennedy

## Part One: Lament

**Rebecca:** The birds they sang at the break of day

**Greg:** "Start again", I heard them say

**Rebecca:** "Don't dwell on what is passed away"

**Greg:** Or what is yet to be.

**R:** Think of the difference between "dwelling in" and "dwelling on". To dwell in means to inhabit, to abide, to make home, to reside.

**G:** To "dwell on" means to ruminate, to be absorbed by, to obsess over.

**R:** Could it be that the more we "dwell on" the less able we are to "dwell in"?

**G:** Don't dwell on what is passed away.

**R:** How do we not lose ourselves in what is passed away? Looking at the world around us today, it is easy to be overwhelmed by grief: we have less than 6 years to halt the process of a warming planet; wars are raging as the colonial project is perpetuated; there is a growing gap between people who have resources and those who do not; the politics of competing interests are being played out while people and other living beings die. The world we see today does not offer the same possibilities that it did a generation ago. When

the issues are this large, how do we even comprehend how to respond?

**G:** The losses we as individuals and as communities have sustained are huge and at the same time often hidden. Or at least that's how our hearts register them. Often it hurts too much to face them, so we deflect our awareness elsewhere. Homelessness is a shame, but at least my neighborhood is relatively sheltered. Climate change is real, of course, but forest fires burn a long way off from the Tri-Cities, even if their smoke can dull our sky. How easy it is to normalize the unthinkable.

**R:** After deflection often comes "dwelling on", the plague of anxiety over (and over) the precious things that have been stolen, be them a job, a loved one, a feeling of safety, a prosperous prospect for the future. It is easy to stay in this spot, to build our walls, and to create an idea of otherness that distances us. And we do this because we hurt, because we are trying to sooth the ache we feel. It is a natural human spot to be, but when we let ourselves retreat within our walls, our hearts harden.

**G:** "Dwelling on" condemns us to the surface; we fear too much to let ourselves sink down into our molten core where burns our energy for action. Eco-activist Joanna Macy says, "the heart that breaks open can contain the whole universe". That means to inhabit our broken hearts is truly to dwell in the universe. Sit-



*New Vibes Jazz provided music for the evening and joined in the performance of Leonard Cohen's Anthem. Member of the band include: Andy Macpherson, vibraphone; John Zadro, piano; Dan Brennan, bass; Jerzy Kaplanek, violin; Jay Boehmer, drums; Sam Meakin, trombone*

# Lament, Courage, Hope

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tening. We'll enter now as one into the paradoxes of silence. Just for a minute, let's be brave quietly together in the midst of sorrow, anger, disappointment and incomprehension. In solidarity, for justice, with truth we sit now in silence.

## Part Three: Determined Hope

**G:** You can add up the parts but you won't have the sum

**R:** You can strike up the march, there is no drum

**G:** Every heart, every heart to love will come

**R:** But like a refugee

**G:** On all fronts, the threats around us require total mobilization. Perhaps more urgently than at any other time in the past, we need a unified effort of resolve, bravery and sacrifice to defend life from lethal political, economic and ecological violence. But this worldwide campaign can't be militarized. There is no drum of war behind the march we must strike. We can't obey the commands of hatred, fear and lust for conquest. Love must mobilize us. Like refugees, stripped of flags, nations and other items of division, our hearts, bodies and minds must come together to love the world into peace and shared wellbeing.

**R:** To move through the grief, to find the courage, we need to recognize that hope is not a feeling and it is not a tangible thing. It is a choice we make that propels us to a future idea, it comes across in the gritty determination to say we can do better for ourselves, for our community, for our planet. Christiana Figueres calls this Stubborn Optimism. Even when the system challenges feel so complex, when the barriers feel insurmountable, we commit to tak-



*Greg Kennedy, Executive Director of the Ignatius Jesuit Centre in Guelph, speaking at the 35th Mayors' Dinner.*

*The goals of the Ignatius Jesuit Centre are to foster an ecological way of life for the healing of the world, nurturing a deeper spirituality in people, leading to inner freedom, promoting the production of local sustainable food and providing a welcoming space for individual and communal discernment, and education.*

ing the necessary and complicated steps.

We commit to taking care, to make the choice to not turn away, to act with intention and to infuse our systems with compassion. History is full of examples of communities of people deciding to embrace stubborn optimism and acting this mindset. This is the only way that we are going to shift our systems and frameworks on a large enough scale that we can build a regenerative future that cares for all life on this earth equally.

Tonight, we have heard stories from people who are taking courage and taking care, and we can find clues in these stories about practical steps we can take.

**G:** We come together as community to play, to paint, to sing, to dance, to create and support expressions of spirit that glue us together.

**R:** We ensure that everyone has a place in community, even if we don't always agree with how they live their lives, with their beliefs, with what it means to us personally as we make room for others. We commit to not cause harm to each other while doing this.

**G:** We ensure that everyone has the resources – homes, food, clothing, medical care, community - that they need to make dignified life possible.

**R:** We engage with new practices, technologies and ways to live in harmony with Earth. We understand that all life on this planet is interconnected and that which harms another being, also harms me.

**G:** We engage and question the systems around us calling those who benefit from them to compassion, solidarity and justice.

**R:** We commit to democratic action together, to allowing ourselves to disagree while also keeping actively

engaged with the conversations and decisions about our future.

We could have invited hundreds of people to share their stories and art tonight. Good and real things are happening in our community and there are incredible reasons to hope, but we must continue to strike up the march. Imagine what is possible if we act together with care, courage, compassion, with gritty determination and stubborn optimism. This care comes from each of us, making the decision where we stand, where we live, where we work, where we play, where we dream. At every point in our day, we can decide to do this.

**G:** Embracing imperfection, we take collective steps forward to create new ways of being. So we celebrate our shared successes. When we fail in compassion we beg forgiveness. We don't forget what we're called to do: ring the bells of grief, courage, hope. We take care of the many living cracks who let light in. Despite the dirty air, despite our hoarse voices, despite our straining lungs, we vow never to stop singing.

## Opening Blessing

### Remarks By Donna Dubie

I am honoured for the introduction tonight, as not very long ago it was not a thing to do, to stand up and introduce yourself as a proud Mohawk woman, Haudenosaunee, from the Territory of Six Nations, Turtle Clan.... We have come a long way.

As Indigenous people we were given the responsibility and the looking after of Turtle Island and the caregiving of Mother Earth, which is a huge responsibility. I want you to know, we can't do this alone.

The theme tonight is Take Courage, Take Care... and in doing that we ask all of you, those who are the dedicated courage people, for those who are the decision makers, to provide those good choices in taking care of our next Seven Generations.

Decisions that effect our environment – fire, water, air, earth.

Decisions that effect the people – white, yellow, red, and black.

Decisions that effect our being – physically, mentally, spiritually and emotionally.

And decisions that effect the stages of life – starting with our babies, our children, our adults and our seniors.

If you see a theme, it is because the theme is the quadrants of our medicine wheel. What the medicine wheel teaches, and those teachings can last for hours and hours and take weeks and months and years to learn, because there are so many learnings attached to that medicine wheel.

There will be moments where you feel very overwhelmed. In your mind ask the creator, your god, or



*Donna Dubie is Founder and Executive Director of The Healing of the Seven Generations, of the Mohawk Turtle Clan, Territory of the Grand River – sister, wife, mother, grandmother and community member.*

your greater power for the strength. In your asking for strength, the creator, god or your higher power, is very generous. In your asking the creator god gives you answers and other tasks.

Stop asking for strength. You're already strong enough, you already have the will to continue to make those decisions. When you are ready, you will know that you are strong enough, and instead of asking for strength ask for direction, knowledge, understanding and acceptance.

In those teachings you will accept the understanding of the knowledge that you received and you will know what direction you need to take to make those important decisions.

Again, I am honoured to be here to gift you with some of those teachings, some of our teachings. I would ask that you consider those teachings as you make your decisions for our next seven generations.

## Anthem by Leonard Cohen

*The birds they sang  
At the break of day  
Start again  
I heard them say  
Don't dwell on what  
Has passed away  
Or what is yet to be.  
Ah the wars they will  
Be fought again  
The holy dove  
She will be caught again  
Bought and sold  
And bought again  
The dove is never free.*

*Ring the bells that still can ring  
Forget your perfect offering  
There is a crack,  
A crack in everything  
That's how the light gets in.*

*We asked for signs  
The signs were sent:  
The birth betrayed  
The marriage spent  
Yeah the widowhood  
Of every government  
Signs for all to see.*

*I can't run no more  
With that lawless crowd  
While the killers in high places  
Say their prayers out loud.  
But they've summoned, they've  
Summoned up a thundercloud,  
They're gonna hear from me.*

*Ring, ring, ring, ring, ring,  
Ring the bells that still can ring  
Forget your perfect offering  
There is a crack,  
A crack in everything  
That's how the light gets in*

*You can add up the parts  
But you won't have the sum  
You can strike up the march,  
There is no drum  
Every heart, every heart  
To love will come  
But like a refugee.*

*Ring the bells that still can ring  
Forget your perfect offering  
There is a crack,  
A crack in everything  
That's how the light gets in.*

# Voices of Hope, Courage, and Determination

As part of the 35th Mayors' Dinner, workers in the field of employment counselling, settlement support, shelter and homelessness supports, and workers involved in climate change and environmental projects were invited to share their experiences, stories and perspectives.

We represent people who stand in courage every day as we welcome people who are refugees and immigrants to Canada.



**My name is Susana Escamilla**, who once called Mexico my home. You will hear from four of us who all work at The Working Centre. Our job title is Employment Counsellor. Every day we acknowledge and feel our own refugee or immigrant journey, while also standing as a gateway for hundreds of people who come to make Waterloo Region home, people who will become future pillars and community members in the place we all now call home.



**My name is Yevhennia Tutak**, who once called Ukraine my home. We hear the personal stories and lived journey of dislocation, of war, as families are blown apart by bombs and war, of people who escape hardship in boats that land them on foreign shores with no status, no place, no welcome. And then, they somehow land in our community here, through policy decisions, through personal choices framed by desperation, and we expect them to find a job, find housing in this impenetrable housing market. Step by step, issue by issue, we unravel the settlement, employment, and qualifications challenges faced by people landing in Canada.



**My name is Narges Rastgoo**, who once called Iran my home. In February, for example, as a community, we welcomed over 200 new refugees to our cities, some government sponsored, and many who claim asylum from across the world. These refugees are living with few resources in unstable housing, and working hard to adjust to the dramatic change in their lives.

When trauma rears its ugly head, we help people to find relevant counselling and supports, when language issues make things harder, we look for employers who have hired people who speak the same language, or we find allies in the workplace who will patiently support the cultural learning needed. Step by step, with determined hopefulness.



**My name is Helen Ala Rashi**, who once called Syria my home. And we weep – the stories we hear unlock the sadness we feel as we all have family members who are still living in the wars, the turmoil in each of these countries. I have children who are part Palestinian, who were born stateless and only became citizens when we came to Canada. What we hear in the newspaper as stories in other countries.... These are our family, our friends, our people.

The courage we live is to believe that our community here has the capacity to care for people, to welcome each person, to help their families to settle, to deeply live what it is to offer hospitality and welcome, in ways that mean we have to change how we understand “we”, how we show welcome as a community.

We represent people who stand in courage each day as we respond to homelessness.



**My name is Shinjita Alam**, and I have worked at University Avenue housing since we first started this housing four years ago. We stand up here tonight as representatives of the hundreds of people in our community who choose to work with people who are experiencing homelessness, standing in solidarity with those who are rapidly becoming the most unwanted in our community.



**My name is Kajaw Jalal**. I work at St. John's Kitchen, witness to the many beautiful people who are facing the dislocation of homelessness, the devastation of a poison drug supply that claims people's humanity, and the rejection people experience because of the desperation they face in their daily lives. Basic survival, the need to meet the driving force of a relentless addiction, these things take over people's lives and increasingly create alienation and despair.



**My name is Nick Okot**, and I also work at St. John's Kitchen. The homeless/at risk of homeless community we serve is around 3,000 people who are living truly precarious lives, with around 150 people living unsheltered – in encampments, in stairwells, couch surfing; a further 600 living in our various community shelters; 200 in temporary motels including families. Over 100 refugees live in our shelter system. How do we stand in compassion and love in the face of the high numbers of people, whose needs are very complex?



**My name is Holly Schuknecht**, and I work at King Street Shelter. We are seeing people in our shelters:

- Who need comprehensive mental health supports - at least 40% in our shelters.
- Who are seniors and people who are unwell that rely on being cared for by shelter workers just to meet their basic needs. This is around 20% of people in our shelters.
- We are also seeing increased numbers of people who are physically and mentally addicted to a toxic drug supply that overtakes their lives. This is close to 90% in Working Centre supported shelters.



**My name is Candace Pitvor** and I work with the Specialized Outreach Services team, providing medical, addictions, mental health, and court based outreach services. People's desperation is growing and can no longer be ignored as we see the growing divide between people who have a home, and people who do not.

Traditional models of support are no longer working as the challenges become more complex. We need more places that work with low-barrier harm reduction practices. Trauma, mental health and acquired brain injury lead to challenges with impulse control. Can we create spaces where people are not excluded when these challenges emerge; places where we love people for who they are?

We need spaces that prioritize housing and shelter, and we need to figure out how we can support people who have been pushed to the margins of society. We urgently need more mental health and addiction supports. Every day, we problem-solve and stand witness, welcome people into community, help people to see they are known, they are loved unconditionally, they are important.

Reflections on Responding to Ecological Change



My name is Kevin Thomason, I'm a local Entrepreneur and Environmentalist. A number of us are gathered up here tonight to represent ways we can individually and collectively respond to our climate crisis. We started this evening an Opening Blessing from Donna Dubie – we need to know, be part of, and be in good relationship with the land that sustains us. It has never been more important for us to pay attention – to be active and engaged, and make change happen.

I work with community groups that care deeply about sustainability and our environment, including upholding our unique Countryside Line concept (this boundary protects our rural lands from the pressures of urban and industrial sprawl, and requires constant vigilance). Our Environmentally Sensitive Landscapes also help to protect our greenspace and water.

We are fortunate that Waterloo Region has a visionary Official Plan, a shared voice that guides growth, development, and investment to 2051 creating complete, sustainable, walkable communities with a focus on housing choice, housing affordability, public transit including phases 2 and 3 of ION Light Rail, farmland protection, and environmental conservation. In an uncertain world, facing a climate crisis, our communities have continued their leadership to come together to endorse strong GreenHouse Gas reductions of 50% reductions by 2030 and 80% reductions by 2050.

Together we can raise our voices as we plan for the future - in rural areas where we must balance nature, farming, and groundwater recharge - and in urban neighbourhoods where we have to build the missing middle and increase intensification to create more housing, transit, and complete, walkable neighbourhoods. If we work together, our voices and efforts amplify - these policies are shaped by us, by the people we elect, and we can support these policies into action, and debate them within the life of our community.



My name is Patrick Gilbride, and I am the new Executive Director of Reep Green Solutions in our 25th year of helping people to live sustainably. We support people to take action: to improve their homes' energy and water efficiency; to reduce their waste; to plant a tree! Every time we choose nature in our front and back yards, we are choosing a hopeful future. These changes are important and all add up to collective impact. More importantly, they are indicative of a shift to make sustainability

a part of our everyday. It takes commitment by homeowners and our entire community to make this happen. This is the path of regenerative thinking that is so important to our and our childrens' future.



My name is Tova Davidson of Sustainable Waterloo Region, a social enterprise non-profit committed to a better future through community and organizational level environmental sustainability. We have supported more than 150 organizations and businesses to set targets and reduce greenhouse gasses, waste and/or water footprints, and to implement the UN SDGs. We envisioned and worked with regional partners to make the Cora Group's evolvl building a

reality, Canada's very first net-positive energy, multi-tenant office building in Waterloo! We have planted thousands of trees to create equitable green infrastructure in school yards, business sites, condominiums, and community parks. We co-lead community climate action work with the amazing Reep Green Solutions and all 8 of our local municipal governments for the creation of an equitable, prosperous, resilient, low carbon future for all. We work with the Clean Economy Ecosystem of more than 125 companies, research groups and community organizations promoting leading edge, clean innovation. The knowledge and technologies are available. We can move to a positive, inspiring economy supporting generations to come.



My name is Angie Koch - I made a radical change in my life to start Fertile Ground Farm, a small, local, ecological farm for sustainable fresh food production. The choice of growing our own food – on urban and rural land – teaches us about the natural world. It is the work itself that is enlivening, by plunging our hands into the soil, breathing the fresh air, listening to the birdsong and harvesting the produce. As we listen to our troubled earth, we need to change how we live, how we grow our

food, how we use and preserve our rural and urban lands. As we listen to our troubled earth, we need to change how we live, how we farm, how we use and prioritize and preserve our rural and urban land for growing food. Food naturally brings us together – in its growing, its sharing and its eating. Growing food grounds us in the realities of our own limits, something Earth is reminding us to be attentive to, taking only what we need. This is the work of regeneration. Regeneration means to renew, regrow, or restore. We can heal our souls while restoring the resilience of our communities and of the land.

Thank You for Supporting the 35th Mayors' Dinner

RBJ Schlegel Family Foundation

A special thank you to RBJ Schlegel Family Foundation for being the main sponsor for the 35th Annual Mayors' Dinner

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MAJOR DECORATING LTD.



St. John the Evangelist Anglican Church

COMMUNITY TABLES

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| Camino Wellbeing & Mental Health                              | House of Friendship                     |
| Citizens for Cambridge  | Ignatius Jesuit Centre                  |
| City Of Kitchener   | Kitchener Fire Department               |
| City Of Waterloo  | KW Habilitation                         |
| Community Healthcaring K-W                                    | Lyle S. Hallman Foundation              |
| Community Support Connections                                 | MTE Consultants Inc                     |
| Conestoga College Institute Of Technology & Advanced Learning | Region Of Waterloo                      |
| Faspa   | SRM Architects & Urban Designers        |
| Food Bank Of Waterloo Region                                  | Stephanie Krug                          |
| Fr. Earl Talbot   | St. Mary's Parish                       |
| Heather & John Motz   | Waterloo Catholic District School Board |
| Honourable Bardish Chagger, MP                                | Waterloo Region Community Foundation    |
|   | Waterloo Region Police Service          |

CONTRIBUTORS

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| Paul Kalbfleisch                     | Eunice Valenzuela                   |
| John Kokko & Sue Andersen            | Susan and Tony Venditti             |
| Momentum Developments                | Wells Resolutions                   |

MUSIC & DANCE

Thank You to Conductor Mark Vuorinen and members of the KW Symphony, Grand Philharmonic Choir, New Vibes Jazz Quintet for their musical contributions. Thank You to Tara Butler for her artistic dance.

**Choir:** Stephanie Fifield, Victoria Jenkins Hand, Ingrid Loepp-Thiessen, Linda McConkey, Sarah Moroz, Hannah Rivers, Dave Arthur, Christopher Cantlon, Victor Fan, Evan Rueb, Jim Service, Mark Szybbo, Barb Arthur, Linda Blake, Tawnya Convoy, Luisa D'Amato, Frances Gormley, Lois Hayward, Nathalie Nasr, Kristen Rueb, Tom Corken, Ken Frey, Eric Hiebert Rempel

**KW Symphony:** David Wadley, viola; Nancy Wharton, cello; Barbara Hankins, clarinet; Kathy Robertson, horn

**New Vibes Jazz:** Andy Macpherson, vibraphone; John Zadro, piano; Dan Brennan, bass; Jerzy Kaplanek, violin; Jay Boehmer, drums; Sam Meakin, trombone

Thank you to all Working Centre donors, contributors, and community partners who supported this year's event.



# Recycle Cycles Community Bike Shop

256B King St. E  
Kitchener, ON

Tues: Shop closed  
for bike building

Wed: 12:30pm - 6pm

Thurs: 10:30am - 1pm

Fri: 11:30am - 4pm

Sat: 10:30am - 4pm

Supporting bike culture by  
offering affordable repairs and  
access to refurbished bikes

Refurbished, affordable bikes for sale

Bike repair stations available with  
a wide selection of tools

Knowledgeable staff and volunteers  
to assist with repairs and tune-ups

Used bike parts available

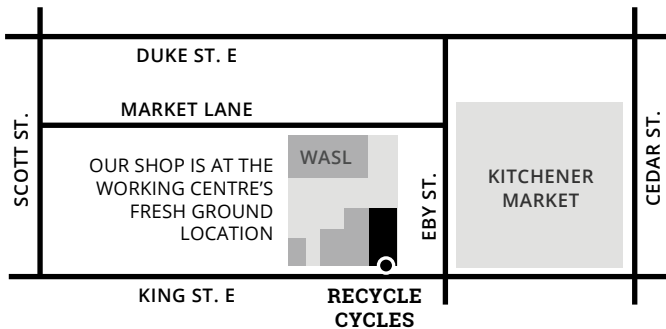
**Do you have Bike Mechanic skills,  
or want to learn Bike Mechanic skills?**

**Become a volunteer at Recycle Cycles!**

Help refurbish donated bikes and strip parts for recycling,  
provide assistance to public bike stand users with tune ups  
and repairs, provide customer service on the main floor.

For more about volunteering, come by the shop during open  
hours, or email us: [recyclecycles@theworkingcentre.org](mailto:recyclecycles@theworkingcentre.org)

Visit our new location at 256B King St. East



The Working Centre is comprised of 30 different projects with hundreds of staff, volunteers, donors and supporters. These photos show different groups at the Mayors' Dinner. The top photo and the photo on the right is a selection of workers from St. John's Kitchen, the emergency shelters and maintenance workers; the photo on the left is long term supporters Bob Strassburger of Strassburger Windows and Doors along with Murray and Merle Hasse; and the bottom photo is a group of volunteers and ushers who helped at the Mayors' Dinner event.

# worth a second look furniture & housewares

Worth A Second Look thrift shop provides the community with low-cost used furniture and assorted housewares items while keeping reusable goods out of landfills.

**Thousands of affordable items are available!**

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

**Tuesday - Friday: 9am - 5pm**  
**Saturdays: 9am - 3pm**

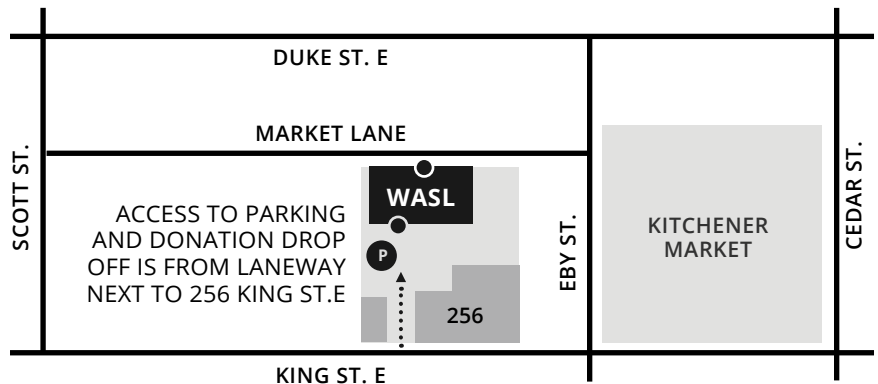
**519.569.7566**

[wasl@theworkingcentre.org](mailto:wasl@theworkingcentre.org)



## Now located steps from the Kitchener Market at 256 King St. East & 37 Market Lane

Enter first floor of store from Market Lane, enter second floor of store from laneway next to 256 King St. E (Fresh Ground)



### Donations welcome!

If you would like to donate items, please contact us or drop off items at the donation door of the King St. East entrance during open hours.

### Pick-up and Delivery

For larger donation items, we offer free pick up service for locations in KW. We also offer delivery service for purchased items at a small cost to locations within Waterloo Region.