

GOOD WORK NEWS

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

Issue 159

December 2024

Subscription: A Donation Towards our Work

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Harden Not Our Hearts

By Stephanie Mancini

Driving through rural Ontario, it is not unusual to see signs with Christian messages surrounded by colourful leaves at this time of year. I was struck recently by one sign that read, "Harden not your heart". As we were driving by this sign, we were also receiving updates from our shelter team that there were four overdoses happening at the same time.

One overdose can be a traumatic experience, as the highly addictive drugs are laced with other drugs, and small mistakes in the compounds can produce a lack of oxygen to the brain, can cause people to drop suddenly to the floor as we stand beside them – potentially from life to death in an instant. We have built the tools of responsiveness – chest compressions, recovery position, ambu-bags to provide oxygen, naloxone – acting as first responders until EMS and police arrive on scene. We act as a team with 2 or 3 of us responding to bring people back, to help people through this deep body trauma. This is how we stand each day with people grappling with an addiction so deep, so life-changing, that it robs them of capacity and autonomy.

Reading *The Rose Bird, A Mother's Perspective on Loving and Losing Her Daughter to Fentanyl*, (see the books section of this newsletter) Helen writes: "I have come to understand that much of Katie's fear and aggression could be blamed on the increased presence of fentanyl in the illicit

Harden not your heart – this invites us to rethink the things we can see are not working, to trust in the ways of the heart that welcome people back into community as people who are loved and cared for.

drug supply. Fentanyl, with its far higher levels of potency and toxicity, simply spawned higher levels of risk and dependency. It is indeed a pure poison that draws its victims closer and closer, and for Katie, there was no coming back from its rock bottom."

Contrast this reality with standing in meetings with neighbours, who are also grappling with the impact of homelessness and drug addiction on their neighbourhood, boldly stating they are happy to help people who are homeless, but that our shelter resources should not be available to people who use drugs.

As we expand our community responsiveness to homelessness, we are inviting neighbours to join us in opening our hearts and make space for people Sam Quinones dubs "The Least of Us".

How do we not harden our hearts to those caught in a cycle of homelessness and addiction? It becomes hard as a community to not be driven by fear, by a desire to return to what we once knew, to cleave to a desire to change people

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40 Years of St. John's Kitchen

By Joe Mancini

In early January 2025, St. John's Kitchen will mark 40 years of serving a daily weekday meal in downtown Kitchener. The journey to ensure that the door of St. John's Kitchen is open each day to continually serve the daily meal and to be a place that people count on, is a major part of our 40 year story. It is also a story of a changing place, of responding to dramatic changes on the ground. The first people who used St. John's Kitchen in the early 1980's all could go to a place they called home, if only at a rooming house. But now, 40 years later, we estimate that 80 percent of those who come daily to St. John's Kitchen live unsheltered, without a home.

Before St. John's Kitchen opened in January 1985, we had already operated a daytime drop-in at St. John's Church for the two years previous. The church knew The Working Centre and welcomed us as part of a downtown church

initiative to ensure people could get a daily nutritious meal. We started with two sinks for hand washing all the dishes. There were box freezers scattered throughout the church to hold donated food. We will never forget the original volunteers like Nellie, Rose, Mae, Don and so many others who worked in less than ideal conditions to make sure the meal was produced and cleaned up every day. Over time we renovated the kitchen, added a cooler and freezer. More importantly we became an integral part of St. John's Church.

Yet by 2004, the growth of homelessness, the continuing high demand for the services of St. John's Kitchen and especially the growing addiction and mental health challenges led the church to believe that we had substantially outgrown the space the church could offer. With the start of the Psychiatric Outreach Project, it was clear that after 21 years at St. John's Church, we needed a new location

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DONATE TO SUPPORT OUR WORK



Donations help support our meaningful community work. If you would like to make a contribution, please visit:

donate.theworkingcentre.org

Fortieth Year

Issue 159

December 2024

Good Work News

Good Work News was first produced in September 1984. It is published four times a year by The Working Centre and St. John's Kitchen as a forum of opinions and ideas on work and unemployment. Four issues of Good Work News constitutes our annual report. There is a circulation of 13,000 copies. Subscription: a donation towards our work.

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36th Annual Mayors' Dinner

The Working Centre is pleased to announce the 36th Mayors' Dinner

Saturday, April 5th, 2025

The Mayors' Dinner draws together an interesting and diverse group of friends and community members to celebrate outstanding community contributions and reflect on important social issues

We invite you to become involved by purchasing tickets, sponsorships, a community table for your group, company or church

For more details, please contact Kara at: 519.743.1151 x119 | mayorsdinner@theworkingcentre.org

worth a second look furniture & housewares



Looking for gift ideas this holiday season?

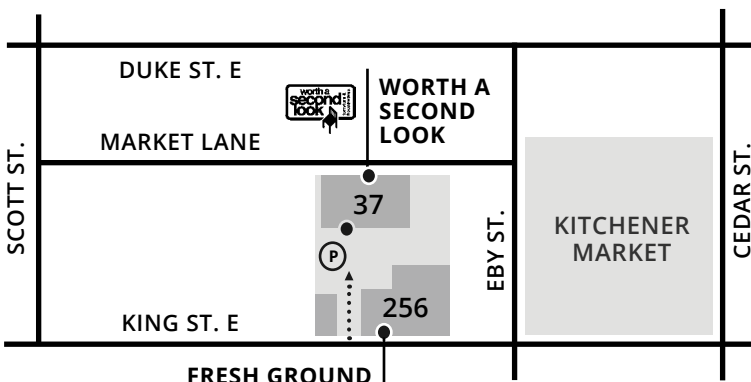
Visit our store to shop from a wide selection of affordable holiday themed items

Thousands of affordable items are available for purchase!

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

256 King St. East & 37 Market Lane

Steps from the Kitchener Market. Enter the Holiday Store from 37 Market Lane.



519.569.7566 | wasl@theworkingcentre.org
Tues - Fri: 9am - 5pm | Sat: 9am - 3pm

Thank You for Your Support



Bullafest 2024 raises \$6,000 for St. John's Kitchen

Paul, Colleen, and Elise Bulla (right) present Joe Mancini and Connie Watson (left) with a cheque for \$6,000 for St. John's Kitchen. The proceeds are from the 21st edition of Bullafest, an annual fundraiser they host in their backyard. Thank you for your continued support!

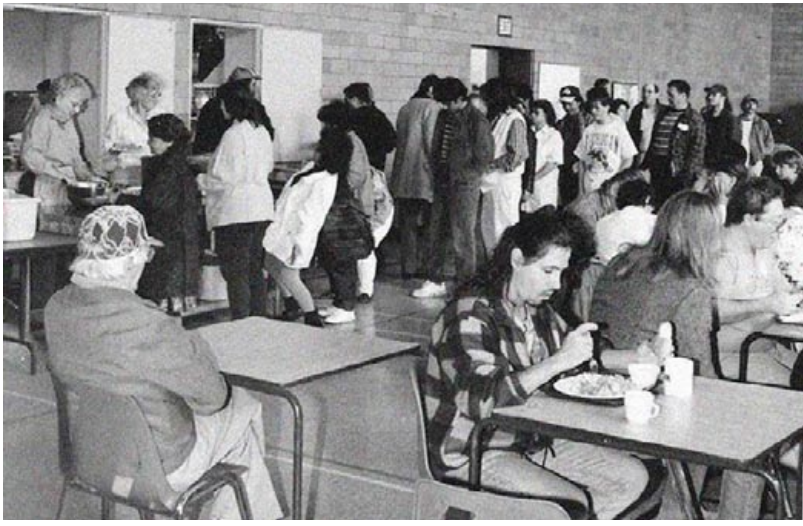


Hockey Helps the Homeless raises over \$351,000

On Friday, October 25, 2024, Waterloo Region celebrated their 11th year of Hockey Helps the Homeless. The tournament was a huge success and we are thrilled to announce that we will be granting \$351,000+ to our local beneficiaries!

Beneficiaries include: Cambridge Shelter, YW Kitchener-Waterloo, oneROOF Youth Services, Starling Community Services, House of Friendship, and The Working Centre

We would like to thank all of those who played such an important part in our event. Whether you were a player, a sponsor, a donor, or a volunteer, we could not have achieved what we did without you.



40 Years of St. John's Kitchen

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that offered more space.

By providence, St. Vincent de Paul was open to selling the 97 Victoria N. building and The Working Centre was able to buy it with the goal of relocating St. John's Kitchen to the second floor. The building was in a tired state and needed an extensive renovation. In July 2006, we moved St. John's Kitchen from the church to our shiny new renovated space. The majority of the renovations were completed by crews that were made up of unemployed workers who often used St. John's Kitchen. The new St. John's Kitchen was built around an open kitchen where the daily meal was cooked while

people gathered in the open dining area. The big windows on the second floor offered lots of sunshine and overlooked the train station and Victoria Ave.

By 2018, the reality of homelessness and a new wave of fentanyl and crystal meth addictions were a challenge to how the Kitchen operated. Long gone were the days when St. John's Kitchen could be described as a community of people working together to cook and share surplus food. We were increasingly overwhelmed by those without any shelter options setting up encampments around the property. The number of overdoses and the general decline in mental health along with the survival culture of homelessness created conditions that shifted the Kitchen's culture.

Even before the pandemic, we had started to plan a new kind of campus for 97 Victoria. It took several years to develop and fundraise towards the new vision. For two years the pandemic changed St. John's Kitchen, but our ability to stay open and offer meals from morning till closing, public



Renovations on the second floor of 97 Victoria St. N in 2006

washrooms, a gathering space, showers, and laundry were vital to our community when so many places were closed.

As the planning for the Making Home project progressed, it became apparent the best place to relocate St. John's Kitchen during the projected two-year construction period was St. John's Anglican Church. St. John's welcomed us back with open arms. In October 2023, it immediately felt like the early 1980's when we first set up in the gym. However, the dramatically different circumstances of the homelessness crisis has challenged our return in ways that would have made it impossible to imagine the current reality of St. John's Kitchen 40 years ago.

After some delays, construction for the new St. John's Kitchen campus at 97 Victoria was able to start at full speed in February 2024. The announcement in September 2024 of the Green and Inclusive Community Buildings grant will help rebuild St. John's Kitchen, recreating and continuing a 40 year history of involving the community in the serving of a free daily meal. At the same time the contribution of the Federal Government ensures that, through the use of



This photo was taken during Arleen Macpherson's retirement celebration as St. John's Kitchen Coordinator in September 1999. Arleen is on the right with Dorothy and a friend.

heat pumps, electric appliances, insulation, solar panels and energy efficiency, the new building will achieve substantial reductions in carbon emissions. This beautiful, new drop-in space will extend the work of St. John's Kitchen through the provision of meals, laundry, washrooms, welcome, connection to resources and healthcare supports for the most vulnerable. This new Kitchen will be fully accessible. With a courtyard in the centre of the project, the 44 units of housing, and the primary care health clinic, we are creating a place that will help people find routes of support for addictions, housing and mental health supports.

Support the Reopening of Queen St. Commons Café!



You can help us bring QSC back to life by purchasing a 4" coffee plant for \$25, with all proceeds going towards our renovation costs. Pick up your plant at Fresh Ground Café, or contact us to arrange your purchase.

freshground@theworkingcentre.org

A special thanks to Ashley DeMarte and Livescape for making this fundraiser possible!

SUPPORT THE ST. JOHN'S KITCHEN COMMUNITY

St. John's Kitchen is asking for donated items that can be distributed to community members in need



\$5 Tim Cards | Hoodies | Jogging Pants
Gloves | Shoes | Boots | Hair Brushes
Deodorant | Toothpaste | Toothbrushes
Bottles of shampoo, soap, conditioner
(Full or sample size)

Please drop off items at The Working Centre's Resource Centre at 58 Queen St. S in Kitchener

For more information, or if you are interested in volunteering at St. John's Kitchen, please email:

sjk@theworkingcentre.org

The Diploma in Local Democracy



Begins January 8th, 2025

"Democratic relationships in everyday life form the roots of a democratic society."

Together we reflect on our own experiences of democracy and think about what it means to include people in the decisions that affect their lives, what practicing reciprocity looks like, and why everyday equality is necessary for a democratic future.

Come participate in a dynamic and diverse discussion with engaged community members.

We welcome you to join us!

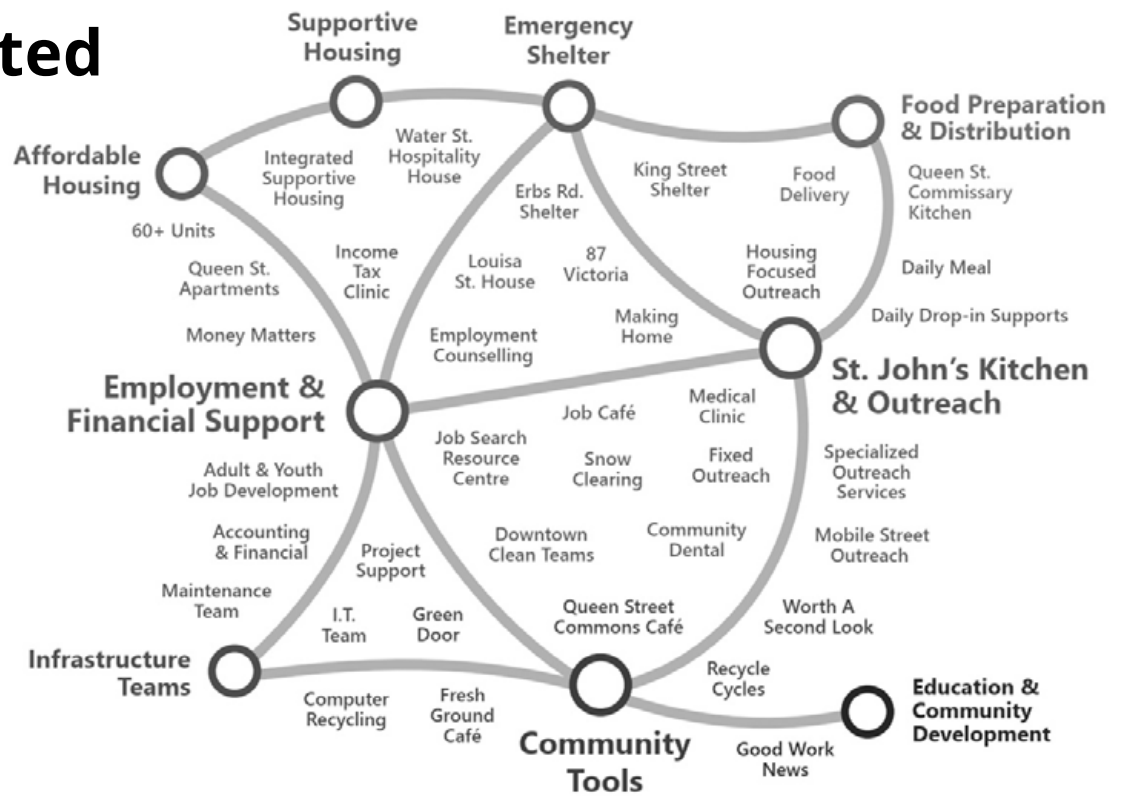
The class runs Wednesdays 7pm - 9pm from January until the end of April.

Contact Isaiah at:
isaiahr@theworkingcentre.org

An Interconnected Community

The Working Centre is organized as a village of supports, where projects are niched within one of the pockets of support, but part of an integrated whole. We respond to the people we meet and support day after day, moment after moment, with kindness, thoughtfulness and practical supports.

The work of each person is important, the work of each team is important, and it all becomes stronger when we work together to create a wider network of supports.



Providing Access to Employment and Financial Supports

The **Job Search Resource Centre** at 58 Queen St. South is a crucial service. For much of the year we have seen line ups each morning by 8:30 am. It is a vital place for job seekers, especially new Canadians, who are looking for job search supports like job postings, resume support, employment counselling, links to employers, and connections to community resources. Our **Money Matters Hub** complements the employment work providing income tax, budgeting, access to government support programs, and problem solving. During the income tax season we helped 1400 people access over \$9 million dollars in government benefits.

Preparing Healthy Nutritious Meals Daily

Our **Queen Street Commissary Kitchen** prepares over 700 meals each day for distribution to St. John's Kitchen, King Street Shelter and Erbs Road Shelter. The meals served at St. John's Kitchen ensure a daily free meal is available each week day in downtown Kitchener. This huge daily effort is supported by many volunteers and the Food Bank of Waterloo Region, who donated 800,000 pounds of food this year. The kitchen is busy morning and afternoon for this work of ensuring the meals are prepared and ready for distribution each day.



Inviting Community to our King St. East Social Enterprises

This year we completed our King St. East Community Tool campus. The three social enterprises **Worth A Second Look Furniture and Housewares Thrift Store**, **Recycle Cycles Community Bike Shop**, and **Fresh Ground Café** have now opened and rooted themselves at 37 Market Lane and 256 King St. East. These projects provide multiple benefits through affordable goods, a community gathering space, volunteer opportunities to work in a café, refurbish and repair bikes, prepare and display furniture and housewares. Come by and support these community initiatives!



Fresh Ground Café | 256 King St. East

Fresh Ground Café prepares fresh food daily, featuring a plant-based menu designed to encourage mindful eating and promote an environmentally conscious lifestyle. With recent renovations, our aim was to create a space intended to be an oasis of brightness and calm, with close to 1,000 plants helping us to build an inviting gathering place, a space that will host discussions and explorations of ideas that focus on building a more compassionate and just world. Visit the café Monday to Saturday 8:30am - 3:30pm.



Recycle Cycles Community Bike Shop | 256B King. St. East

Recycle Cycles puts a focus on promoting cycling by making bicycle purchase, maintenance and repair accessible and affordable. Knowledgeable and skillful staff and volunteers can assist members of the public with repairs and tune-ups. The shop also offers affordable used bikes that are available for sale and have been skillfully repaired by staff and volunteers. The bike shop is open Wed: 12:30pm - 6pm, Thurs: 10:30am - 1pm, Fri: 11:30am - 4pm, Sat: 10:30am - 4pm.



Worth A Second Look | 37 Market Lane

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. Volunteers sort and price hundreds of affordable items weekly. The store is open Tuesday to Friday 9am - 5pm, and Saturdays 9am - 3pm.



Serving Others at St. John's Kitchen



St. John's Kitchen has been at the centre of the homelessness crisis since before the pandemic. It is the place where people come when they are unhoused. Every day we feel the full weight of supporting over 400 people where vital services are provided. The daily meal along with public washrooms, showers, laundry, outreach supports, medical and dental care are essential services for those without housing. This year, while construction continues at 97 Victoria N, we have been fully welcomed back to our original home at St. John's Anglican Church.



Making Home for the Unsheltered

Construction progress at the Making Home project continues towards opening in the summer of 2025. We look forward to the completion of 44 units of new affordable and supportive housing. On the main floor will be a large medical clinic area to expand accessible health care with a focus on mental health and addictions. The foundation for the new home for St. John's Kitchen has now been completed. Making Home will be a crucial hub for housing, meals, medical clinic, and community supports in downtown Kitchener.

Funding Support from Infrastructure Canada

On September 19, 2024, a Green and Inclusive Community Buildings grant from Infrastructure Canada was announced by MP Bardish Chagger and MP Mike Morrice. The fund will contribute \$2,244,000 towards the construction costs of the new St. John's Kitchen. This will enhance and continue the work of St. John's Kitchen to be a welcoming space as a daily drop-in, providing shared meals and access to critical resources. Constructed with a mass-timber structure to minimize the building's carbon footprint, the facility will also feature a rooftop solar panel array that will support net-zero carbon emissions. An open-concept community kitchen, courtyard, and public bathrooms will foster a dynamic, creative and welcoming atmosphere, while helping to deliver essential services and supports.

We were pleased to be joined at the announcement by politicians Bardish Chagger MP, Mike Morrice MP, Karen Redman, Chantal Huinink, Jim Erb from Region of Waterloo Council, Stephanie Stretch, Dave Schneider from City of Kitchener Council, along with donors and supporters Savaas and Christine Chamberlain, Craig Beattie, Mike and Kelly Peasgood, Lawrence Bingeman, Laura Galbraith and Simon Guthrie.



Project updates at: 97victoria.theworkingcentre.org



Providing Affordable Housing and Shelter

The Working Centre provides housing to 100+ people at 11 locations. The new 21 units at the **Queen Street Apartments** is now home to 34 residents, including single new Canadian women and their young children. This past year we recreated the **Louisa Street House** into a refugee hosting house. Through the support of generous donors we were also able to purchase a 12 person rooming house, ensuring these rooms stay affordable.



Since 2020, we have been providing 24/7 shelter beds as a direct response to growing homelessness. The 100 beds at the **King Street Shelter** and the 50 Cabins at **Erbs Road Shelter** directly help people without housing options. Both locations include a food servery, washrooms, showers, laundry, primary healthcare, and housing supports.



Developing Supportive Housing at 97 Victoria

Making Home will add 44 units of supportive housing for those who have experienced long-term homelessness. The work will be to build a culture of mental health supports by focusing on overall wellbeing through in-depth mental health and addiction supports while integrating reflection, exercise, focused activities, and daily living skills. 44 people will find a home nestled in a hub of services, part of a continuum of care designed to build stability as the services wrap around the person. Dedicated and person-focused support coordinators will work with each resident to create engagement activities focused on the goals of each person.



The Spirit of Community

The Working Centre thanks our many volunteers, donors, community partners, and staff that continue to come together in the spirit of community to ensure our many projects and initiatives are open, accessible, and successful. Thank You!

In October, we were happy to welcome Ontario Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions Michael Tibollo to The Working Centre for a conversation about the toll of addictions and homelessness. Also joining us were Kitchener Mayor Berry Urbanovic, Councillor Stephanie Stretch, Outreach worker Nikki Britton, and Housing Co-ordinator Katherine Bitzer



In Memoriam

By Joe Mancini

Each year we witness many deaths within the St. John's Kitchen community. Kelly, Zack and Cookie were three men who were long time contributors to the work of community. Their contributions go back 25 years each, as part of the Job Café, a term we use for our part time work force. Job Café has contributed in hundreds of ways to the Kitchener downtown.

Carl (Cookie) Lace

Cookie was known for his volunteer and paid work at St. John's Kitchen, where he spent countless hours over several decades. He was known for his easy-going nature and

positive presence which brought a smile to the faces of those he served with and those he volunteered with. Many will know of Cookie from his place in front of 256 King each Saturday morning starting at 6:30 no matter the weather or the season, asking gently for money, but always with a smile and ready for a friendly chat. Cookie had several cancers, but he wouldn't go to the hospital until he was forced to relent. He passed away quickly. He will be remembered as the best snow shoveller, always arriving early to ensure St. John's Kitchen was ready to open.

Kelly Partridge

Kelly first started on the 43 Queen renovation project back in 1999. He was placed by Developmental Services and all Kelly wanted to do was find a place where he could work

and get paid. He was a consistent and trusted construction worker but he was never able to find the full time work he craved. He liked his freedom and we tried to convince him not to leave home. While working at 43 Queen he would like to go live at the House of Friendship for weeks at a time. Yet over time he became trapped by the toxic drug supply. Our outreach workers cared for Kelly these past 10 years, as he became dependent on the drug culture. St. John's Kitchen was like his home. We were very sad to learn of his death.

Zack Wade

Zack started volunteering while dealing with his homelessness. During this time he managed the showers and laundry as we moved into 97 Victoria. No one could miss how organized and friendly Zack

was, and he ran the back end of the Kitchen seamlessly. He was proud to qualify for one of the new units at SHOW housing in Waterloo around 2008. SHOW became Zack's home and he didn't visit St. John's Kitchen with the same frequency as he did when he was without housing. Instead, as part of the Job Café team, he brought his natural work skills to the Kitchener downtown streets where, for over 10 years, he and his friend Shawn patrolled King Street either with their brooms and cleaning carts keeping the downtown clean or as part of the Discovery Team where they walked through the downtown responding to street issues as they arose. Zack died of health issues but even in his last years he still managed a weekly Job Café gig working with Deb as part of the Discovery Team in downtown Waterloo.

Harden Not Our Hearts

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and to help only those who are "deserving" of help because they are willing to change.

Are shelters a space only for those willing to commit to change? Our experience is that lasting change happens when people feel stable and cared for. Good decisions are seldom made out of desperation. The Working Centre is modelling a form of shelter based on inclusion and acceptance first, and strongly standing in the kinship relationship to invite people to see themselves as part of a community. We keep people company on the journey as they learn to trust and experience acceptance. Living in community has its expectations, within the shelter and within the neighbourhood, and the relationships we build reinforce that people are a part of community – that what they do matters.

We know that many people are estranged from their families. The disruption and breakdown that occurs leaves people outside, the complexities too deep for the family, the way back to family too fraught with shame and choices and wounds. Where are the places that people can find belonging rather than face increasing isolation and dislocation?

Increasingly, the dialogue is that we only want to spend our social supports on people who are

deserving of help, who are willing to change, to fix themselves.

Harden not your heart – this invites us to rethink the things we can see are not working, to trust in the ways of the heart that welcome people back into community as people who are loved and cared for. We recently walked with one of our shelter residents through his death. He didn't want to leave the shelter because he felt the shelter was his family – "I want to die here with people who care for me."

The common critique then is that we are making people feel too welcome because they won't want to leave shelter to find housing. We think we can face that reality, support people into housing, as those realistic housing options are viable and available to people who are facing mental health, addiction, poverty, and deep loneliness. In the meantime, we continue to care for each person.

Fr. Gregory Boyle of Homeboy Industries states: "You stand with the least likely to succeed until success is succeeded by something more valuable: kinship. You stand with the belligerent, the surly, and the badly behaved until bad behavior is recognized for the language it is: the vocabulary of the deeply wounded and of those whose burdens are more than they can bear."

Harden not our hearts.



Books for Sustainable Living

By Joe Mancini

This issue's collection of books point in new directions. The Working Centre is bridging two gaps between a homelessness crisis and climate change. The depth of homelessness was made real by The Working Centre naming over 900 people who are homeless. Each day we see in the news scathing hot temperatures, swaths of forests burning and villages washed away by surging water.

The book section can be divided in two. The first group is about *The Primacy of Love*. We cannot understand and respond to homelessness unless we deeply understand the meaning of love. Ilia Delio, paraphrasing Jesus, "one cannot live on reason alone but on every act of love that flows through the human heart into the heart of the world." When you read Helen Davies' *The Rose Bird*, a loving account of her daughters' fall into a fentanyl addiction on the Kitchener streets, your heart cannot fail but to be moved. Sam Quinone's *The Least of Us*, dissects the opioid epidemic by looking at the culture of pills and drugs, of our wider addictions to things no less dangerous, and he reminds us of how our work culture has broken down. He also points to actions for recovery. In *Tattoos of the Heart*, Fr. Gregory Boyle, describes the essence of the Homeboy community he founded with radical kindness

and compassion as the answer to every question. This of course is the message of *Transition to Common Work*.

The second grouping is a model of thinking called Interdependence that responds to both homelessness and climate change. *The Light Eaters* and *Entangled Life* are two books that change how we think the world works. The viewpoint is from two different perspectives – one from a journalist, the other from a scientist, both looking at the mind boggling biological creativity of plants and fungi, a world of ingenious communication and interconnectivity that us humans barely understand. Both authors implore the reader to develop the same creativity for how we share the world. *All We Can Save* is designed to show the renaissance in the climate movement led by women who model compassion, connection, creativity, and collaboration as the change we need to live. *Come Have Breakfast* reinterprets the Bible by giving equal standing to the whole biological world, as it is integral to our Common Home. Finally *IntraConnected* helps the reader to see our identity as a verb, a dynamic flow of energy in and through the world around us.

Radical kindness and intraconnected wholeness are new emergent ways of thinking that lead us to see, with joy, the complex pathways from which new regenerative practices grow.

BOOKS FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVING

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



The Rose Bird

A Mother's Perspective on Loving and Losing Her Daughter to Fentanyl

Helen Davies

A personal account of what goes on behind closed doors in a family coping with severe mental illness. Told as only a mother can, this is the true story of loving and losing a daughter affected by mental illness and addiction. Although author Helen Davies begins the story with the fentanyl-related death of her twenty-three-year-old daughter Katie on the streets of Kitchener, Ontario, *The Rose Bird* is really a tale about resilience and a family cherishing and supporting a daughter and sister in an impossible situation. By sharing the story of raising Katie through both good times and bad, Helen highlights how mental illness and addictions can affect any family, and the dearth of resources available before a situation hits a crisis point. As Helen watches her spirited, creative, animal-loving daughter slowly get drawn into life on the streets, she shares the frustration and isolation of fighting to save Katie, and the devastation this brings to her and her family.

294 pages | \$27.99 softcover



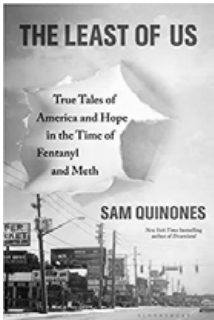
All We Can Save

Truth, Courage, and Solutions for the Climate Crisis

Ayana Elizabeth Johnson & Katharine K. Wilkinson

All We Can Save illuminates the expertise and insights of dozens of diverse women - scientists, journalists, farmers, lawyers, teacher, activists, innovators, wonks, and designers across generations, geographies, and race - who are leading the public conversation on the climate crisis, aiming to advance a more representative, nuanced, and solution-oriented path. These women offer a spectrum of ideas and insights for how we can rapidly, radically reshape society. Intermixing essays with poetry and art and this book is both a balm and a guide for knowing and holding what has been done to the world, while bolstering our resolve never to give up on one another or our collective future.

448 pages | \$27.99 softcover



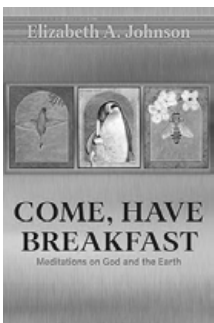
The Least of Us

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



Come Have Breakfast

Meditations on God and the Earth

Elizabeth Johnson

In her latest work, prize-winning theologian Elizabeth Johnson views planet Earth, its beauty and threatened state, through the lens of scripture. Each luminous meditation offers a snapshot of one aspect of the holy mystery who creates, indwells, redeems, vivifies, and sanctifies the whole world. Together, they offer a panoramic view of the living God who loves the earth, accompanies all its creatures in their living and their dying, and moves us to care for our uncommon common home.

256 pages | \$36.90 hardcover



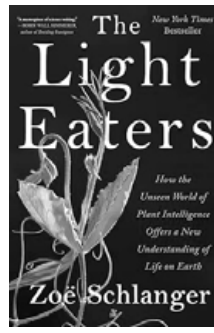
Transition to Common Work

Building Community at The Working Centre

Joe and Stephanie Mancini

The Working Centre in downtown Kitchener, Ontario, is a widely recognized and successful model for community development. Begun from scratch in 1982, it is now a vast network of practical supports for the unemployed, the underemployed, the temporarily employed, and the homeless, populations that collectively constitute up to 30 percent of the labour market both locally and across North America. This essential text is about The Working Centre—its beginnings thirty years ago, the lessons learned, and the myriad ways in which its strategies and innovations can be adapted by those who share its goals.

212 pages | \$20.00 softcover



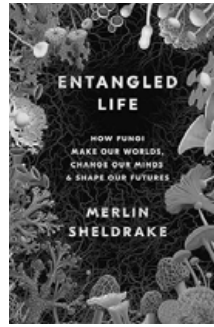
The Light Eaters

How the Unseen World of Plant Intelligence Offers a New Understanding of Life on Earth

Zoë Schlanger

The Light Eaters is a deep immersion into the drama of green life and the complexity of this wild and awe-inspiring world that challenges our very understanding of agency, consciousness, and intelligence. In looking closely, we see that plants, rather than imitate human intelligence, have perhaps formed a parallel system. What is intelligent life if not a vine that grows leaves to blend into the shrub on which it climbs, a flower that shapes its bloom to fit exactly the beak of its pollinator, a pea seedling that can hear water flowing and make its way toward it? Zoë Schlanger takes us across the globe, digging into her own memories and into the soil with the scientists who have spent their days studying these amazing entities up close. What can we learn about life on Earth from the living things that thrive, adapt, consume, and accommodate simultaneously? More importantly, what do we owe these life forms once we come to understand their rich and varied abilities?

304 pages | \$36.99 hardcover



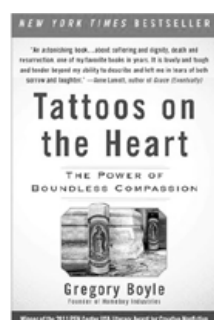
Entangled Life

How Fungi Make Our Worlds, Change Our Minds & Shape Our Futures

Merlin Sheldrake

In this mind-bending book, Sheldrake introduced us to this mysterious but massively diverse kingdom of life. This exquisitely designed volume, abridged from the original, features more than one hundred full-color images that bring the spectacular variety, strangeness, and beauty of fungi to life as never before. Fungi throw our concepts of individuality and even intelligence into question. They are metabolic masters, earth makers, and key players in most of life's processes. They can change our minds, heal our bodies, and even help us remediate environmental disaster. By examining fungi on their own terms, Sheldrake reveals how these extraordinary organisms—and our relationships with them—are changing our understanding of how life works.

368 pages | \$27.00 softcover



Tattoos on the Heart

The Power of Boundless Compassion

Fr. Gregory Boyle

Thirty years ago, Gregory Boyle founded Homeboy Industries, a gang-intervention, rehabilitation, and reentry program in Los Angeles, the gang capital of the world. In *Tattoos on the Heart*, his debut book, he distills his experience working with gang members into a breathtaking series of parables inspired by faith. From giant, tattooed Cesar, fresh out of prison, you learn how to feel worthy of God's love. From ten-year-old Pipi you learn the importance of being known and acknowledged. From Lulu you understand the kind of patience necessary to rescue someone from the dark—as Father Boyle phrases it, we can only shine a flashlight on a light switch in a darkened room. This is a motivating look at how to stay faithful in spite of failure, how to meet the world with a loving heart, and how to conquer shame with boundless, restorative love.

240 pages | \$26.00 softcover



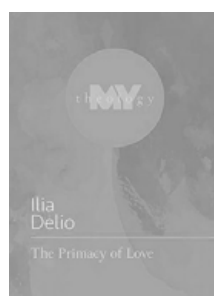
IntraConnected

MWe (Me + We) as the Integration of Self, Identity, and Belonging

Daniel J. Siegel M.D.

Both a personal and general meditation on identity and belonging, Daniel J. Siegel's book combines personal reflections with scientific discussions of how the mind, brain, and our relationships shape who we are. Weaving the internal and external, the subjective and objective, *IntraConnected* reveals how our culture may give us a message of separation as a solo, isolated self, but a wider perspective unveils that who we are may be something more—broader than the brain, bigger even than the body—and fundamental to social systems and the natural world.

320 pages | \$35.99 hardcover



The Primacy of Love

Ilija Delio

In an age of anxiety where reason is deified, what is the role of love? This short book centralizes love as the core reality of all cosmic life. From the cosmological to the theological dimensions of existence, love is shown to be the irresistible force of attraction that leads straight into the heart of God. The book is divided into three short chapters based on a metaphysics of love: we are born out of divine love, we exist in love, and we are oriented toward the fullness of love. In a world of evolutionary convergence and global consciousness, love may be the singular ethic that binds us together, heals our wounds and draws us into a new unity of planetary life.

96 pages | \$12.75 softcover



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A Year of Movement and Renewal



5000+ job seekers supported annually



1400+ people assisted at our free income tax clinic to receive \$9.4M in financial benefits



200,000 meals prepared and distributed in 2024



960 people supported by our SOS (Specialized Outreach Services) Team



100+ people living in affordable housing



378 individuals used the shelter service this year



400+ people daily supported at St. John's Kitchen

Dear Friends,

This past year has been a year of movement and renewal.

The structural steel beams creating a third floor for the 44 new housing units at 97 Victoria symbolizes the energy throughout The Working Centre, directed towards building and shifting spaces that make a difference in people's lives.

The Working Centre is now offering **150 beds** as 24/7 emergency shelter. This has come together through an effort of sheer will to support those who do not have a home, who are left to fend for themselves on the streets.

King Street Shelter provides 100 beds in a congregate shelter with three sleeping areas, a central community gathering area and a 24 hour servery. 268 different people used the shelter last year. During the year we prioritized women without shelter and presently the shelter has 60 women and 40 men.

Erbs Road Shelter is a new kind of shelter with 50 cabins. Last year 110 different people stayed at the shelter with 19 people securing supportive or private housing. Each month residents are supported with over 1500 supports towards stabilizing and gaining housing.

St. John's Kitchen has been located at St. John's Anglican Church at Duke and Water since November 2023 while the Making Home building project progresses. The Kitchen is a primary place providing access to meals, showers, laundry, public washrooms, outreach and medical supports. St. John's Kitchen sees 400 people per day. We estimate that there are 2,000+ different people who are unhoused or precariously housed who use St. John's Kitchen. The reality of addictions, mental health, poverty and homelessness is starkly present each day. Over the last 18 months, we have seen 80 people connected to the St. John's Kitchen community who have died.

Over the pandemic, we built a **commissary kitchen** on Queen Street which each day produces over 700 meals that are served at St. John's Kitchen and the shelters.

Outreach supports for those facing homelessness are crucial. Our outreach teams work closely with over 600 people living precariously. We can name over 300 people living outside or couch surfing. Everyday our outreach workers are supporting people in encampments, motels and precarious living situations, helping with access to housing, medical, mental health, addiction supports, and legal issues. **Specialized Outreach Services**, our concurrent mental health and addictions team, supports 960 people.

Adding housing is an integral part of our work. Last year we completed the **Queen Street Apartments**, creating 21 loft units for new Canadian single parents. The **Water Street Hospitality House** provides support to those acutely ill and homeless. Through generous donors we were able to purchase a 12 person **rooming house** that has already provided rooms for our community. The **Louisa House** is providing needed transitional rooms for refugees.

The **Job Search Resource Centre** at 58 Queen Street South has been serving those looking for work for 39 years. This fall we revitalized the resource centre changing its look substantially for the first time in 25 years. This was necessary to adjust to its growing use. Last year, 5,000 different people were supported, with 40-50 new people a day, many urgently seeking enough income to pay for high housing rents.

Your donations help us support people with creative projects that respond to growing poverty and housing instability. Supporters of The Working Centre have proven, year after year, that community donations are vital to respond to local issues. We are grateful for your ongoing support in building our community of support.

Sincerely,

Joe Mancini,

Director

P.S. We share our quarterly newspaper Good Work News with our contributors. Learn more about our community-based initiatives by visiting our website at www.theworkingcentre.org

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