

Thirty-First Year

Issue 126

September 2016

Good Work News

Good Work News was first produced in September 1984. It is published four times a year by The Working Centre and St. John's Kitchen as a forum of opinions and ideas on work and unemployment. Four issues of Good Work News constitutes our annual report. There is a circulation of 12,000 copies. Subscription: a donation towards our work.

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Summer Institute Update

By Heather Montgomery

This summer we hosted our first ever Summer Institute on running a value-based organization; a response to the many ongoing requests that TWC receives from people who want to understand the practices and organizational structures that make our model of community development and sustainability so effective. People came to learn how they might integrate these practices and philosophies into their own organizations and community engagement projects.

So, what happens when you put entrepreneurs, funders, social planners, community builders, and youth workers from communities ranging from Thunder Bay, Sudbury, St. Thomas, Burlington,

and Waterloo Region in a room to explore these ideas? A wonderful coming together and sharing of ideas between people working hard to maintain real relationships in a world governed by systems!

We explored how to buffer bureaucracy for the people we serve, while also maintaining positive relationships and meeting evaluation requirements of funders. We explored models of sustainability that incorporate diverse and innovative funding models, including community enterprise. And, we supported each others' journey towards a personalist approach to community work. All in all, a very successful first year. We look forward to continuing this important dialogue about putting people first in community work.

A2U Off to a Good Start

By Maru De Luna Villalon

Wilfrid Laurier University has received nearly \$400,000 from the Lyle S. Hallman Foundation of Waterloo Region to fund an innovative program that will help 30 non-traditional students begin their studies at the university. The program is offered in collaboration with The Working Centre, an independent and inclusive social service agency in downtown Kitchener.

Through the Laurier Access to University (A2U) program, Laurier's Faculty of Arts in partnership with The Working Centre will assist non-traditional learners—new Canadians, Indigenous people, those dealing with disabilities, older unemployed workers—who wish to pursue higher education but who face different challenges from students enrolling directly out of high school.

This summer over 40 applications were received and 18 participants

were selected to begin their journey to begin studying at WLU. In the first few weeks participants have expressed the goals of finding direction, gaining success, developing a sense of achievement/completion, the ability to work on essays, and gain knowledge and Canadian education.

The group also recognized the challenges they face such as balancing family, work and studying, language, writing essays, group work, computer skills, self doubt, finances, and university expectations.

As a group they recognized that they could face these challenges by being positive, asking questions for help, taking computer courses at TWC and learning to work at their own pace.

It has been a good experience watching the high level of participation with everyone having the chance to share their ideas, their concerns, their doubts, and learning from their peers.

Are You Between the Ages of 19 and 29 and Out of School?



Youth Entrepreneurship Project

- Develop your business idea
- Work part-time while starting your business
- Connect with Mentors and Micro-Loan Opportunities
- Build Entrepreneurial Skills

To see if this program is for you, contact:

T. 519-743-1151 x139

email: yep@theworkingcentre.org

website: www.theworkingcentre.org/yep



Ready.Set.Work.

27th Golf Tournament

By Dave Thomas

Rain late in the day didn't stop the fun at our 27th Annual Golf Tournament, which raised over \$15,000 to support The Working Centre and St. John's Kitchen.

The day started out sunny for the 120 golfers for the event, held at Rockway Golf Course. This year we had a special lunch provided by Mother's Pizza who generously provided pizza for the golfers before they started on the golf course. The golfing was cut a bit short when the rain started. Everyone gathered in the clubhouse for refreshments, dinner and socializing.

Awards were presented for men's and women's longest drives, the putting contest and a closest-to-

the-pin contest. The top foursome was Glen Westaby, Dave Reston Gary Nash and Guy Rathbone. Janis Turenne, Kim Carter and Dianne Halstead were the top women's group; and the top mixed team was made up Greg Tomori, Melanie Kacic, Cynthia Matheson and Jeremy Sands. No one was successful in either of two possibilities for a \$10,000 hole in one.

The tournament's organizing committee - Dayle Steadman, Shaun Rouse, Bill McLachlan and Jim Woods from Unifor - helped make the day successful. Unifor and Lear Corporation were, as in years past, the main event sponsors, and MTD Products returned as a patron sponsor. There were also 19 hole and prize sponsors.



Graduation of the 8th Local Democracy Class

Wed November 16th

7:00 pm

Queen Street Commons Café

This year, Renison University College's Humanities 101, a non-credit course aimed at providing access to a university-level course for non-traditional students, will hold their graduation in conjunction with the Local Democracy graduation. Everyone is welcome to learn more about the Diploma in Local Democracy and Humanities 101.

Next Diploma in Local Democracy Class begins
Wednesday January 4th 2017 7:00pm

For more information: localdemocracy@theworkingcentre.org
or call Isaiah at 519-743-1151 x 175



The Working Centre's Volunteer Barbeque Dinner

The Spirit of Volunteers

By Joe Mancini

Volunteers are at the core of all the good work accomplished by Working Centre projects each day. We count over 500 volunteers that contribute their skills and abilities to the work of building community. When we have our big yearly gathering of volunteers, it seems as if the energy and commitment of all the volunteers magically coalesces together.

This is largely because of the deep recognition that is interwoven through the work. This big crew of worker volunteers know that together, they provide the sustenance and glue that makes our community possible.

It is easy to rhyme off the stats of all this work – 300 daily meals served at St. John's Kitchen, 2,500 items recycled each week at Worth A Second Look, 6,000 bicycles repaired at Recycle Cycles, hundreds of computers repaired at Computer Recycling, over 17,000 units of produce grown and sold at the Hacienda Sarria Market Garden and the GROW Greenhouse to name some of the projects contributed to by volunteers.

In their own way, this group contributes to the vibrancy of Kitchener-Waterloo by providing important affordable and accessible services that make our community better. The spirit of the volunteer BBQ, just like the projects that the volunteers contribute to, demonstrates the social bonds of community when people work together.



Under the direction of Dana Jones, 2 co-op high school classes from St. Benedict and Monsignor Doyle worked on drywalling at 256 King and built a shade structure at the Hacienda Sarria Market Garden.



This year many groups and individuals generously contributed to our Affordable Housing Campaign. In the pictures to the right, Heather McLachlin and Terry Reidel present Susan Hallman and Jim Erb co-chairs with a \$100,000 donation from the Cowan Foundation, the charitable arm of the Cowan Insurance Group and Marko Savic, co-founder and CEO of Funnel Cake Marketing presents a cheque for \$15,000, representing proceeds from the Marketing Leap Conference.



KWCF Vital Grant: Community Engagement in Downtown Kitchener

The Working Centre's Vital Grant from the Kitchener Waterloo Community Foundation has been focused on community engagement in downtown Kitchener. Our goal is to expand the circle of belonging by reinforcing opportunities for reaching out to ensure the downtown is a place of generosity and kindness.

Our Vital Grant has three parts to it – building community engagement and conversation, supporting people in the downtown core, and creating work opportunities in the downtown that includes street sweeping, window washing, construction, and moving services. We have used the Vital Grant to promote belonging by connecting the work of St. John's Kitchen with downtown people, organizations and businesses. We have seen the dialogue grow as more people describe the downtown as a welcoming place full of diversity and inclusiveness.

Here are some examples:

Marko Savic, co-founder and CEO of Funnel Cake, a marketing startup

"Most of our employees live downtown and we walk to work everyday. We've seen how downtown is changing very quickly and we want to make sure that it remains a place that's inclusive for everybody. The things The Working Centre is doing, especially the supportive housing project, make sure that there is a place for everybody to live or work downtown. It's helping people who definitely need the most help and who are most affected by gentrification."

Joseph Fung, NetSuite, Vice President of HCM Products

NetSuite regularly collaborates with The Working Centre on a number of different programs, including partnering to launch the Slower Cooking, Faster Meals initiative.

"So when we think about how

Our Vital Grant has three parts to it – building community engagement and conversation, supporting people in the downtown core, and creating work opportunities in the downtown that includes street sweeping, window washing, construction, and moving services.

the tech companies are recharging and changing the face of downtown Kitchener, this is one of the few opportunities we get to actually help have a direct impact on some of the negative side effects of the changes. And it is a great way for us to make a very material, real contribution to the lives of some people who may not normally walk through our doors."

Angela Lowther, Extend-A-Family Waterloo Region, Working Adults Learning Empowering Skills (WALES)

WALES partners with The Working Centre to enhance the opportunities for people with disabilities to access employment services.

"Like any other partners there are different strengths that come from different parties. Our goal is to use these strengths in tandem to provide employment services to everyone in our community, and that includes people with developmental disabilities."

Randall Howard, Verdexus

"For Judy and I, The Working Centre's Affordable Housing campaign was immediately compelling for us to support. Firstly, we already knew The Working Centre team to be first rate with a track record of innovation coupled with successful delivery. Secondly, the integrated housing approach

clearly would have a tangible impact on homelessness in downtown Kitchener. Because the Tech community is centred in downtown Kitchener, we saw a clear chance to engage this innovative sector with some local Social Innovation. Already, the Tech community is becoming more involved in these important issues and conversations – as downtown Kitchener changes, how do we also make sure that we keep in mind people who are not part of this tech boom. A number of tech companies make significant donations to local efforts, but we were trying to think about how to invite the newer and younger tech leaders into supporting community efforts. By leveraging our community contribution, we wanted to extend the conversation to include more of the Tech community. Thus came our challenge to the local tech community to raise \$50,000 to help displace the harsher realities that come along with the success of a growing city. By matching tech sector donations we were able to extend the impact of our donation and expand the community conversation about homelessness."

Beth Weisberg, Job Developer at The Working Centre

"Job carving – a creative approach to job creation – is a natural fit for the Region's innovative tech companies. Take NetSuite, for example. What started as an employee's idea to provide healthy breakfasts

for co-workers developed into a permanent position for a Breakfast Bar Attendant. The role took form starting with the employee coming up with an idea (healthy in-house breakfast) that grew into a need (someone who could stock, clean and put away breakfast bar items) that then shaped around the skills and personalities of a couple of job-seekers. Our Employment Support Facilitator was key in moving the position into the best possible fit for the new employees. She analyzed the work as each person did it and developing checklists for each to follow to help them maximize their competency and confidence."

Nathan Stretch, Integrated Supportive Housing

"The addition of new supported and affordable housing in Kitchener has contributed to a shift in relationship amongst people, businesses and services who utilize the downtown core. The complex work of preparing "home" for people who live on a constrained income – many of whom have lived on or close to the street for many years – is surprising and humbling work requiring insight, balance and a keen sense of our shared humanity. Interagency collaboration is key – outreach and housing workers from multiple organizations have been working in an agile, responsive manner to meet the complex

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Supportive Housing at The Working Centre

By Monica Vorderhuber

In 1995 The Working Centre started developing housing initiatives in the buildings they were renovating. By providing supportive housing, The Working Centre recognized the difficulties people face making ends meet while dealing with unemployment, precarious work or social assistance which only pays a small portion of the actual costs of maintaining housing.

Individuals on Ontario Works are able to receive something over \$560/month assistance while those on ODSP receive \$950/month. In the regular housing market individuals face average rents of \$725/month for a one-bedroom apartment. Couples and small families have to pay \$850/month for a two-bedroom apartment. The gap between what people receive and the average costs of housing, coupled with the fact that nearly 19,000 people in Waterloo Region are on social assistance, goes a long way in illustrating the realities people face. It was within this wider context that citizens in our community first brought up the idea of Transitional Housing to the Working Centre.

The first project was making the 2 units above 58 Queen rentable.

They had been vacant and when The Working Centre purchased the building, they were fixed up and quickly rented. In 1998 with the purchase of 43 Queen St. South, it was decided that the third floor which had been empty for over 20 years, would become apartments. Repairing the original structure of this building seemed like a never ending project as serious renovations were required to meet the building code. On the third floor 2 apartments with 6 bedrooms were built with new insulation, plumbing, electrical and utilities and a new roof. The Working Centre also created a balcony off one of the apartments which beautified the space and added new windows to meet the building code requirements.

In 2004 the Working Centre purchased 66 Queen St South. The second floor of this building was renovated to provide additional housing for about ten people. The construction crew created five mixed units, including two-bedroom units that could be shared by single people or by a family. People living at 66 Queen Street have easy access to a whole variety of supports located within the Working Centre.

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Ted Gibbons an employment counsellor at The Working Centre who is an accomplished Jazz musician, and his friend Dan Corrigan, playing the double bass, provided great entertainment at the 2016 Volunteer Dinner.

Supportive Housing

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The supports include employment counselling for those entering the labour market alongside access to technology projects in the forms of computer training courses, public access computers and computer recycling. Those who like to cook, or want to learn, are invited to work alongside others at Maurita's Kitchen in preparing meals for the Queen St Commons Café. The variety of interesting and useful tools projects and practical supports makes living here a very rich experience.

Through the experience of offering supportive housing starting in the mid-1990s the Working Centre has learned and continues to learn how best to support people and what makes such housing units successful.

As the projects grew in success, The Working Centre added to their supports through more housing units. One of these was a five-bedroom house that was given to the Working Centre to be used as transitional housing for women.

In Waterloo Region these units developed into a popular response for people who struggle with their everyday housing. As the program grew and developed more people had access to the spacious living quarters which can aptly be called 'home.'

The Working Centre created flexible supportive housing for people by choosing to be open to those living in such precarious situations. The situations people were coming from were varied: some had problems with landlords, others experienced terrible fires and others had challenging medical needs. No matter what the challenges people were facing The Working Centre worked hard to help people find places in which they could feel at home.

Another person who taught The Working Centre about the lack of affordable housing was Geeta Vaidyanathan. She began by listening to people's concern about the lack of affordable housing in our community. After talking to people, she created a plan with a hope that her two goals of appropriate housing for individuals who need supportive Housing and "development of

The Working Centre created flexible supportive for people by choosing to be open to those living in such precarious situations.

sustainable settlements in a world in a process of urbanization" would become successful. The Working Centre's housing model also borrowed from Jane Jacobs' book *The Nature of Economies*. In this book Jacobs' suggests that development happens when people begin with individual creative initiatives and where commercial and non-commercial organizations can cooperate to help form a creative, diverse and sustainable economy.

For those living in Transitional Housing finding a place to live after their stay can be frustrating and difficult. Rental agreements with landlords can vary greatly and to wade through such a changing landscape can induce significant stress. The discussion between landlords and tenants is a delicate dance as both parties seek to come to an agreement that meets both their needs. The Working Centre can offer landlords and tenants mediation help, technical support and work with volunteers to help with practical needs.

The recent addition of 20 new units, especially those focused on the persistently homeless along with new units for refugees has helped The Working Centre develop further its supportive housing work. The ideal, although sometimes difficult to realize, is that a physical place to live can become a home surrounded by a supportive community. The Working Centre has been fortunate to have purchased space that could be re-designed to accommodate the creation of new housing units that can manifest this spirit. What began simply as listening to people who experienced housing difficulties has grown to encompass a variety of housing units which form an integral part of the life of The Working Centre today – and an integral part of our wider community.

Monica Vorderhuber is an aspiring writer. She has been volunteering this summer at the Hacienda Sarria Market Garden.



The Working Centre's Job Café

The Working Centre's Job Café connects people to community members looking for short-term workers. People earn additional income and contribute to the community in a variety of ways:

- Moving • Landscaping
- Property maintenance • Snow shoveling
- Window washing • General labour

Job Café selects workers to match the job requirement; the project is a great example of what can happen when the community comes together to meet the mutual needs of us all through respect and productivity in trust-building work environments regardless of our background or the place we call home.

"The Downtown BIA has called on the Job Café many times over the years.

Whether it's smaller jobs like pick-ups and deliveries to large furniture moves, we have always received great service from their workers. Most recently the Job Café has introduced Window Washing and we are pleased with the results. This initiative benefits many and the BIA is a proud partner in supporting the efforts made by both staff and workers of the Job Café." **Christine Michaud, Kitchener Downtown BIA**

"With the exception of a couple of days, I have had a Job Café worker assigned to help me with renovations daily for the past ten weeks... he is skilled, totally reliable, punctual... who seems to do eight hours work in three hours... My Helper has given me insights into the courage, dignity and skill it takes to live a lifestyle of street involvement." **Irene O'Toole, Home Owner**

Visit our website at www.theworkingcentre.org/jobcafe

By phone at (519) 743-1151 x 168

By email at jobcafe@theworkingcentre.org

Vital Grant

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and changing needs of people transitioning to stable housing. We have worked together in new ways that highlight our shared support for the people in our common spaces.

It is exciting to see people move into their apartments – it was never a "given" that they would. Our new tenants are familiar faces: many made choices to live outside rather than live in predatory, unsustainable, or unfit housing. When this group moved inside they – in many cases – took it as an opportunity to re-endorse Kitchener, and to begin the nuanced work of redefining their relationship with the downtown core."

Steve Currie, Communitech

"As a member-based organization representing more than 1,000 tech related companies, many of whom call Downtown Kitchener home and as an organization headquartered in Downtown Kitchener, Communitech is committed to supporting initiatives that provide for a healthy, vibrant, inclusive community. We recognize the importance of providing a supportive environment for people of all backgrounds to work, live and play taking into account their wide variety of needs."

Tax Shelters

I was on King Street

*I saw my friends
under sleeping bags
in a vestibule
of a local tax filing
establishment
tax shelter?
--no shelter!*

By Tom Friesen

Order of Canada

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of praise and blame, love and anger, fear and hope. Let's build together a new Canada based on a common journey of respect.

The Order of Canada is a call to the ideals of the best of what the nation's leadership provides. The community of The Working Centre offers a new vision of a nation, eagerly engaged, and joyfully struggling with the full potential of humanity.

The Order of Canada - a great honour and an opportunity to share the vision.

Margaret Nally has been part of The Working Centre since the idea took root around her kitchen table in the spring of 1982.



Employment Project for Refugees

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profit group locally who offer peer based welcome and problem-solving supports for Arabic speaking people. ShamRose has done a good job making people feel welcome; since January they have registered 749 newcomers, which includes 493 Government Assisted Refugees (with the rest being privately sponsored). They have built a place of trust and welcome – a great refuge after people have travelled so far and experienced so much turmoil.

Working Centre has also received a Job Creation Partnership Project, to hire 4 Arabic/English speaking Transition Assistants (TA's). This is a community resource – these TA's go out to the community to support the newcomers as they meet with service providers, helping those with very low English levels to meet and discuss options and resources. The TA's have supported over 800 appointments and information sessions – offering translation and cultural understanding.

We have also been offering Job Searching in Canada information sessions, in collaboration with our local employment providers. We have met one-on-one with about

Justin Trudeau's Speech to the UN

In Canada, we see diversity as a source of strength, not weakness. Our country is strong not in spite of our differences, but because of them.

To that end, in recent months, Canadians have opened their arms and their hearts to families fleeing the ongoing conflict in Syria. And from the moment they arrived, those 31,000 refugees were welcomed—not as burdens, but as neighbours and friends. As new Canadians.

That effort brought Canadians together. In an almost unprecedented fashion, the government worked with the business community, engaged citizens and civil society to help the newcomers adapt to their new country.

.... We're determined to build an economy that works for everyone—not just the wealthiest 1%—so that every person benefits from economic growth.

... Every single day, we need to choose hope over fear, and diversity over division.

... Listen, Canada is a modest country. We know we can't solve these problems alone.

We know we need to do this all together.

We know it will be hard work.

But we're Canadian. And we're here to help.

We are inviting local employers to help us to create Canadian work experience for this group, welcoming one (or ten) workers at a time into their workplace.

Create a job, adapt a job, or customize a job to help workers to learn on the job while they earn income to support their family.

100 people who are searching for work. We have offered youth job search workshops over the summer, and continue to support adults and youth who are looking for work.

Challenge of Finding Employment

Our new neighbours face many challenges; many of them have work experience as general labourers, often with a Grade 12 education or less, and have very low English language levels. Though English learning is a high priority, this is a group who will best learn English through an applied work setting instead of the classroom environment. When general labouring jobs are declining, how do we make room for this group?

For these new Canadians, work is not just putting food on the table and feeding one's family. Many in this group are in their 40's, just building their life before it was torn apart by war. Work is an expression of dignity, honour, and self-fulfillment. Self-esteem is closely tied to one's ability to contribute and be useful in community. This group has spent an extended period of time waiting, journeying, and now they have found a new homeland. There is an eagerness to begin this new life, trying to learn this new language in spite of the fog that comes with grief, trauma and change that is not chosen.

Employers are increasingly being challenged to respond to the health and safety needs of their workforce – legislation around these issues continues to tighten and be more defined. And we don't want to see vulnerable workers injured on unsafe worksites. Is there a way to channel the good will of local, responsible employers who would be willing to hire Arabic speaking newcomers, while also supporting the workplace safety and integration needs of the workers?

At The Working Centre we have been grappling with these questions, balancing opportunity with responsibility, creatively thinking of ways to do things differently – practically responding to the challenges around us. We have patiently hammered out a strategy that we can think

can work, but which will involve extensive community good will to succeed.

Work Placements

We are inviting local employers to help us to create Canadian work experience for this group, welcoming one (or ten) workers at a time into their workplace. Create a job, adapt a job, or customize a job to help workers to learn on the job while they earn income to support their family. These work placements can be for 4-6 months or longer – helping to offer a first Canadian work experience in a supportive environment.

We are building a strategy to support employers who are willing to step up to this challenge. We hope to provide Arabic/English supports to:

- Provide pre-employment workshops and workplace tours that help train workers in employment standards and workplace safety issues, including safe food handling.
- Strengthen workplace language skills.
- Offer assistance with interviews for employers to meet with Arabic speaking newcomers.
- Accompany the person to the first day (or two) of work to help build awareness of workplace tasks and workplace safety issues.
- Offer a 24/7 phone line to offer communication assistance when day-to-day workplace communication is challenging.
- Meet regularly with employers/employees to help strengthen and improve the workplace relationship as required.
- Provide a job coaching role – help to review and understand the employee's role, build the workplace language vocabulary that will strengthen communication, encourage a workplace mentor who will support this new employee, support and problem-solve issues with the new employee as they build understanding of Canadian workplace expectations.

Are you an employer willing to talk further about how to provide work for one or more Arabic speaking newcomers? We are interested in talking more about what is possible, what might work, as we respond creatively to this next stage of welcome for refugees in our community.

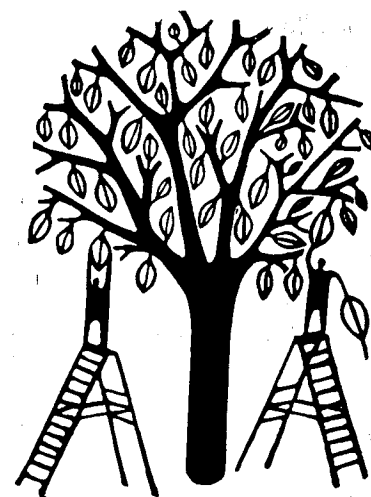
We look forward to hearing your ideas. We have some hiring incentives that can be leveraged in some situations. We are mostly interested in hearing about creative ideas that welcome this group into full community through work opportunities.

For more information please contact:

davet@theworkingcentre.org

employers@theworkingcentre.org

519-743-1151 x289



The Cultivation Project

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because of the complexities of their life situation. Inevitably conflicts arise and miscommunications happen. But in most cases where authentic relationships were properly nurtured, we were able to resolve the tensions. After the resolution of one difficult encounter, a volunteer summarized the situation well, "this is how community happens." Our approach required committing and investing in each person without expectation of reciprocity. Building a community of belonging in this way puts the person in the centre. We are far from perfect, but we were privileged to be a place where people felt they were welcomed, where they were invited to share experiences, and where we desired to have authentic interactions.

In addition to personal connections, we worked hard to teach effective gardening principles and skills. This season garden staff and interns built a Market Gardening Certificate Program that introduced essential practices through weekly workshops. Staff and interns facilitated the training after attending a course of their own on the importance of diverse teaching/learning styles.

With the first year of workshops under our belt, we are confident that other community members will be attracted to the certificate program as a way to enhance their own home gardening, improve their wellness, learn transferrable job skills, or even start a career in market gardening.

In the meantime, we are working on ways to incorporate what we learned from our workshops into our daily encounters in the field.

If you would like to watch a video of The Cultivation Project follow this link to The Working Centre website at theworkingcentre.org/cultivation-project-film.



The Cultivation Project

How Urban Agriculture projects can offer supportive volunteer and employment training options

By David Schumaker

Over the last year, The Cultivation Project (TCP) operated within the Hacienda Sarria Market Garden (HSMG) and GROW Greenhouse to strengthen volunteer involvement. In particular, our goal was to reach out to people who face challenges to volunteering and employment. This is no small task. Garden staff and interns wear many hats. They are at once farmers, entrepreneurs, customer liaisons, problem-solvers, foodies, couriers,



teachers and community builders. As a result, we are often limited by time, personnel and structure. This year's project gave us the resources to expand all three.

Three Strategies

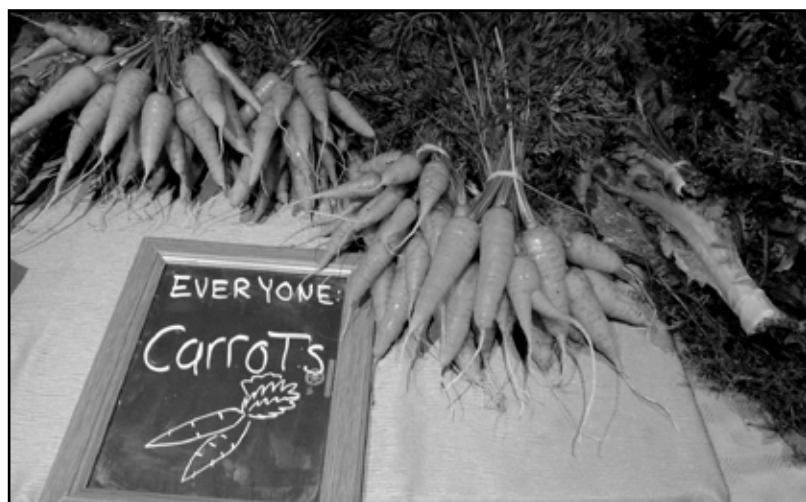
When we started, we had two main strategies for The Cultivation Project. First, we wanted to deepen our relationships with current volunteers, many of whom work with us season after season. We benefit tremendously from their presence, and we wanted to know how they benefitted from their experience in the garden. In this group, we wanted to expand our partnerships with people with disabilities, especially those connected with Extend-a-Family (EAF) and WALES. In addition, we were thankful for our ongoing relationship with House of Friendship programs and with a diverse array of community organizations that support those living with physical or mental health challenges. Second, we worked with the Community Mental Health Association of Waterloo Wellington (CMHA) to build connections with people supported through CMHA and Drug Treatment Court (DTC).

Initial connections with CMHA and DTC were positive, and we see tremendous potential for the future. We realize, though, that



we need more time for this kind of partnership to be incorporated into what CMHA and DTC are already doing.

We saw the most progress with our current TWC contacts and connections with EAF and WALES. Over the course of the year, we hosted more than thirty TCP volunteers who worked with us for varying amounts of time. Of those connected with our project, 95% face significant challenges to either volunteering or employment, and 77% have professional supports. For all volunteers, we listened closely to their reasons for joining us. Many were looking for welcoming spaces to engage in the community. Others recognized the health benefits of gardening, and so joined us to enhance their wellness. Some saw their time in the garden as a great



way to learn transferrable job skills, while other appreciated the chance to learn to garden formally through our Market Gardening Certificate Program or informally through day-to-day experience.

Growth

Over the year, we enjoyed seeing growth not only in our plants but also in our volunteers. Through ongoing conversations, weekly observations, interviews and a survey, we noticed how gardeners developed confidence and increased their skills. For those with a goal

The positive nature of the encounters fostered trust and a mutuality that drew in people who are vulnerable or are often left out because of the complexities of their life situation.

of community engagement, 83% demonstrated improvement. One volunteer was quite honest that she needed a reason to get out of bed in the morning. Building relationships at the garden and taking on responsibilities helps her reach that goal. More than one person commented on the hospitality of garden staff and interns: "I always feel warmly greeted when I come in." And others noticed the inclusiveness of the space at the garden, "everybody's equal. I appreciate the values of collaboration and community. Everybody has something special to bring to the garden." One way we encouraged engagement was by inviting people to adopt a garden bed. For those who did, we noticed that gardener

knowledge and skills." Another person echoed this sentiment: "I benefit emotionally; I love working outside with the herbs, especially planting. It's very calming."

89 percent of those who wanted to learn job skills showed improvement, and we connected volunteers to TWC counselors to further support them in their employment goals. One project volunteer who has grown tremendously in work habits and attitudes like punctuality, self-confidence and asking for help when necessary noted that being at the greenhouse "has expanded the possibilities of things I can do."

Finally, for those with a goal of completing the Hacienda Sarria Market Gardening Certificate Program, 75% of those who began finished the course and earned their certificate. One participant wrote that he liked the feeling of "being in a team, accomplishing something together."

Relationships

Relationships were a consistent factor in the growth of program volunteers. Garden staff and interns desired to build a welcoming space and worked hard to cultivate both vegetable plots and personal connections. Through relationships we were open to the uniqueness of each person, and met them where they were. Each person was intentionally and personally invited into the activities of a community garden where staff, interns, and volunteers work toward a common purpose. We strive to trust each gardener for the gifts each brings, and valued the contributions offered. The volunteers responded to this personalized invitation to relationship. They did not have to change themselves to belong. Instead, they were welcomed as they were, helping to create a safe space in the gardens. Ideally, volunteers came knowing that they need not earn their place, or prove their worth. Reaching out with this kind of hospitality created a community of belonging. One garden volunteer, for example, saw the other gardeners as his "people."

We invited gardeners to consider their own goals and skills, but prioritized relationships above all. The positive nature of the encounters fostered trust and a mutuality that drew in people who are vulnerable or are often left out

enthusiasm and vegetable yields were higher and weed pressure was lower.

For those with a goal of wellness, 63% demonstrated improvement. One of our long time volunteers deepened her commitment to the garden (increasing from one day a week to two) and was able to articulate how she benefited emotionally from her care of the plants: "I benefit from the garden because it gives me purpose; relaxes and energizes me; gives me peace; practice building relationships; satisfies my need for physicality (hard work); improving gardening



Hacienda Sarria Market Garden

By Adam Kramer and
Rachael Chong

Another wonderful season of working in the gardens! The fields have been looking fantastic and while we keep thinking about the fall and winter to come, we're gathering bountiful harvests of a wide array of fruits, vegetables, and flowers.

In September, we had the pleasure of participating in Foodlink's annual fundraiser "Taste Local, Taste Fresh" at the Steckle Homestead. Each year they pair growers and restaurants, with each pairing tasked to put together a local dish. With 17 different dishes to try, we sure were stuffed by the end! We were partnered with The Berlin, whose chefs made a delicious duck, kale, and onion tart, topped with a blindingly green arugula puree. We especially enjoyed seeing what professional chefs can do with our produce. If you find yourself dining at The Berlin, you may recognize some Hacienda Market Garden produce on the menu!

Chef Jonathan Gushue of The Berlin has been incredibly supportive of our gardening. We've been pleased to hear him praise the quality of what we grow as outstanding. The extra care, attention to soil-building, and the thoughtfulness we put into the planning, growing, and harvesting really does shine through. Our produce may look more or less the same as you'd see at any market, but it's really something special.

As we walk through the fields with an eye towards the future, it is impossible to avoid feeling a great sense of pride and gratitude.



We're expecting to have our best fall yields yet, much of that owing to the amazing team of gardeners who have been putting in the hard work. Mother Nature gets some credit, of course, but the gardens here are a testament to the power of community and a spirit of joy and openness that permeates the space.

We have been lucky enough to have groups come join us in the gardens from United Way, as well as GenNext, which connects young professionals to community organizations. Recently we were joined by students and staff from the Activities Coordination and the BeyondU programs at St. Jerome's University. This time of year we typically see a reduced number of volunteers, so you can help us spread the word that the gardens are open and are as busy as ever until the end of November!



In these first few weeks of fall we've been on a real weeding tear and were able to tidy up areas that had been neglected. Though the work can at times be overwhelming, there is an amazing sense of satisfaction when we're able to pull together and make such a visible improvement to the garden.

In late September, we harvested our entire cipollini onion and shallot crop. Ensuring that they are harvested at the right time is always a bit of a challenge. You've got to wait until the green tops have mostly died back, but not completely. Too far either way and they won't store properly. We are incredibly pleased with how we did this year. Yields were very low the past two seasons, but this year we definitely made up for it! We're estimating around 600lbs were harvested. Some have made it in to our Community Supported Agriculture shares, while others will be squirrelled away to be sold once the snow is flying.

Our fall spinach crop has also done well this year. Though the germination rate was a bit low, the plants that did grow have made up for it! Like we had in the spring, these plants are producing massive tender leaves that we can barely fit into our bags!

As harbingers of autumn, our fall spinach, leeks, celery, onions, and squash have been making their way into kitchens all around Kitchener-Waterloo. The shift is palpable as the frosts knock out hot weather crops like tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, and eggplant. We expect that the harvests will continue to be plentiful until snow arrives!

Finally, with the way things are shaping up for the fall, we are planning to offer limited quantities of an "Extended Season CSA". For more information about our CSA programs, please visit our website and online catalogue.

Each season brings its share of joys and challenges, so as we transition towards fall we're feeling re-energized and excited for what is still to come! Hoping to feed you soon!



Market Gardening Certificate

This season we built a summer-long Market Gardening Certificate Program that introduced interns, staff and volunteers to essential gardening skills through weekly workshops. Staff and interns facilitated the workshops. We plan to continue building on this new learning model to expand this opportunity.

- Seed Starting, Seedling Care and Greenhouse Basics
- Crop Planning



- Bed Preparation, Amendments, and Soil Building
- Tools
- Planting: Seeds, Seeding, Transplanting
- Harvesting and Processing 1: Greens
- Watering and Irrigation
- Weeds 1: Hoe Weeding and Weed Education
- Compost and Compost Tea
- Fruit Trees: Summer Care
- Weeds 2: Maintenance and Prevention
- Harvesting 2: Roots and Fruits
- Insects, Pathogens, and Beneficials
- Cover Crops
- Starting Your Farm: The Economics of Market Gardening
- Limiting Food Waste and Water Waste
- Fruit Trees: Fall Care
- Extending the Season and Winterizing the Garden
- Sustainable Community Food Systems

Local Fresh Winter CSA

Winter CSA Shares Available!

- *Peashoots*
- *Microgreens*
- *Living Greens*

Supplement your greens by adding shares of:

- *A Juicer's Wheatgrass Special*
- *Baked Goods and Wholesome Meals from Maurita's Kitchen*
- *Freshly Roasted Coffee from the Queen Street Commons Café*

Enjoy eating fresh and local greens over the winter months with a Winter Community-Supported-Agriculture share from the Working Centre's GROW Greenhouse.

Pickups run from mid-January until spring.

Visit <https://catalogue.theworkingcentre.org/csa> to order!

For more information: call 519-575-1118.