

GOOD WORK NEWS

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

Issue 132

March 2018

Subscription: a donation towards our work

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St. John's Kitchen in the 1980's



Weaving Hospitality

Arleen Macpherson, Gretchen Jones, Jennifer Mains will tell the story of St. John's Kitchen at 31st Mayors' Dinner

By Joe Mancini

St. John's Kitchen is a place of relationships. From its first meal served on Jan 15 1985, it has been a refuge in downtown Kitchener. In December of 1984, the community was waiting for this new place to open. Anna Kaljas wrote in a letter to the Kitchener Record asking why the fire department was holding up the opening of the Kitchen. Anna stated emphatically in her letter that people needed a place where the community could serve a daily meal for those in need.

32 years later, St. John's Kitchen continues to be a place that serves a free daily meal in downtown Kitchener while fostering a unique kind of belonging.

Grace, dignity, mutuality, and generosity have made St. John's Kitchen a place of meaningful daily exchanges. Creating a place of attachment where the community's effort to produce and serve the daily meal is complimented by relationships that overflow. It is often a place of contradictions. It is not one group over the other but the recognition of the human condition, that we are all broken and that we can help each other.

How did such a place take root? At this year's Mayors' Dinner, Arleen Macpherson, Gretchen Jones and Jennifer Mains will tell the story of St. John's Kitchen, how it has endured as a place of relationships.

These three women have been essential to the St. John's Kitchen

Grace, dignity, mutuality, and generosity have made St. John's Kitchen a place of meaningful daily exchanges. Creating a place of attachment where the community's effort to produce and serve the daily meal is complimented by relationships that overflow.

community over these 30 years.

When Arleen retired in 1999 she used the words belonging, laughter, understanding, gratitude, hospitality, and openness to describe St. John's Kitchen. What she meant by those words was a description of the culture she encountered each day. "Food is an important part of St. John's Kitchen," Arleen wrote, "it is around food that we gather to recognize our common humanity and to establish a sense of belonging."

Arleen weaved hospitality into the fabric of St. John's Kitchen, often writing about the courage, simplicity and generosity that was an everyday occurrence at the Kitchen. Arleen considered St. John's Kitchen to be a "wonderful meeting and gathering place."

The Miracle on Duke and Water by Dave Conzani conveyed the friendship he encountered at St. John's Kitchen. Today we understand that Dave was a survivor of the 60's scoop, taken away from his aboriginal mother when he was only 3 years old. Arleen and Gretchen were important

Practicing Focal Living A Microgreens Story

By Christa Van Daele

This winter our family has tried a microgreen share, offered by The Working Centre for a twelve-week period. It seemed both winter and myself in these unsettled and distracting times were curled up in a quiet, incubating mood. My son Jonathan had unexpectedly given me a start-up kit, seeds, trays, and an LED light to get our family started with microgreens at Christmas. He planted these before my eyes a few days after Christmas in a sunny window bay that he swore was the ideal growing condition; he completed the project by hanging an LED light at just the right height to maximize good growth. At the same time, about two weeks before Christmas, I had ordered the The Working Centre's weekly shares as a surprise Christmas present for my husband.

Now, in the winter of 2018, we have a lush green revolution on hand! Our small family went from a no-microgreen household to one literally bursting with offerings.

Now, in the winter of 2018, we have a lush green revolution on hand! Our small family went from a no-microgreen household to one literally bursting with offerings. You can't come to our house these days without microgreens clustered lavishly on your soup, or mixed into your salad. I've found that I'm making certain spicy soups with the thought in mind of "what would this exact soup taste like with a pile of crunchy green pea shoots on top?" I've never been much of a joyful cook, so these

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Thirty-Third Year

Issue 132

March 2018

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. There is a circulation of 11,000 copies. Subscription: a donation towards our work.

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Dave Berry Doug
Jaworsky Vrbanovic Craig

The Mayors of Waterloo, Kitchener and Cambridge invite you to celebrate the

31th Annual Mayors' Dinner

Telling the story of St. John's Kitchen with Arleen Macpherson, Gretchen Jones and Jennifer Mains

Saturday April 7th, 2018

Marshall Hall, Bingemans, Kitchener

Cocktails and Auction Preview: 5:30 pm

Dinner: 6:45 pm

The Mayors' Dinner is an evening that celebrates outstanding contributions to our community, and serves as an important fundraising event for The Working Centre and St. John's Kitchen.

To purchase tickets and for more details

call (519) 743-1151x119

or mayorsdinner@theworkingcentre.org

You can purchase tickets online at

www.theworkingcentre.org/dinner

❑ Individual Ticket: \$100 (includes one tax receipt for \$55)

❑ Contributor Sponsorship Package: \$250 (includes 2 tickets, recognition in dinner program, and one tax receipt for \$160)

❑ Community Group Package: \$750 (includes 8 tickets and one tax receipt for \$390)



Practicing Focal Living: A Microgreens Story



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are somewhat evolved and concentrated culinary thoughts, for me!

There's an edible, tangible part to this adventure, and also, I have decided, a more contemplative part. I would go as far as to say that in the past few days, my ocean of sprightly microgreens has stirred me to thought, even to a bit of philosophy. For example, on certain wintry days, I have grumbled at the thought of going all the way downtown to pick them up from the Queen Street Commons, even though this location is a reasonable and friendly one. Who wants to go down there in the slush and snow? Went the thinking.

The last few weeks, I've been slowly, and somewhat delicately, revising my perspective. My thoughts changed in steps as tiny as the microgreens themselves. I have hovered attentively over my own grumble-fest and nudged myself to think a little more deeply. A writer and Mennonite pastor named Arthur Boer who I heard lecture locally about his time on the Camino about eight years ago has helped me out considerably. My own thick-of-winter grumbling has evolved into a consideration of Boer's explication of the work of Alfred Borgmann, a social philosopher. Boer, who shares his thoughts about his pilgrimage in an easygoing prose entitled *The Way is Made for Walking*, presents a succinct synopsis of

Borgmann's work on "focal living." You can live in a focussed way, say Boer and Borgmann, without travelling the Camino itself.

Here is Borgmann's thinking on "focal living" as helpfully shared by Arthur Boer. When we live in a focussed way, we can deliberately pick practices, events, and activities that stir in us a concentration and a focus. These activities or concerns have a "commanding presence". They take energy or effort; they make demands on us. They require discipline, attention, or focus. They are beyond our ability to manipulate or to consume. The activities or events or practices may require skills, patience, persistence to pursue. So, the fact that I can travel to a friendly place set apart to pick up the greens, chat with someone who knows exactly where to find them in the Café, and connect in real time with the people who grew them – these conditions make the microgreens at least three notches more delightful to get hold of than a handful of Brussel sprouts, imported from far away, that I bought under the fluorescent lights of the supermarket at the local strip mall.

Since "focal activities" as defined by Borgmann also "connect us with a wider world including people and ecosystems" (he gives examples such as gardening, hiking in the

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Natalie McMaster and Family

On December 19th, at noon before their performance at Centre in the Square, Natalie McMaster and Donnell Leahy brought five of their six children Mary Francis, Michael, Clare, Julia, and Alex to play a special Christmas concert at St. John's Kitchen. The award-winning fiddle virtuosos entertained a full house at St. John's. There was much appreciation for the high quality Celtic Christmas fiddle music and the enthusiastic performances of the children.



Weaving Hospitality

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supports to Dave as he moved past his alcohol addiction. A few years later he wrote poignantly about his experience,

“Later I came to meet the two dearest women I have ever known. I can’t count how many times I sat at my table drunk and cried my heart out to them about grief over my lost son, my inability to quit drinking and the cold stark horrors of my life on skid-row. They sat and heard my pain for hours, and though I reeked of alcohol, and hadn’t bathed for God knows how long, and had only that one filthy change of clothes I was wearing, they gave me a hug of encouragement and never batted an eye of disgust. I know because I looked for it and it wasn’t there.”

Gretchen first started volunteering in 1991 and soon was an integral part of St. John’s Kitchen coordinating the kitchen and volunteers for 26 years. Gretchen has been a big part of the magic that happens each day to ensure the daily meal is served. Her work has been to invite the many from the floor and from the community to work



together. The distinctiveness of the kitchen is its open structure. There is an overriding trust that people working together can take the gift of food and turn it into a meal shared by the community.

Gretchen knows the feel of community. She is often in the middle of it as up to 40 people go about the work of chopping vegetables, keeping the coffee pot filled, washing dishes, scraping pots, cleaning tables, and mopping the floor, all ensuring that community is built through the daily meal.

Jennifer started coordinating St. John’s Kitchen in 1999 and for 19 years has been committed to developing ever-increasing supports for those most disadvantaged. Jennifer questioned right away why there were so few resources at the grassroots for those most marginalized. As Gabor Maté noted, why is it that those who face the greatest challenges face a system that ostracizes, marginalizes,

impoverishes and refuses to provide the means for support to move past addictions.

Overtime new social supports took shape at St. John’s Kitchen that included Downtown Street Outreach, Hospitality House, Psychiatric Outreach and the St. John’s Kitchen medical and dental clinics.

For Jennifer what matters most is creating a place where the work of community is seeking beauty. She described this way of thinking and how it relates to St. John’s Kitchen in a **Good Work News** article in December 2012.

“The framework in which we work is one of understanding the role of beauty in our lives. We do the work because we are seeking beauty in the other, celebrating the spirit in the other and renewing our own.

“We have frequent outreach meetings in which we carefully listen to each other, hoping to gain counsel, support or a broadening of our understanding but at one particular meeting I was struck by the focus of the dialogue. I heard the outreach workers speak with delight and vigour about their work during the past week, naming situations where they saw insight, caring and compassion, the human spirit rising. This is not to say that their week was not also filled with anger, despair and desolation. But the conversation was not about what was pathological, wrong or negative. They spoke of peoples’ desires, their hopes and wishes.

“Instead of goals we prefer the practice of walking with the other, which has the possibility of giving dignity to their experience and allows us to be open to the mystery of the human spirit.”

The Mayors’ Dinner will celebrate the culture that has grown in downtown Kitchener at St. John’s Kitchen. We often remember a quote by our friend Myrta Riveras who used to say, “She would not like to be in a city that did not have a St. John’s Kitchen.” This celebration is recognition that for 32 years our community has created a place of friendship and hospitality open to all with no questions asked.



Celebrating the Off-beat

By Leslie Morgenson

I signed up this year to sing *Messiah* in the Mennonite Mass Choir. And, since I have always sung soprano, that is where I placed myself. But I soon discovered that Handel had something other than my voice in mind when he wrote the soprano line. I simply couldn’t reach some of the notes. Before I quit however, I was encouraged to sit with the altos for one week. To my surprise, not only did I find a home, but I wondered what took me so long to see how the alto line, although challenging, resonated with my whole being.

I often find myself telling visitors to St. John’s Kitchen that over time, I am drawn to stay because of the “off beat” nature of the place. In a world full of insistent social norms, accepted small talk, and mainstream thought, I fancy the perspective from the kitchen. It’s an entirely different angle, as if I’m on a moving staircase at Hogwarts or walking inside a cubist painting. The “kitchen” norm becomes something else altogether, as when learning a new language, not every word is translatable. At times entering St. John’s Kitchen is like learning a new language. And there is an 18% chance that the lexicographers of this new language will be left-handed, double the frequency found in the rest of the population outside of our walls. This is clearly not the melody line.

Although I haven’t asked him,

I’m not certain my choir director would agree with my assessment that the alto line is off beat. I imagine he would remind me that it is called “harmony” and insist that it supports and works with the other voices. Thinking in terms of the offbeat is my own idiosyncrasy that suits me in those times when I can’t find my place in the world... when I recall that I came to St. John’s Kitchen mostly for my own need for healing.

People come to the kitchen, some stay, some go, some return, but many



of the patterns remain. We are a constant stream of cardinals who feel that red is not our best colour.

For years I have been listening to the stories of a very wise man I met at St. John’s Kitchen. His favourite theme is the sad demise of incandescent lighting and the damage we may be doing to our mental and physical health because of the bright lights that essentially eliminate the much needed dark. Many, I suspect, would ignore his ongoing tirade. But whatdayaknow! The November 2008 issue of **National Geographic** has a

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A Feast for the Soul

Editors Note: This article, written by Arleen Macpherson, first appeared in the September 1999 Good Work News as a reflection on her 11 years as coordinator of St. John’s Kitchen. In 2002, Arleen joined The Working Centre Board of Directors. This year she retired from the Board after serving the last five years as President.

By Arleen Macpherson

Thank you to the thousands of people whom I have encountered over the last eleven years at St. John’s Kitchen. My work here has enabled me to meet, to socialize with and to work with more people than I ever could have imagined. A wonderful variety of gifts, talents, personalities, experiences, and treasures has enriched my life beyond measure. I will carry some part of each one in my heart and in my very bones for the rest of my days, for all have become part of me.

Eleven years ago, I entered St. John’s Kitchen, in fear and trepidation, for my first day of work. There were many questions on my mind and a great deal of nervousness.

Here I was in a room crowded with strangers and I had to get to know them all. I was equipped with only a great deal of enthusiasm and many neat, tidy and, ultimately, silly ideas of how things should be organized. But the people became my teachers. I learned over and over again that people, all of us, wherever we are and whatever our socio-economic status, more than anything else, want to be treated with respect and dignity; and that we flourish and blossom when we give and receive love and understanding. I also learned that there is an enormous amount of fun to be had when several people work together to prepare, cook and serve a meal to a large group of fellow human beings. It is not true, as they say, that “too many cooks spoil the broth”! Conversely, they enrich it! And what about the cleaning up afterwards? It is true, as they say, that “many hands make light work.” It is so gratifying at the end of the day to see numerous people pitch in to do the many and assorted tasks needed

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No Shortage of Volunteers for Christmas Day at St. John's Kitchen

By Terry Pender

Jeremy Horne walks through the converted room on the second-floor of an old warehouse that is filled with light, chattering people and the smell of turkey dinners.

It is Christmas Day, just before noon, and Horne is co-ordinating the 40 volunteers who helped feed more than 100 people at the St. John's Kitchen in 97 Victoria St. North.

Horne has done this for 10 years now. "Today has a good spirit to it," said Horne.

For more than 30 years the St. John's Kitchen, which is operated by the Working Centre, has served food to homeless people, those at risk of being homeless, street people and others. About 10 years ago, the Working Centre gave its regular staff Christmas Day off.

That's when Horne stepped up, and started co-ordinating the volunteers who work in the kitchen from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. every Christmas. He is continually amazed at how many people give up their Christmas mornings to help feed people who are less fortunate.

"And I turn people back, I have more people wanting to come and help than we can use," said Horne. "It's incredible."

For years Myrna and Art Bauman have helped serve the annual Christmas dinner in the St. John's Kitchen.

"Usually the turkey is prepared ahead of time for us, and then, there are a lot of donations that come in. Lately we are even getting donations from restaurants, or bakeries and things like that," said Myrna. "There is a lot of food, more than enough food."

They helped serve 200 pounds of turkey, 100 pounds of potatoes, and lots of trimmings. On the way out, people walked past a table full of donated food. They could choose from among several boxes, and take some home.

"Both Art and I have had so much, so you just want to give in return to people who don't have as much," said Myrna.

Among the volunteers Christmas Day was Emmad Kahn, a second-year student at the University of Waterloo studying geological engineering.

"It is awesome, it's great to give back, see everyone happy," said Kahn.

The heavy snow and cold winds yesterday are blamed for the lower-than-normal turnout for the annual dinner. The kitchen prepared to feed 200 people. Between 120 and 150 came out.

"I feel happy about it, it feels nice to give back, especially on Christmas Day," said Kahn.

St. John's Kitchen feeds people year round, something Horne believes is much more impressive than having volunteers come in one day a year. Even if that one day is Christmas Day.

"All we do is come Christmas Day. That's easy. What happens here every day of the week, they are the real stars," said Horne.

"By the time we get here all the turkey has been cut, cooked and deboned and ready to go," said Horne. "So a lot of the work is already done."

This article appeared in the Waterloo Region Record on December 26, 2017. The photo was taken by Record photographer Peter Lee.

Celebrating the Off-beat

cover story titled "Our Vanishing Night." This story could have been written by my friend, but instead was written by Verlyn Klinkenborg, a most offbeat writer who editorializes in the New York Times about the crops and the horses in his field. There sits his column like a sanctuary for the mind while other columnists on the same (but oh so different) page rage about the economy and the U.S. presidential election. I would rather hear thoughts that resonate with my soul.

Such as, when a woman recently came to sit in the office with us as we finished up our day's work. She had just had a fight with her boyfriend and didn't know where she would now spend the night. She made a few phone calls but mostly just sat thinking about her immediate future while we worked. Then her thoughts suddenly spilled with crystal clarity. With amazing insight she spoke of power struggles at every turn, of not wanting to be a pawn in someone else's dream, of institutions that promote women's rights but don't heed their own words, and of the importance of sitting with one's

own pain. We stopped our work and listened since wisdom from the street (with its paradox and its accuracy) is always more interesting than words from those who already have a forum. In fifteen short minutes she spoke to the central dilemmas we face as a culture with more truth than any campaigning politician. There she sat, a solitary cardinal on her own delicate branch, singing her beautiful alto line with a vibrancy she doesn't even know she possesses.

And now, as we approach a holiday season that is also acknowledged at St. John's Kitchen in an atypical, often grudging manner, the song line that probably best suits the mood would be the one played at the funeral of a prominent member of our community this past year. While everyone else is singing Joy to the world, the cardinals of the Kitchen will be singing something more akin to the Rolling Stone's Paint it Black. "I see a red door and I want to paint it black."

Editors Note: This article first appeared in the December 2008 Good Work News as The Cardinal that Sang Alto.



St. John the Evangelist Anglican Church

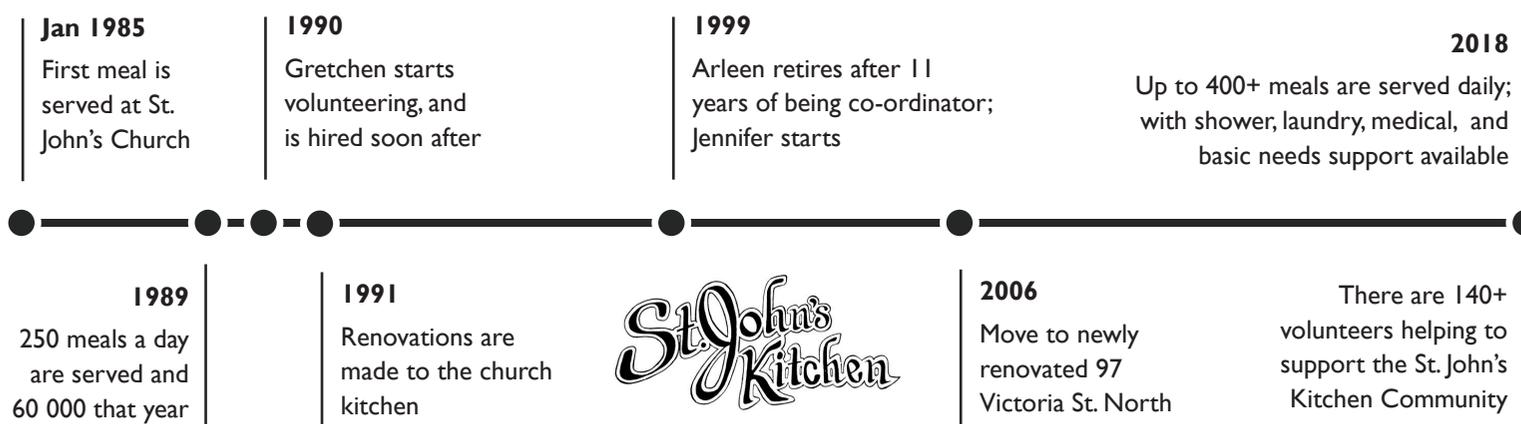
St. John the Evangelist Anglican Church at Duke and Water in downtown Kitchener hosted the location for the Unemployed Help Centre that started in January 1983. In the fall of 1984, St. John's Church was fully behind the plans to establish St. John's Kitchen. Rev Cy Ladd had welcomed this social ministry, describing in Good Work News in

December 1994, "The fact that the Kitchen is in a Church building is a profound statement of Unconditional Love – giving to individuals, not to get something in return, but because each person is equally loved and important."

Many of the photos in this issue come from the 23 years we operated out of St. John's Anglican Church.



A Timeline of Community Support



A Feast for the Soul

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to leave everything in readiness for yet another day. I shall miss all of this activity, and especially each of these remarkable and generous-hearted individuals as I retire from this work and start yet another life. As I reflect on these past eleven years, I find meaning and expression in Jean Vanier's newest book, **Becoming Human**, House of Anansi Press, 1998.

Becoming Human

In 1964 Jean Vanier founded L'Arche, an international network of communities for people with intellectual disabilities. In his book, he shares from his significant experience, a "profoundly human vision for creating a common good that radically changes our communities, our relationships, and ourselves." It was a privilege for me when I recently met and listened to this humble man whose chosen work has not only had such a significant impact all over the world, but whose own heart is so visibly filled with peace and joyfulness as a result. Jean Vanier tells us that:

"Society is the place where we learn to develop our potential and become competent; where we work and receive a salary that allows us to live financially independently. It is the place where each can accomplish his or her mission, to work for justice, to struggle for peace and to serve others.

"Belonging, on the other hand, is the place where we can find a certain emotional security. It is a place where we learn a lot about ourselves, our fears, our blockages, and our violence, as well as our capacity to give life; it is the place where we grow to appreciate others, to live with them, to share and work together, discovering each one's gifts and weaknesses. We receive and give the knocks of life. It is like the polishing of diamonds as they rub together." (pp. 57-58)

It seems quite natural and logical, in a discussion of St. John's Kitchen, to associate with these two concepts of society and belonging. Most people who come to St. John's Kitchen do so because they are

unable to meet the requirements and expectations of society, as we know it. Because they are either unable to work or unable to find steady, paid employment, they are not considered to be successful in a society that measures success in terms of salaries, possessions, social status and power. And so they are marginalized. They live at the fringes of society. As Vanier says:

"Those who are weak have great difficulty finding their place in society. The image of the ideal human as powerful and capable disenfranchises the old, the sick, the less-abled. For me, society must, by definition, be inclusive of the needs and gifts of all its members... I also believe that those we most often exclude from the normal life of society have profound lessons to teach us. When we do include them, they add richly to our lives and add immensely to our world." (p. 45)

Polishing Diamonds

Often I have asked people who come to St. John's Kitchen, "What brought you here?" Their replies vary from "I wanted to learn about another way of life" to "I am depressed and I thought it might help to be doing something" and "Nobody else wanted me." Within a short time of being involved and of "giving and receiving the knocks of life," they felt a sense of belonging, discovered heretofore unknown skills, overcame



In this photo, Arleen (in white) and Jennifer (on Arleen's right) are both serving during the special meal at St. John's Kitchen to mark Arleen's retirement in September 1999.



depression and in some cases were able to find a job.

It is difficult to overcome a life of early and violent abuse, homelessness, alcoholism and imprisonment. But "Jim" has succeeded and is now a very obviously devoted family man living in a stable home.

It would be hard to measure the contribution to this point of "John" who has become the custodial parent of his school-aged son who was struggling with an inability to learn and serious behaviour problems developed during a short lifetime of verbal abuse in a dysfunctional home. "John", whose own early life was chaotic, completed his schooling, studied parenting skills and childhood development, entered a job and set up a home for his son. Three years later, John's son, who is very bright, is thriving in school, is able to relate in a healthy way to others and is a cheerful, friendly

growing boy.

"Hector" came into the kitchen recently to say hello and thanks. He frequented St. John's Kitchen during a period of unemployment about six years ago. Since that time he has been steadily employed in another city and dropped in while on vacation. He has never forgotten us and wanted to make sure that we would continue to remember him. These folks and many, many others are the diamonds who have put sparkle into my world – a world, like Jean Vanier's, of "celebration, presence and laughter".

Thanksgiving

St. John's Kitchen is, in many ways, a very open community. Anyone with an interest or curiosity is welcome to come in any day. Many visitors have come and stayed for lunch. They are warmed and surprised by the openness, hospitality and good cheer of the people. We appreciate their interest.

Volunteers, like our supporters, are the life-blood of St. John's Kitchen. Without their daily help of preparing, cooking and serving foods, cleaning and maintaining the premises, planting, weeding and harvesting our garden, picking up and delivering our goods and looking after our laundry, St. John's could not exist. Some have been here since the beginning days. Others come and go. They come in all ages and from all walks of life and they too participate in the giving and receiving and even in the knocks of life. They truly are diamonds!

Food is an important part of life at St. John's Kitchen. It is around food that we gather to nourish and sustain our bodies. And it is around food that we gather to recognize our common humanity and to establish a sense of belonging. So we thank the Food Bank, the local farmers and gardeners, the churches and the individuals who fill our table so abundantly.

And to my many friends at St. John's Kitchen who contribute so much to the meaning of life, a deep and heartfelt thank you for enabling me in my quest to become fully human. You have brought joy and gratitude to my heart and you have given me beautiful memories!

Thank You!

to the over 1500 donors who contributed to the work of The Working Centre and St. John's Kitchen last year

A special thank you to these groups that made large generous contributions especially to St. John's Kitchen:

The Congregation of the Resurrectionists | Shantz Mennonite | Sisters of St. Joseph Toronto | Sisters of St. Joseph London | Estate of John Berg | Estate of Dorothy Falconer | Estate of A.V. MacDonald

May Court Club of Kitchener-Waterloo have been donating dishware, utensils and pots for St. John's Kitchen for over 15 years. Remember to support the May Court Thrift Store in Belmont Village

Tessa Jennison for organizing Waterloo Region Crossing fundraising walk with Livescape WRX walking 78 Kilometers over one day along the Grand River Trail.

Hilltop Poultry for donating turkeys for Thanksgiving and Christmas Dinners at St. John's Kitchen

Kitchener Downtown BIA for donating the proceeds of their Christmas Tree sales during the Kriskindle Market in December

Jay and Sarah Shah for raising donations for The Working Centre rather than asking for personal gifts for their wedding.

gratitude

Our gratitude to the families for directing memorial donations to The Working Centre and St. John's Kitchen:

Andreas Schwartz | Theron Kramer | Jon Huras | Colin Plant | Joanne Paciocco-Brisland | Linda Bender | Bill Wharnsby | Bruce Milne | John Donald Brown | Wilma Boyle

We are grateful to Dean McIntyre, President of the McIntyre Group for his donation of decorative EzoBoard that improves the accoustics at Fresh Ground. This donation compliments the SwiftSpace furniture donated by Rob Way. Both companies have a Kitchener showroom at 825 Trillium Dr. and have generously supported Fresh Ground.



Finding Our Place

Winter Fermented Thoughts



Thursday, March 29th 2018

An evening designed for discussion, starting with the speakers, then table discussion while fresh sour dough bread and dip plate are served along with complimentary wine or beer, followed by a question and answer period.

No Tractor? No Problem!

Technology Choice and Farming

with Tony McQuail

Why make the choice in the late 20th and early 21st century to farm with horses? New technology is not necessarily better. For over thirty years Tony McQuail, from Meeting Place Organic Farm near Lucknow, Ontario, has farmed sustainably without the help of tractors. Join him as he discusses the specific reasons for this choice and be challenged to think about your own technology choices.

Tickets are \$25 each

Contact us at: waterlooschool@theworkingcentre.org

Why Detroit Matters:

What we can learn from their experience

By Brian Doucet

Perhaps no other city evokes such powerful images as Detroit. The very word conjures up pictures of abandoned factories, burnt out homes and urban decline. From a peak of more than 1.8 million inhabitants in 1950, Detroit's population has shrunk to under 700,000 today. It has become a metonym for urban failure and the ultimate scaremonger. City leaders are often warned: 'if we don't change our ways, we will end up like Detroit.'

More recently, however, Detroit has undergone a renaissance, particularly in its downtown core. Long-abandoned buildings are being renovated and turned into new lofts and restaurants. New construction is taking place, including several sports stadiums which are filling in gaps in the urban form. The 'Motor City' even opened a new streetcar line to link these booming parts of the city together. This city's renaissance is being celebrated in academic, planning and policy circles. After decades of being seen as the city of urban failure, Detroit is something of

It was these visions of grassroots urbanism that brought me and my students to Detroit again and again to learn from the city and its inspiring people.

an urban darling today.

However, just as the story of the city's decline was one-dimensional, so too are the accounts which look uncritically at its contemporary success. The thriving part of Detroit that many people speak so fondly of today comprise less than ten percent of the city. There is a racial component to this as well; in a city which is 85% African American, much of the renaissance is being led by whites. And some of the statistics remain staggering: close to 40% of the population lives below the poverty line, 25% do not have access to a car and there remain around 70,000 abandoned buildings in the city.

But Detroit today is far more complex than either a story of urban failure or of new renaissance.

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WHY DETROIT MATTERS

Wednesday March 21 at 7pm

Queen Street Commons Cafe
43 Queen Street South

Join us for a talk and discussion with **Sharon Howell**, an activist with the **Boggs Centre** to Nurture Community Leadership and a professor at **Oakland University**, and **Myrtle Thompson-Curtis**, who is involved in the **Feedom Freedom Farm** on Detroit's East Side.

Why Detroit Matters

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If we look beyond the ruins or the new bright lights downtown, we find inspiring stories of individuals or groups who struggle against economic oppression, racism and decades of disinvestment to, in the words of Detroit activist Grace Lee Boggs, 'find a way out of no way.'

It was these visions of grassroots urbanism that brought me and my students to Detroit again and again to learn from the city and its inspiring people. Many of these people are easy to miss when visitors are only fixated on the ruins or renaissance. But if we engage with them, we find that Detroit is at the forefront of a lot of progressive thinking. Grassroots educators are rethinking the purpose of education in the context of a city where there are few jobs for high school graduates; activists and residents rethinking the food system in a city that has been abandoned by mainstream supermarkets. Just as The Working Centre has been a leader in social innovation, many different organisations in Detroit have been pioneering a new kind of urbanism that is rooted in local communities and social justice.

While no civic leader wants their city to be compared with Detroit, there are parallels between Kitchener and Detroit. Both have gone through painful periods of deindustrialization which shook their local economies to the core and led to higher levels of unemployment and urban poverty. While Detroit's decline was more extreme than any city in Canada, we face many of the same challenges, such as growing inequality and polarization. The talk of a downtown urban renaissance also resonates in our region as new condo developments and gentrification are reshaping the region's core. On the positive side, like Detroit, Kitchener-Waterloo has also been a pioneer in social innovation, with many long-standing and active groups working to reduce poverty, inequality and injustice through a variety of inspiring ways.

On Wednesday 21 March, 7pm at the Queen Street Commons, we will discuss these, and other ideas with important grassroots visionaries from Detroit. We will be joined by Sharon Howell, an activist with the Boggs Centre to Nurture Community Leadership and a professor at Oakland University, and Myrtle Thompson-Curtis, who is involved in the Freedom Freedom farm on Detroit's East Side.

Brian Doucet is an Associate Professor in the School of Planning at the University of Waterloo and editor of the book Why Detroit Matters: Decline, renewal and hope in a divided city.

COMMUNITY MARKET DAY

PRESENTED BY THE LOCAL EXCHANGE

SATURDAYS

10AM - 1PM FRESH GROUND
256 KING STREET EAST

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The Waterloo School for Community Development

The Summer Institute in Grassroots Sustainability

The Summer Institute is a tool to help reflect on what it takes to uphold organizational commitments while staying integral to community and navigating challenges.

This year, The Summer Institute will integrate Wendell Berry's philosophy into all three events. In *Two Economies*, Wendell Berry describes the small economy as the "narrow circle with which things are manageable by the use of our wits" and the "recognition of limits and restraints as a human good." "The work of the small economy ... minutely particularizes the virtues and carries principals into practice."

The 2018 Summer Institute will unpack the best practices of grass-roots, bottom-up, community work by drawing on The Working Centre's 36 years of experience in downtown Kitchener.

The Daily Circus

A full day gathering to explore the thought of Wendell Berry. Join this convivial gathering at Fresh Ground, Wednesday August 8th 2018, 9:00 am - 5:00 pm.

Fermented Thoughts

An evening designed for discussion combining speakers, table discussions, appetizers and drinks. Join our TBA special guest speaker on Wednesday August 8th, 2018, 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm for a presentation and discussion on the influence of Wendell Berry.

The Summer Institute

The Summer Institute is a set of workshops designed by Working Centre staff that is geared to describing the philosophy and skills that enable the Working Centre to walk the fine line of rooting themselves in community while remaining responsive, reflective, and guided by virtues. Join us on August 9th - 11th 2018

For more information contact:

waterlooschool@theworkingcentre.org

<https://www.theworkingcentre.org/summer-institute/725>

Emergent Thinking • Personalist Practices • Local Democracy

Practicing Focal Living

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wilderness, and more), the micro-greens I am picking up connect me to not only The Working Centre's greenhouse and garden and food preparation networks, but also to the love and expertise of my son, who encouraged me to grow batches at home for the learning and fun inherent in having living healthy greens sprout around me as I write.

Third, focal activities have a centering or orienting power. They help us be in touch with something "greater than myself and of ultimate significance." Walking into a cathedral or museum or gallery of art or wilderness are such possibilities; doing difficult concentrated things like making music, making a quilt, or walking the Camino day by day, is also a hugely centering force. In my winter world, overcoming natural consumer laziness, tedious old stuck habits in shopping and cooking – those things don't look hard, but they can be! Nurturing my own microgreens, learning more about how they are used by talking to others, and knowing that The Working Centre community truly cares about healthy food grown in small spaces, can offer me such a sense of significance as I consider what I can give up in order to enjoy the simple pleasures of cooking mindfully with the shares on hand.

The focal things that "move, teach, inspire, and reassure" – what is your list in times of trouble, distraction, and turbulence? The list can start anywhere or be nudged into being by a modest life event around which one gives extra thought and care. Deciding to engage with microgreens at more than a casual level has connected me to paths of green, lively growth – and an abundance I had not anticipated.

"Each of us can compile our own list," says Boer. "What each of us names in our own lists says as much about us as it does about our surroundings and circumstances."

Four books that support practical and philosophical inquiry and discussion in focal living:

Boers, Arthur Paul. *The Way Is Made by Walking: A Pilgrimage Along the Camino de Santiago*. Downer's Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2007.

Borgmann, Alfred. *Crossing the Post-Modern Divide*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

Borgmann, Alfred. *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life: A Philosophical Inquiry*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.

Sanders, Russel Scott. *Staying Put: Making Home in a Restless World*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1993.



Rooted in Place at the Hacienda Sarria Market Garden

By Rachael Chong

In The Working Centre's year of Wendell Berry, we too are taking time to reflect on the Urban Agriculture Projects as places of rootedness and meaningful work. In a world beset with seemingly overwhelming crises, these modest projects take on a sense of sanctuary, where a community of growers care deeply for this piece of land and work together in a spirit of co-operation to help it thrive.

The Hacienda Sarria Market Garden has turned a neglected urban area into productive greenspace with astounding ecological diversity. Soil ecosystems hum away beneath our feet - sequestering carbon, supporting healthy crops.

Food is grown without the use of pesticides, using organic practices including crop-rotations, low-till bed preparation, and pollinator-friendly planting. Working in the gardens, volunteer gardeners learn about the complexity of these ecosystems and how we interact with them, while contributing their own experiences, knowledge, and energy.

As we work alongside one another, a sense of shared responsibility and interconnectedness is easily felt. Together, in place, our roots run deep.

The gardens are a place of belonging and work for over 100 volunteers who come to work the land, but there are many ways this place interacts with the wider Kitchener-Waterloo community.

Through it we are able to provide sustainably-grown, local food to well over 100 households in the region. As we work together to produce this food, knowledge exchange is inherent in the work. Social ties are strengthened, cultural identities are expressed, and our community becomes more resilient.

"For a society to be sustainable it needs people who care for their places, for people to care for their places they have to know their places and for people to know their places they have to learn to stay, to be rooted, to be 'placed.'"



Hacienda Sarria Market Garden

The Working Centre's Hacienda Sarria Market Garden is a volunteer driven community enterprise that demonstrates, promotes, and shares knowledge about sustainable urban food production.

519.575.1118 | www.theworkingcentre.org/hacienda

Agricultural Craft at The Working Centre

By Adam Kramer

"The world of plants is vital, vigorous, and self-starting. Drop a seed in the ground and it wants to grow. The common wisdom possessed by successful farmers is that they understand how to help the seed do what it is already determined to do."

- Eliot Coleman, *The New Organic Grower*

Turning the compost pile, planting seedlings, watering on a summer evening, sitting in comfy chair reading a new gardening book. Everything a grower does echoes back to these wise words from Eliot Coleman. Successful growing, whether in your yard or on 100 acres, is about being an ally of the natural biological processes at work. As Mr. Coleman would tell you, it goes well beyond the seed and involves



ecosystems that are miraculous in their complexity and vivacity.

Striving to understand how these natural systems function and adopting practices that work with them, as opposed to against them, is important work for all growers. Even "expert" gardeners will tell you there is always more to learn!

Winter, when our work has less urgency, is a wonderful time for learning and planning. Figuring out ways to simplify and improve our growing practices is an ongoing pursuit and during these quieter months has the effect of reinvigorating our passion for the craft of growing local food. Now, as we head into spring and our work ramps up, we are excited to put into practice all that we have learned. Come visit us in the gardens this season and we'll show you!



PURCHASE CSA SHARES

Community Supported Agriculture is a model of food production that connects farmers directly with the people who eat the food they grow. Members purchase a share in the harvest and are treated to fresh, locally-grown vegetables in season each week.

Order your share now and receive your items weekly from mid-June until the end of October.



Purchasing a share directly supports the work of our projects and community!

Fair Trade Organic and Single Origin Coffee Share

Enjoy delicious fair trade organic and single origin coffee that is freshly roasted at Queen Street Commons Cafe! Choose your specific variety and roast, or receive a rotating selection.

Flower Share

Bring the freshness and beauty of our farm into your home with bouquets of locally grown, pesticide free flowers from the Hacienda Market Garden.

Dinner Share

Aromatic and flavourful vegetarian stews, soups, curries, and casseroles made at Maurita's Kitchen.



Vegetable Share

Enjoy delicious local produce direct from the Hacienda Sarria Market Garden. We harvest your vegetables fresh - usually within 24 hours of delivery!

Pea Shoot and Microgreen Share

The mighty microgreen is simply a just-sprouted baby vegetable. Grown at Grow Greenhouse, you'll love these flavor packed, nutrient rich greens. Varieties include Broccoli, Purple Kohlrabi, Radish, Arugula and of course, our fan favourite - Pea Shoots.

Baking and Cookie Share

Cookies, pies, coffee cakes, sweet breads, and cinnamon buns. Enjoy a sweet breakfast or snack freshly baked in Maurita's Kitchen.

To purchase a CSA share online visit:
catalogue.theworkingcentre.org

hacienda@theworkingcentre.org
519.743.1151 ext. 113

Our two-acre garden is located at The Hacienda Sarria on Union Street in Kitchener.