

# GOOD WORK NEWS

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

Issue 98

September 2009

Subscription: A Donation Towards our Work

## Inside This Issue:

- Twentieth Annual Golf Tournament
- Waterloo Region ASSETS+ Project
- Workplace Language Coach
- Open Source Software
- Out of Retirement: From Counselling Workers to Facilitating Local Democracy
- Axioms, Aphorisms, & Anecdotes for Activists
- Diploma in Local Democracy



CANADA	POSTES
POST	CANADA
Postage paid	Port payé
Addressed Admail	Médiaposte avec adresse
5306256	



This original drawing by Greg McCann, entitled "Jerry on the Piano," depicts a man playing piano at Queen Street Commons Café

## Homelessness: A Personal Look

By Christy Ogley

The University of Waterloo's student newspaper, The Imprint, published an article about Homelessness in Kitchener Waterloo last fall. The article was mostly about the Bridges, a shelter in Cambridge. It focused on one man who hated to admit that he panhandles to pass much of his time. I'm sure that many students read it and then passed onto the next article. Did anyone even notice that there was no mention of KW's shelters, or even that there are homeless people in Waterloo? I would not be surprised if such an inadequate look at homelessness

would have had the same response if it had been published for a larger audience. People just don't know much about homelessness.

I've had the privilege of doing my social work placement at St. John's Kitchen this year, where I've been able to learn much about homelessness in KW that I didn't even know I didn't know. The myths surrounding homelessness are numerous and pervasive, and that article didn't sit well with me.

To start out, there are homeless people in Waterloo--right uptown. You won't see every person who is

continued on page 3

## Music for the Community

Alison Feuerwerker

The Waterloo Chamber Players is a small orchestra composed of skilled amateur and semi-professional musicians who have been playing and performing together since 1994. We are a self-run group, collectively making decisions and sharing organizational responsibilities. Members volunteer their time and talents as musicians and in administrative tasks. Working together to "play good music well" (as one of our founding members expressed it) sharing responsibility for keeping the group going, being together for many seasons of each others' lives, has created strong bonds in the group that persist even as people come and go. We are more than an orchestra, we are a community of friends.

Until last year, our primary funding source was the income generated by accompanying local choirs for concerts and church services. With general cuts to funding for the arts, especially in difficult economic times, those sources of income no longer exist. Since we very much want the Waterloo Chamber Players to continue, a creative response is necessary. And so we are reaching out into the larger community as both givers and receivers.

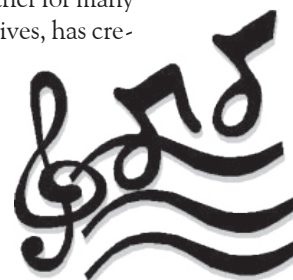
Several members of the Water-

*Working together to "play good music well"... sharing responsibility for keeping the group going, being together for many seasons of each others' lives, has created strong bonds in the group that persist even as people come and go. We are more than an orchestra, we are a community of friends.*

loo Chamber Players volunteer at St. John's Kitchen. Just as the Waterloo Chamber Players is more than an orchestra, we see St. John's Kitchen as more than a place to get a free lunch. It is a place where everyone is valued and can have input, where everyone can be productive, whether or not they are in the workforce or have a home.

On Saturday October 17, 2009, the Waterloo Chamber Players will perform a concert at the Church of St. John the Evangelist in downtown Kitchener. Proceeds from this fundraising concert are to be shared between the Waterloo Chamber Players and St. John's Kitchen. Tickets will be sold to the general

continued on page 6



### Waterloo Chamber Players Benefit for St. John's Kitchen

**Time:** Saturday October 17, 7:30 p.m.

**Place:** Church of St. John the Evangelist, 23 Water St. N., Kitchener

**Tickets:** \$15 adult, \$10 students and seniors, free for St. John's Kitchen patrons

**For more information:**

call 519-885-5697 or 519-746-1374,

or e-mail [wcp@rogers.com](mailto:wcp@rogers.com) or [afeuerwerker@hotmail.com](mailto:afeuerwerker@hotmail.com)



Twenty-Fifth Year

Issue 98

September 2009

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 9,500 copies. Subscription: a donation towards our work.

**Editors:** Joe Mancini, Stephanie Mancini, Jennifer Mains, John R. Smith

**Contributors:** Joe Johnson, Rebecca Mancini, Dave Thomas, Jim Lotz, Bob Shantz, Sean O'Seasain, Sarah Anderson, Paul Nijar, Christy Ogley, Alison Feuerwerker, Azam Fouk Aladeh, and Ken Westhues

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

The Working Centre  
58 Queen Street South  
Kitchener, Ontario, N2G 1V6  
Phone: (519) 743-1151, Fax: (519) 743-3840  
joej@theworkingcentre.org, www.theworkingcentre.org  
Canada Post Bulk #05306256  
Charitable Registration #13092 9607 RR0001



**A Free Film Festival**

September 29<sup>th</sup> to October 3<sup>rd</sup>  
at 7:00PM daily at Kitchener City Hall,  
Council Chambers

**FEATURING:**

- ★ DOUBT – TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 29<sup>TH</sup>
- ★ CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER – WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30<sup>TH</sup>
- ★ TAPE – THURSDAY, OCTOBER 1<sup>ST</sup>
- ★ CLOSER – FRIDAY, OCTOBER 2<sup>ND</sup>
- ★ STAGE BEAUTY – SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3<sup>RD</sup>



**Presented by the Multicultural Cinema Club, in cooperation with Impact Festival 2009.**

Call 519-743-1151 x146 for more information.

**Do You Dream About Starting a Small Business?**

Start your small business with the help of the **Waterloo Region ASSETS+ Project**

(A Service for Self-Employment, Training, and Support)



[www.waterlooregionassets.org](http://www.waterlooregionassets.org)

**This project offers:**

- **Ten Week Business Training and Entrepreneurship Readiness Course** – This course assists you in completing a simple, comprehensive business plan. Both new entrepreneurs and existing business people can benefit from the information and planning this program provides.
- **Business Technical Assistance** – Sessions are provided on specific topics such as marketing, product development, bookkeeping, financial statements, tax preparation, management, etc.
- **Business Loans** – Assistance with accessing small loans, marketing assistance, and other supports for your business.
- **Mentorships/Networking** – Learn from a wide network of business people who offer mentorships and advice as you develop your own business.

Classes held on Tuesday evenings at The Working Centre, 58 Queen St. S., Kitchener.

**REGISTER NOW!**  
Next session starts in September 2009.

Call Bob Shantz at 519-743-1151 x. 206, Greg Roberts at 519-749-9177 x. 236, or e-mail [wrap@theworkingcentre.org](mailto:wrap@theworkingcentre.org)



**By Dave Thomas**

The sun was shining as almost 100 golfers teed off on August 20<sup>th</sup> at our 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Golf Tournament. This year's event, held at Foxwood in Baden, was a more compact tournament, but did not lack in spirit. Through great generosity, we were able to raise over \$15,000.

Despite all the challenges facing the automotive and related industries, our friends at CAW were undeterred and showed a deep commitment to making this a successful tournament. Once again, we had participation from CAW locals from across Ontario who showed their dedication to community-based support for unemployed workers.

The top foursome trophies went to Chris Riehl, Greg Bobier, Ron Guse and Jim Soper, and the top women's team was made up of Janis Turenne, Susan Oberle, Kim Carter

and Cheryl Medeiros. The mixed team of Christine O'Connor, Gord Currie and Rick Rooke also received trophies.

It was through the great efforts of our organizing committee that the event was such a success. Special thanks to Tim Mitchell, Rob Pyne, Paul Roeder (CAW Local 1524); Jim Woods (CAW National Office) and Tammy Heller (retired from CAW); Steve Longeway (Bell); Frank Curnew and Steve Sachs (Labour Program of Waterloo Region); Chris Riehl and Russ Jessop (UA 527); and Fred Walker (Bingemans).

We are also grateful for the continuing support of the tournament sponsors CAW National Office and MTD Products Limited.

With another successful year of the Golf Tournament, we extend a deep thank you to all those who continue to support our work.

# St. John's Kitchen

## Homelessness: A Personal Look

continued from page 1

homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, but they're there. There are services and shelters and connections in KW. You don't have to go to Cambridge to understand the issue.

It seems that most people don't realize that homelessness is caused by poverty. Rent is high, government assistance is low, and many people can't find adequate employment. Social assistance, Ontario Works (OW) for the region, is set at \$572 a month. This amount is to cover shelter, food, medical care, clothes, and anything else you may need. The average rent runs around \$400-450 minimum for a room, and \$500 and up for a bachelor apartment. Food banks are not an option or a charity if you're on OW, they're a necessity.

Fully employed people can be "working-poor." Shift-workers, manual labour, service jobs--many jobs leave employees far below national poverty lines. For whatever reason one is poor, housing becomes difficult to find and to maintain.

Even if the rent is manageable, many landlords will not rent to people on social assistance. Sometimes they've had a bad experience with someone on OW but, in other cases, landlords judge recipients solely based on stereotypes. Unfortunately, this means that landlords renting out substandard units are sometimes the only option. These units can be utterly unliveable. Add on to that health problems, mental health problems, marital problems, family problems--really any kind of problem--and you're stressed out, living in terrible conditions and not able to bear it. It's easy to lose an apartment that you can barely afford when a small crisis arises. The idea that homelessness is primarily a choice, a lifestyle, or a problem of laziness is false. It could happen to anyone.

I spoke on record with a woman at St. John's Kitchen in order to publish another version of this article in Imprint in July. Her situation has since changed, but her story was a familiar one at the kitchen. She was receiving ODSP (Ontario Disability Support Program), living in a unit that should probably be condemned, and struggling to file costly complaints. It was a difficult situation because she, like many others, didn't really have the resources (personal or financial) to fight--but she didn't have a choice.

In my position I'm often appalled at how little I can do to change some of the fundamental problems affecting people's housing. Sure, I can provide listings, support, and many

*It seems that most people don't realize that homelessness is caused by poverty. Rent is high, government assistance is low, and many people can't find adequate employment.*



Daniel Nichols

other key services to help acquire accommodation, but I can't lower market rental prices or raise social assistance rates. People regularly have to pay rent out of money allotted for food, and sometimes will spend nearly their entire cheque on rent. Many recipients know this, but some don't and are understandably shocked when I tell them that OW's shelter allowance will not cover all shelter costs. One of the ways of measuring poverty is to calculate what percentage of a person's income is spent on shelter. Anything over 50% qualifies as "low income." With that in mind, consider that most people on OW spend upwards of 75% of their income on rent. Somewhere in the evolution of government policy (especially during the Harris era) the idea that social assistance was meant

to help people in tough situations got completely lost. Gone too from government policy was the idea that a society is judged by the treatment of its poorest citizens, as opposed to measuring the worth of our poorest citizens by whatever means government sees fit.

In my time at St. John's Kitchen, I've heard stories of people who rented flooding basements, cramped spaces, and "accommodations" that necessitated peeing into a bucket. There are nice landlords, for sure, but there are also landlords who perform "inspections" monthly, without notice, and rifle through their tenants' garbage. For some landlords, mental health issues on their tenants' part are opportunities to deceive and harass. People make do in a lot of difficult situations, but that doesn't justify deliberately making things difficult. Often people ask me, 'Don't most homeless people want to be homeless?' Well, no. It's complicated. There are indeed some people who choose to live outside. But there are many others who simply cannot access housing because of discrimination, high rental prices and other issues beyond their control.

No single explanation can account for the variety of marginalized people in this region. Here are profiles of a few local residents--some homeless, some housed in substandard buildings, some with a connection to street culture--that can help illuminate what it means to be homeless.

Duff, a chatty man in his 40s, was more than willing to elaborate by explaining, for instance, what's particularly difficult about being on the street. "Loss of weight. It causes depression. You're not eating properly, you're losing weight, your teeth aren't healthy... Loneliness. You're

*Unfortunately, this means that landlords renting out substandard units are sometimes the only option. These units can be utterly unliveable. Add on to that health problems, mental health problems, marital problems, family problems--really any kind of problem--and you're stressed out, living in terrible conditions and not able to bear it.*

surrounded by other people who are as depressed as you. So... you need to be surrounded by grounded people to succeed, grounded people who are empathetic. I have some people. But it took a while. But I'm a different bird -- I talk to everybody."

Colin is now able in retrospect to comment on how his perspective changed. He used to be on the street and still has connections there. He grew up in a middle class family and never expected to be homeless. "I learned that you should stay away from homeless people, like it's a disease you can catch. It's a crappy attitude to have...I was like that too, once. I grew up in Toronto -- used to step over people, literally. People lying on the sidewalk." After his divorce he was left with more bills than he could



pay. When he did become homeless, Colin says, "I was expecting a fight a day, but the [sex worker] who was getting off her shift at 7 am was bringing me a coffee. ... Unreal...I lived a sheltered life, was expecting the worst. What I found were a lot of

continued on page 5

## Living with Less Money



This series of free workshops offers tools, resources, and skill building that can help you thrive. We can help explore ways to

- Manage your finances
- Deal with debt and understand credit
- Find a career you love
- Feed your family affordable, healthy food
- Reduce your transportation, clothing, and communications costs
- Make difficult decisions with confidence
- Put your skills and talents to good work
- Budget without feeling deprived



## Workshops in September

### Orientation Session

An overview of all Living with Less Money workshops that we will be offering  
Wednesday, Sept. 16 from 1:00pm to 2:30pm

### Transportation

Introduction to Basic Bicycle Maintenance  
Wednesday, Sept. 23<sup>rd</sup> at 6:30pm

### Finance & Budgeting

Understanding Debt: how it accumulates, costs of borrowing, where money goes  
Tuesday, Sept. 15<sup>th</sup> from 1:00pm to 2:30pm

### Computing as if People Mattered

A range of practical 20-minute computing workshops (see page 5 for details)  
Saturday, Sept. 19<sup>th</sup> from 10:00am to 4:00pm

*Additional workshops are planned for the coming months. Call for more information or see [www.theworkingcentre.org/less](http://www.theworkingcentre.org/less)*

For more information, contact Nathan: [nathans@theworkingcentre.org](mailto:nathans@theworkingcentre.org), 519-743-1151 x168

# Workplace Language Coach

By Sarah Anderson

The Working Centre's Workplace Language Coach project is a training resource for employers who hire new Canadians, which started in June 2008 with funding from the Kitchener-Waterloo Community Foundation, the United Way of Kitchener-Waterloo and Area and the Lyle S. Hallman Foundation. Through individualized work-specific activities and community resource connections, workplace language coaching builds employees' confidence and communication skills.

After being contacted by an employer or their employee, the Workplace Language Coach meets with the employee and their supervisor separately to discuss the employee's language and communication strengths, challenges and learning needs.

*"I know what I want to say but can't find the right words or phrases. It's very frustrating and makes me feel like child. But last week I went to someone's cubicle to chat, not about work, for the first time in my job here. It went okay. She didn't seem disrupted or annoyed. Since our last session, I feel more relaxed when speaking in English."*

Probably the most important outcome of Workplace Language Coaching is the increased sense of confidence each participant gains. Some participants felt very nervous about communication tasks like talking in meetings, talking on the phone and making small talk with

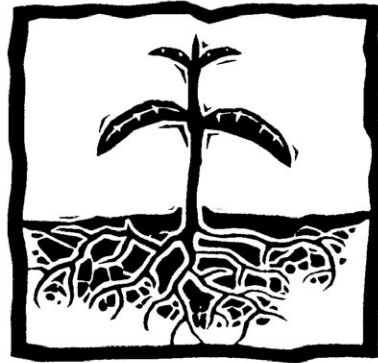
strangers in the work environment. The Workplace Language Coach process offered an opportunity to overcome their fears in a supported way. We discussed new communication strategies and tried them out through role play and positive feedback. "Homework" assignments might include tasks like challenging themselves to initiate (for the first time) a non-work related conversation with someone at work and reporting back on the experience.

*"Yesterday I got a call from a City of Kitchener employee who was very upset and wanted help with a new system. I told her I would pass her to the team members who could help, but they were on lunch right now. She was angry and said she needed help now. When I apologized and showed empathy, she said, 'Sorry, I shouldn't take this out on you.' I again showed empathy and she was very nice. I felt confident, where in the past I was very nervous."*

One participant always showed her embarrassment about her English communication through negative body language and facial expressions like eye rolling, sighing and shaking her head. But listeners misinterpreted her body language, often assuming she was expressing her feelings about the actual conversation topic. It was easy as a listener to be left with a negative impression, or at the very least, confusion. With feedback and coaching, she made a significant positive shift in her body language, and learned to use her body language to express her feelings about the con-

tent of the conversation rather than her language ability.

Some participants talked very quietly over the phone or in person and often mumbled some of their words. One in particular, dreaded the sound of the phone ring. Often when callers reached her they may have been put on hold by several departments and felt frustrated. She spoke softer when she wasn't sure of the pronunciation of a word, but because she spoke softly, people had difficulty hearing her and had



*"I start to know more people around the city facilities. It was good to start to build up my courage to speak. It helped me a lot knowing about small talk. I find from their side more patience with me. Probably that encourages me to be more open. I noticed that I'm feeling very comfortable now. I sat down with a staff person at the farmer's market and chatted about (facilities) problems. We had coffee together. This would not happen two months ago."*

to ask her to repeat her words, reinforcing her original lack of confidence. With coaching, she learned to maintain an audible voice level, knowing that people would find it easier to understand words that they could hear, even if they weren't pronounced perfectly. By learning some basic customer service de-escalation

phrases and strategies, she learned to ease customer tension, rather than assuming the callers' frustration was related to her accent.

Many of the participants felt uncertain of workplace communication expectations. Was it a waste of time to chat for a minute with coworkers? Wasn't it inappropriate to share a joke with a supervisor? Was it okay to interrupt others? What were normal topics of conversation? The Workplace Language Coach process encouraged participants to observe and identify workplace communication norms, helping participants to become confident about the answers to these and other workplace culture questions.

Canadian workplaces tend to be less hierarchical and formal than the workplace many of the participants were used to. We broke these differences down to the micro level: participants sought advice about appropriate eye contact, facial expressions, handshakes, greetings, ways to end conversations, personal questions to use and avoid, using first names, meeting etiquette, and how to soften requests and feedback.

Some of the participants had

*"I just wanted to say thanks for creating such a wonderful Language Coach program. I thought it was for improving (my employee's) English but it helped her with a whole lot more than that. (Some of the) biggest challenges for this employee, was (to) understand that supervisors are not people to place on pedestals, and therefore no need to get all nervous around us. (Also) how to integrate herself into our group, for example how to have a non-work related conversation. By the end of her 8th month with us she had really come out of her shell. It was quite a learning experience for me as well."*

held back from building rapport with their coworkers and customers because of fears that they would say or do something wrong. We discussed the function of relationship building in their roles. With encouragement and role-plays, participants who feared small talk and relationship building began participating in and even initiating conversations.

An underlying goal of the Workplace Language Coach program is to build the capacity of employers to hire new Canadians. Initial and follow-up meetings with supervisors helped to increase their understanding of employees' communication challenges. One supervisor commented that he had been completely unaware of his employee's anxieties relating to workplace small talk, and planned to make a point of engaging that employee in conversation in the future.

*Sarah Anderson has worked as an employment counselor and community developer for the past 5 years and recently enrolled in a masters program in Environmental Studies at U of W.*



## Visit Kitchener's Largest Furniture and Housewares Recycling Centre!



Our huge inventory of highly affordable, quality used goods offers something for everyone and turns over frequently, so stop by regularly to see what's new!

97 Victoria St. N.  
Downtown Kitchener  
519-569-7566

### Store Hours:

Monday-Friday: 9:00am to 5:00pm  
Saturday: 9:00am to 4:00pm



### Our inventory includes...

- |                       |                     |                  |
|-----------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| sofas and chairs      | arts and crafts     | jewellery        |
| coffee and end tables | books and magazines | toys and games   |
| kitchen furniture     | small appliances    | beds and bedding |
| dishes and cookware   | cassettes and LPs   | and much more!   |

# Open Source Software: The Digital Gift Economy

By Paul Nijar

On September 19 Computer Recycling is participating in an international celebration called "Software Freedom Day". Although the name is awkward and misleading -- we are neither celebrating an end to computer programs from our lives nor the triumph of our robotic overlords --- we think the idea is worthy, and that there is a lot to celebrate.

To understand why, it helps to understand a little about software economics. It costs a great deal of time, effort and imagination to create a software program. However, once that program exists, there is no technological reason that prevents this software from being shared with thousands or millions of other people; copying software is incredibly cheap. The only barrier to this sharing is economic.



*Tux, the  
spokespenguin  
for Linux  
operating  
systems*

Because computer programs are so expensive to create, many software creators attempt to make money by putting restrictions on software copying. Such restrictions include licence keys, shiny stickers, access codes, and crippled "Home" editions of their software that cost a little less than the "Professional" varieties. This approach makes software seem scarce, so that it fits into the same economics of scarcity that governs helicopters, watermelons, haircuts and most of the other goods and services the world runs on.

Software Freedom Day celebrates a different approach to computer programs, one driven by sharing rather than scarcity. The idea is both simple and radical: instead of preventing you from copying software, software creators release their computer programs under licences that encourage you to share these programs, study them, improve them, and redistribute your changes to others. Such software is called "free" or "open source" or "liberated", and it has changed the world. If you have ever searched Google or visited Wikipedia you have experienced it firsthand. Sometimes it hides behind the scenes delivering e-mail or running plasma TVs, and sometimes it is as visible as Firefox or OpenOffice or Ubuntu.

Although advocates of this movement loudly proclaim that this movement is about liberty and not low cost, on Software Freedom Day we also celebrate the opportunities low cost software creates. Low cost means a nonprofit in South Africa can run a computer lab full of up-

to-date, legal software that is not infested with viruses and spyware. Low cost means that a systems administrator in Brazil has access to the same high-quality e-mail server software used by multinational corporations in Germany. Low cost democratizes access to software tools, letting people worldwide express their creativity and improve their computing skills.

Because open source programs can be studied and improved freely, users are encouraged to become participants -- reporting problems, writing documentation, supporting their peers, and developing improvements.

Software that is modifiable can be repackaged and bundled with

thousands of other programs so that it can be easily installed and explored. This flexibility puts control of computing resources back into our hands.

The people who first released their computer programs under open source licenses were taking big risks. After all the time, energy and imagination they put into their creations, they were letting them go with no promise of return. But in doing so, those people helped create a new economy -- an economy of software abundance. Just as in the conventional economy, software freedom has its injustices and inefficiencies. Nobody knows what the future holds for free software, whether it will be wiped out or thrive. Although we use (and even sell!) software from the economy of scarcity at the Working Centre, we also use and appreciate open source software every day. We invite you to help us celebrate, whether on September 19 or afterwards.

## Homelessness

continued from page 3

good people, genuinely good people."

"Judgments do have an impact," says Sara, an outreach worker. That is a frequent complaint of street youth--the looks of disgust and scorn they receive on a daily basis. Sara explains that every subtle look matters, such as people who say "Sorry, I've got no change" and then glare as they walk off. As a result, homeless and marginalized people often become adept at hiding their status which perhaps contributes to people's ignorance.

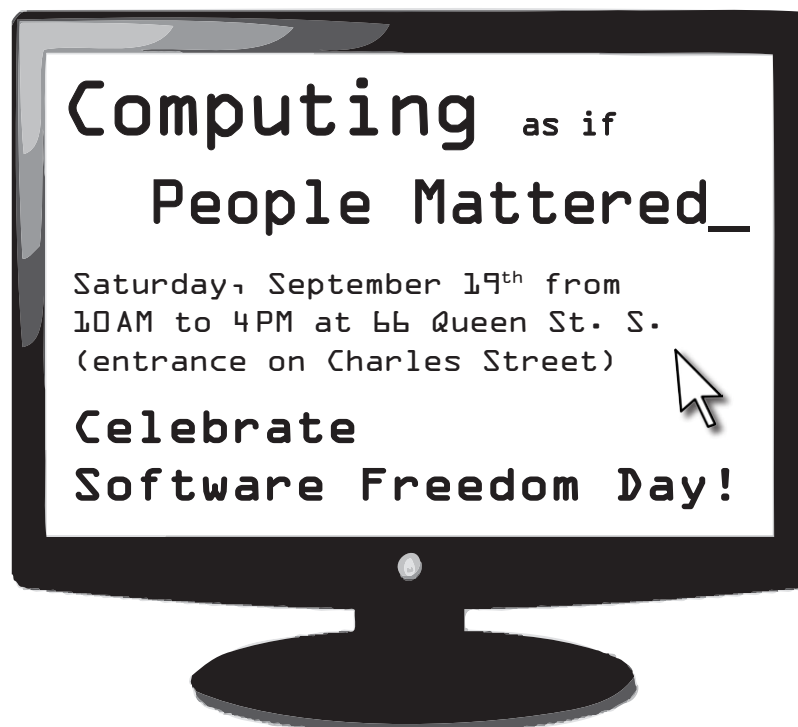
Dave has lived in different rooming houses. I asked him what it's like to have very little money and to have to live in cramped, shoddy housing. "You get bored to tears. You can only watch the same TV shows so many times." He's starting to volunteer to pass the time. He would also like a part-time job--as much the pinched nerve in his back and hand problems will allow. Dave has addiction problems now that are exacerbated by the rooming house he lives in. "It's hard to get away from [drugs], especially on the street, and even in the shelters." He's hoping to work at night to avoid the temptation.

Addictions, unfortunately, are often the focus of talks about homelessness. People seem to think that they're the primary cause rather than poverty, divorce, or the lack of affordable housing. It's also common to find excuses to dismiss people. Not just weighing whether people deserve to be on the street or not, but whether they deserve assistance, whether they deserve kindness, and what they owe in return. "Compassion, the idea of being nice for the sake of it, is getting lost," Sara says. "People debate [about helping people]: 'Why should I?' 'Nobody helped me...' or 'What's in it for me?'" The current social assistance rates and methods of administration reflect these punitive attitudes, keeping people who must access OW or ODSP in poverty--and far below national poverty lines at that. Workers spend a lot of time advocating for people, whether it's to be able to rent places within their means, access proper health care, legal services—you name it.

Gerry has both experience on the streets and in college. He doesn't meet students on his own time, but he sees them when he gives talks at Laurier's School of Social Work with Colin. "I hate to say it, but they're really naïve. About what they're going into, what they'll face. As much as I admire them, appreciate the fact that they want to go into social work... they've never missed a meal in their life." Does that ignorance contribute to rudeness, to cruelty? "I wouldn't say it makes them mean, but people don't know what's going on unless they've lived it."

Gerry continues to give the lectures at Laurier, nonetheless, in

continued on page 6



Featuring workshops, software demonstrations, prizes, and giveaways!

Whether you are a computer novice or a guru, we invite you to drop by and explore Computing as if People Mattered.

### Workshops\_

Here are some of the workshops we will be offering on Software Freedom Day

- ◆ Reducing Technology Expenses
- ◆ Linux for Windows Users
- ◆ Don't Be Afraid of the Command Line!
- ◆ Hands-on Installations & Troubleshooting
- ◆ Avoiding Viruses and Malware

For more information, contact Paul

Phone: 519-743-1151 x147

E-mail: pauln@theworkingcentre.org

Web: www.theworkingcentre.org/sfd09

# Homelessness

continued from page 5

hopes of making people more aware. The students tell him they appreciate hearing his story instead of reading it from a book, or hearing it from a “book-educated” professor. Gerry, though, has some book-education of his own. He studied social work in college after realizing he had something to give. He became homeless most recently in 2005 but is currently housed. It hasn’t been easy. “I sat around thinking ‘Why am I here?’ ‘What’s my purpose?’ ‘What’s the point?’ ... And it struck me. You’re here to help people that are worse off than you. I live in chronic poverty, right, but there are always people worse off than you.”

I’m always struck by the kindness and empathy of the patrons at St. John’s Kitchen, like this moment with Gerry. On a stressful day, people accessing services there, seeing my tense face, will often share a kind word or tell me a funny joke, hoping to relax me. They don’t ask if I deserve to be stressed, or if there is something I could be doing to reduce my workload. Compassion, as defined by dictionary.com, is “a feeling of deep sympathy and sorrow for another who is stricken by misfortune, accompanied by a strong desire to alleviate the suffering.”

Duff can tell you what has helped, more than analysis, advice and judgment. Has there been anyone helpful? Why? “Yeah. Because they care. Are sincere. Who they are, that could be anyone. It could be a fellow street person, or someone who just sees you sitting there, sees you’re depressed. And the general public that’s observant. Who can see. Also people that have decided to volunteer... at the Out of The Colds, at the drop-in centres, the ones who cannot stop helping once they realize what the street people are about. They’ll never stop, and it’s opened their eyes. They’re truly compassionate.”

I initially wrote this article for my fellow students, particularly the ones who don’t have any experience with the issue of homelessness. But homeless and marginalized people interact with the entire community-business owners, shoppers, medical staff, landlords. Everyone can make a difference in a homeless person’s life. How? By acknowledging what you don’t know, being open to learn, and treating people with respect and dignity. As Duff says, “Same old adage--until you walk a mile in my shoes, don’t judge. And that’s it.”

[This article appeared in a different form in Imprint, the University of Waterloo’s student newspaper.]

Christy Ogley has recently completed her Bachelor of Social Work and has been gaining practical experience through Downtown Outreach and Housing Desk work on student and summer placements at The Working Centre for the past year.

## Celebrating Food in a Creative Community Market

- Receive fresh, local food direct from local growers and producers
- Order wholesale items through Ebytown Food Co-op
- Enjoy celebrating local food in a creative community setting



- Support local farmers and producers by ordering directly on-line
- Pick up every Wednesday at Queen Street Commons Café (43 Queen Street South, Kitchener)



To participate, contact Rebecca or Jen at [market@theworkingcentre.org](mailto:market@theworkingcentre.org), call 519-743-1151 x130, or visit us at [www.theworkingcentre.org/market](http://www.theworkingcentre.org/market)

## 300 People Attend Downside Up Premiere

The Record published a fine review by Brent Davis of Downside Up under the perplexing title Homeless Documentary Opens Eyes at Premiere.

A standing-room-only audience filled council chambers at Kitchener City Hall on Wednesday night to watch a documentary that seeks to answer some of those questions.

And many left with opened eyes, and changed perceptions.

The homeless kids who participated in filmmaker Azam Fouk Aladeh’s documentary *Downside Up* speak about some of the things you might expect to hear — abuse and addiction, violence and crime.

But it’s some of the other things these young men and women share that are most compelling.

Concerns about appearance and self-esteem. Love of the arts, and music, and Nietzsche. Hopes and dreams for a better life.

“They’re people, just like you

and me,” said audience member Michael Savage. “All they’re asking for is compassion, caring and sharing.”

His wife, Catherine Stewart Savage, said it’s a documentary everybody needs to see.

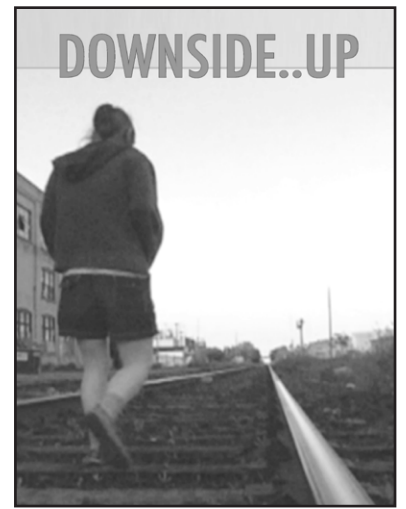
“I think politicians need to see it. I think business people need to see it,” she said. “(These youth) are a part of society too.”

The couple has seen some of these kids through their work with the Out of the Cold program in Waterloo.

“Every issue that they raised (in the film) works with any level of any group that’s homeless,” Savage said. “It crosses all genders, it crosses all ages.”



*Downside Up* is on sale for \$15 at Queen Street Commons Café, 43 Queen Street South



## “Downside Up” playing at Princess Cinema

On September 21, The Multicultural Cinema Club’s third documentary, “Downside Up”, will be screened at the Princess Cinema in Waterloo.

This thought-provoking documentary looks at the human side of life on the streets, at love lost and found, at friendships forged, and at a community that, despite hardships, sticks together through thick and thin. It presents profound insights into the lives of the youth, their struggles with mainstream society, and their recommendations for social change. These are voices that need to be heard and understood if we are to become a truly integrated community.

## Music for the Community

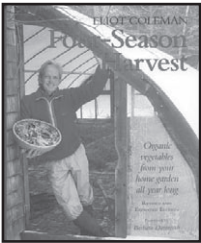
continued from page 1

public, but people who go through the lunch line at St. John’s Kitchen will be offered concert vouchers and invited to attend as our guests.

We will rehearse and perform this concert without a conductor. Plans for the program so far include concertos by Bach and Mozart featuring members of the group. We will also draw from some of our favourite repertoire, choosing pieces that can be enjoyed by newcomers and seasoned concert-goers alike. Audience members can expect to hear some familiar tunes that will keep them humming once the concert is over.

Times of economic hardship evoke divergent responses: they can lead to despair, isolation and giving up, or they can inspire creativity, reaching out, and working together. The second is a counter to the first, for it is by connecting with others that we end isolation, and it is by working for the common good that we push back despair. St. John’s Kitchen is an example of people joining together to meet basic human needs for food and connection; it is a light in the darkness. The Waterloo Chamber Players are choosing to offer what we do best and love to do most not only to benefit ourselves but in service to the larger community of which we are part.

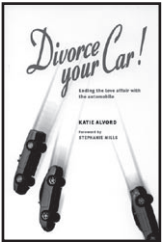
# Alternative Work Catalog



**Four-Season Harvest**  
Organic Vegetables from Your Garden All Year Long  
*Eliot Coleman*

Eliot Coleman now shows you how to produce fresh, delicious, healthy food from your home garden year-round. He shows you how to harvest organically-grown vegetables throughout the coldest months in all climate zones with very little extra time or effort. His success depends on growing a large variety of vegetables each suited to its season, and on simple, inexpensive designs for cold frames, unheated mobile green houses, and root cellars.

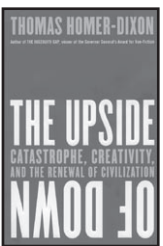
236 pages \$34.95 softcover



**Divorce Your Car!**  
Ending the Love Affair with the Automobile  
*Katie Alvord*

Society's love of cars began enthusiastically more than 100 years ago, and has since become a very troubled relationship. Today, the automobile inflicts upon us pollution, noise, congestion, sprawl, big expenses, injury, and even death. Yet we ignore the growing costs to ourselves and the environment. Alvord explores the many practical ways in which people can reduce their dependency on cars and address the many problems they create.

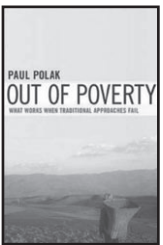
320 pages \$22.95 softcover



**The Upside of Down**  
Catastrophe, Creativity, and the Renewal of Civilization  
*Thomas Homer-Dixon*

In this essential book for our times, Thomas Homer-Dixon describes his understanding of the urgent problems that confront our world, and clarifies their scope and deep causes. The Upside of Down paints a vivid picture of the immense stresses that are simultaneously converging on our societies and threatening to break our very civilization apart. This vitally important book shows how, in the face of ecological and societal breakdown, we can renew our global civilization, and avoid catastrophe.

448 pages \$24.95 softcover



**Out of Poverty**  
What Works When Traditional Approaches Fail  
*Paul Polak*

Polak busts the common myths that we can donate people out of poverty, that national economic growth will end poverty, and that Big Business, operating as it does now, will end poverty. These failed top-down efforts contrast sharply with the grassroots approach outlined by Polak that helps the dollar-a-day poor earn more money through their own efforts. Unexploited market opportunities do exist for the desperately poor, and with innovative, low-cost tools, they can use the market to improve their lives.

232 pages \$30.95 hardcover



**The Circle of Simplicity**  
Return to the Good Life  
*Cecile Andrews*

Less – less work, less rushing, less debt – is more – more time with family and friends, more time with nature, and more time to develop a meaningful spirituality. This book is a guide to discover and create the good life for yourself. Andrews is renowned for her workshops on voluntary simplicity and creating simplicity circles.

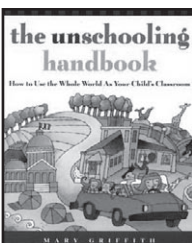
239 pages \$20.00 softcover



**Small is Possible**  
Life in a Local Economy  
*Lyle Estill*

In an era when complex issues like Peak Oil and Climate Change dominate headlines, practical solutions at a local level can seem somehow inadequate. Small is Possible introduces us to "hometown security," with this chronicle of a community-powered response to resource depletion in a fickle global economy. This is the story of how one small southern US town found actual solutions to actual problems. Unwilling to rely on government and wary of large corporations, these residents discovered it is possible for a community to feed itself, fuel itself, heal itself, and govern itself.

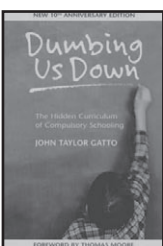
240 pages \$17.95 softcover



**The Unschooling Handbook**  
How to Use the Whole World as Your Child's Classroom  
*Mary Griffith*

A growing percentage of homeschoolers are becoming unschoolers. Without bells, schedules, and rules about what to do and when, the knowledge they gain through mindful living and explorations is absorbed more easily and enthusiastically. Successful unschooling parents know how to stimulate and direct their children's learning impulse.

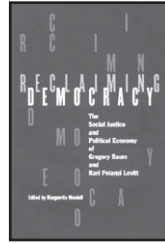
230 pages \$25.95 softcover



**Dumbing Us Down**  
The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling  
*John Taylor Gatto*

Dumbing Us Down shows how compulsory schooling stamps out the self-knowledge, curiosity, concentration and solitude essential to learning. In his 26 years of teaching, John Taylor Gatto has found that independent study, community service, large doses of solitude, and a thousand different apprenticeships with adults of all walks of life are the keys to helping children break the thrall of conforming society.

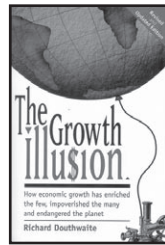
144 pages \$12.95 softcover



**Reclaiming Democracy**  
The Social and Political Economy of Gregory Baum and Kari Polanyi Levitt  
*Edited by Marguerite Mendell*

Building on the ideas of Gregory Baum and Kari Polanyi Levitt, Reclaiming Democracy features discussions by eminent scholars about social ethics, political economy, and democracy, and traces their influence on critical social thought. The essays provide an intellectual perspective to ground the growing opposition to dominant institutions by social movements fighting injustices.

208 pages \$75.00 hardcover

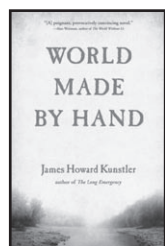


**The Growth Illusion**  
How Economic Growth has Enriched the Few, Impoverished the Many, and Endangered the Planet  
*Richard Douthwaite*

The idea that economic growth is necessary is deeply rooted in western culture and forms the basis of the economic strategies for developed and developing nations around the globe. A finalist in the GPA Book Award when first released in 1993, this fully updated and revised edition demonstrates why economic growth is a prescription for disaster and suggests

how to redirect our capitalist system toward more positive ends.

400 pages \$25.95 softcover



**The World Made By Hand**  
*James Howard Kunstler*

In this work of speculative fiction, social critic Kunstler paints a picture of American life in the aftermath of the long emergency, when the terminal decline of oil production and disruptive climate changes have put industrial civilization out of business. Cities have been wiped out, epidemics spread uncontrolled, the government has effectively collapsed, and transportation is slow and dangerous. This powerful tale of love, loss, violence, and desperation depicts a surprisingly hopeful new America, struggling to be born.

317 pages \$26.50 hardcover

The Alternative Work Book Store at Queen Street Commons Café offers a wide selection of books on such topics as the environment, education, poverty, social alternatives, the philosophy of work, job searching, simple living, and more!



You can place orders by fax (519-743-3840), phone (1-887-252-2072), or mail (see order form below).

## Alternative Work Catalogue Order Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/Town: \_\_\_\_\_ Province: \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Cheque Enclosed (payable to The Working Centre)

Visa  Mastercard

Card #: \_\_\_\_\_

Expiry: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Quantity	Title	Price

Postage: \$3 for the first book, \$1 for each additional book. Free postage for orders over \$200.

Mail completed forms to:  
Alternative Work Catalogue  
58 Queen St. S. Kitchener, ON  
N2G 1V6

Total	
Postage	
Subtotal	
5% GST	
Order Total	

# WATERLOO SCHOOL FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

## Out of Retirement: From Counselling Workers to Facilitating Local Democracy

By Seán O'Seasáin

I judiciously selected June 16 this year as my retirement date from employment counselling at The Working Centre because it was Bloomsday – the day immortalized by James Joyce in *Ulysses* which is set on a single day in Dublin, Ireland ( June 16, 1904) and which has become known and celebrated annually as “Bloomsday”. I wanted to celebrate Dublin, which happens to be my birthplace, and the ordinariness of that day as portrayed by Joyce. I told my co-workers that I'm not really leaving but just “Blooming” into retirement on June 16 to de-invent myself. After all, what Joyce did in *Ulysses* was reincarnate himself as Stephen Dedalus!

In summarizing Joyce's message in *Ulysses* the online Literature Network asks:

*What happens? In the case of Ulysses, the answer might be Everything. William Blake, one of literature's sublime myopics, saw the universe in a grain of sand. Joyce saw it in Dublin, Ireland, on June 16, 1904, a day distinguished by its utter normality ... every variety of human experience is crammed into the accordion folds of a single day, which makes Ulysses not just an experimental work but the very last word in realism.*

I have learned especially from being a counsellor at The Working Centre that life/work is all about utter normality with “every variety of human experience crammed into the accordion folds of a single day.” The Working Centre is about realism, hope and survival. Come to think of it, every day is a Bloomsday there. I said to my co-workers: So

actually I'm just going on a Bloomsday leave on June 16.

These words proved to be prophetic. I was pleasantly surprised when, shortly after announcing my retirement, Joe Mancini, the Director of The Working Centre and founder of the Waterloo School of Community Development, invited me

to facilitate the course on Local Democracy at the School this Fall. How fitting, especially considering the Joycean connection. While on vacation in Dublin this Summer I came upon a recently published work by

Declan Kiberd – a professor of Anglo-Irish Literature at University College Dublin and a director of the Abbey Theatre) – entitled *Ulysses and Us: The Art of Everyday Living* which underscores how *Ulysses* far from being the epitome of elitism was always intended as a book for the common people.

Kiberd castigates the “pseudo-radical interpretations of Joyce produced over the past two decades of ‘critical theory’ [which] have challenged neither the growing corporate stranglehold over universities nor the specialist strangle-hold over Joyce. They have in fact strengthened both forces. And that is because ‘theory’ is rarely concerned with linking analysis to real action in the world.” James Joyce was a believer in participatory democracy. It is my desired intention to bring the Joycean approach (“he could release those elements of the marvelous latent in ordinary living, so that the familiar might astonish” – Kiberd) to facilitating Local Democracy.

Sean can be contacted by e-mail at [sean@theworkingcentre.org](mailto:sean@theworkingcentre.org)

## Axioms, Aphorisms, & Anecdotes for Activists

By Jim Lotz



“He who would do good to another must do it in minute particulars. General good is the plea of the scoundrel, hypocrite and flatterer.”

- William Blake, *Jerusalem*, 1815

“The ruling passion, be it what it will; The ruling passion conquers reason still.”

- Alexander Pope

“Excellence is the result of: caring more than others think wise; risking more than others think safe; dreaming more than others think practical and; expecting more than others think possible.”

- VanCity Community Foundation Mission Statement

“... top down bureaucracy-driven plans for regional development have fallen into disrepute and policy makers know they must consider new approaches.”

- Economic Council of Canada, *From the Bottom Up: The Community Economic Development Approach*, Ottawa, 1990. (Shortly after the council issued this “statement,” the Mulroney government abolished it.)

“Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influence, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist. Madmen in authority, who hear voices in the air, are distilling their frenzy from some academic babble of a few years back.”

- John Maynard Keynes

“Forget your perfect offering. There is a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in.”

- Leonard Cohen

“The key to innovative ventures like New Dawn lies in identifying the gifts that people possess and determining what each person has to offer to the collective good. We have had no luck in getting people to do things they are not good at.”

- Rankin McSween, President, New Dawn Enterprises, Canada's first community development corporation, incorporated in 1976

“All professions are conspiracies against the laity.”

- George Bernard Shaw

## Diploma in Local Democracy

A 14-week course starting October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2009

Call now to register!

This course...

- Is intended for adults committed to serving local democracy in Waterloo Region
- Offers the opportunity for participants to reflect on their actual experience of democratic practice in the workplace, public agencies, and civic initiatives
- Will expand your knowledge of diverse forms of democracy
- Explores how local democratic values are integral for a flourishing community

### Course Format

The Local Democracy class will be participatory and democratic in format, drawing on each individual participant's experience of democracy or absence of democracy in their personal and working lives whether lived in Canada or wherever in the world they may come from, giving a multi-dimensional hue to the collective learning experience.

Unlike the perceived image of

the teacher being the giver of wisdom, the Local Democracy gathering will be a sharing of many ‘wisdoms’ through diverse modalities such as the colloquium (facilitated open conversation), dialogues (more formal exchanges seeking common ground – the ‘dialogus’), peppered with some open-to-the-public lectures by people involved in social and political action.

Written and/or oral presentations – autobiographical learning - will round off the course with the possibility of film making, engaging in theatre, designing and preparing a CBC ‘Ideas’-like radio program – the possibilities are limitless depending on the drive and enthusiasm of all those involved. Being democratic, the course will evolve round the aspirations and expectations of the participants with a deliberate focus on unraveling the core and auxiliary elements which make up an authentic democracy.

Call Kara at 519-743-1151 x119 to register.

