

GOOD WORK NEWS

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

Issue 162

September 2025

Subscription: A Donation Towards our Work

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MAKING HOME OPEN HOUSE

Tour the new home of St. John's Kitchen; 44 units of transitional housing with 24/7 support; medical centre; public washrooms and showers.

Join us in the celebration and experience a new kind of space, designed for social stability and community building.



FOR WORKING CENTRE DONORS

Friday, September 26th | Guided Tours 3pm - 6pm

PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE

Saturday, September 27th | Guided Tours 10am - 2pm

97 VICTORIA ST. NORTH IN KITCHENER

How an Inhospitable Labour Market Increases Homelessness

By Joe Mancini

Homelessness and an Inhospitable Labour Market

Canadians are asking why the number of unhoused people has grown steadily over the past ten years. In Waterloo Region alone, there are over 2371 people are unhoused.

It is widely agreed that the homelessness crisis is the result of poor housing planning. The supply of housing has not kept up with demand, causing rising housing prices. At the same time, housing became coveted as a commodity, which has added to inflated housing costs. Currently, a significant portion of the population cannot even dream of paying the sky high mortgage costs, which then translates into unaffordable housing rents that the average worker's wage can barely cover. For 30 years, Canada has built minimal affordable housing and did not renew the existing social housing. The population of Canada has grown rapidly with little effort going into building an infrastructure to match population growth with affordable housing.

Yet, what this analysis misses is the simmering social and economic phenomena of a degraded job culture. Homelessness is more than a warning of poor housing policy, it is also a warning of a work culture that undermines the dignity of workers.

The trend to an inhospitable labour market started in the 1980's. It was a time of high unemployment when companies started implementing higher levels of temporary and part-time work. This

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was the beginning of wage stagnation that continues 30 years later. Social benefits like Unemployment Insurance became harder to access while offering smaller benefits. Labour unions were under pressure to make job concessions. Companies added automation technologies to reduce labour costs which continues to reduce low-skilled factory employment. Minimum wages were kept low. On top of all that, it was a time of deindustrialization as factories were forced to close as production moved to lower-wage regions around the world.

These were the conditions from which The Working Centre's Job Search Resource Centre on Queen Street was established. A study we conducted in 1987 using the local Canada Employment Centre job board found that of the 500 jobs advertised, over 75% were minimum wage jobs which, even at that time could barely cover rent. In a seven year period, The Working Centre was involved with 15 local factories that had stopped operating and laid off their workers.

The resource centre specialized

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Making Home Project Timeline

Over the past six years, the 97 Victoria St. N site was re-envisioned and reconstructed with contributions from many community partners and donors. See the timeline on Page 3.

Forty-First Year

Issue 162

September 2025

Good Work News

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

Editors: Joe Mancini, Stephanie Mancini

Contributors: Douglas MacLellan, JP Smola, Roger Gilbert, Sam Quinones, Isaiah Ritzmann, Ayman Eldesouky, Mike Seymour, Christina Mancini

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

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

HOCKEY HELPS THE HOMELESS



12TH ANNUAL WATERLOO REGION TOURNAMENT

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 24TH, 2025 | RIM PARK

Our charity tournaments leverage Canada's affinity for hockey to raise awareness and financial support for the homeless through education, fundraising, and by partnering with solutions-based local homeless support agencies.

All net proceeds from the Waterloo Region event will support oneRoof, House of Friendship, Starling Community Services, Cambridge Shelter Corp, YW of K-W, and The Working Centre, which together run the Region's emergency shelter bed network. Last year, the Hockey Helps the Homeless Tournament of Waterloo Region raised over \$300,000 for these local community organizations.

Donate, volunteer or support the tournament in other ways.

Please visit the website: www.hockeyhelpsthehomeless.com

FOR MORE INFO, CONTACT ERIK LUCZAK | ERIK@HHTH.COM

Community Spirit and Support



On June 7th, the local MEDA committee held a unique event at Fresh Ground Cafe that featured work MEDA is doing to support coffee growers in Nicaragua. Over zoom, Mayerling Gurdian and Herberto Rivas—owners of Delafinca Coffee Company in Managua, shared their story and connection to MEDA's impact in their region.



It was another lively Bullafest, with 9 local musical acts playing on a field by the Speed River near Shantz Hill. Paul and Colleen Bulla with Elsie and Nathan have been running this fundraiser for 22 years and generously donating to St. John's Kitchen and CHAMPS (The War Amps). Above is a photo from that hot July evening of Paul Bulla's band, PB & Jam featuring Sean O'Brien, Ian Tanner, Andy Macpherson, John Little, Bob Phillips, John MacMurchy and Paul Bulla.



During a presentation at Westhill Retirement Home, it was special to find three people with connections to TWC. Dennis Eaton was on The Working Centre Board of Directors for 10 years from 2005-2015. Margaret was a laundry angel for St. John's Kitchen in the 1990's till 2006. Before we had a laundry machine, Margaret used to take 1 bag of laundry and 4 mop heads each week for washing. Rosemarie spent this summer visiting thrift stores to collect 44 bed sets, including pillows, sheets and covers for the bedrooms at the 97 Victoria Making Home project.



Many donors have been interested in the construction project at 97 Victoria. Local lawyer Don Travers listened to a presentation and then made arrangements to meet on-site to make a donation towards the project!



Once again, Creekside Church hosted a BBQ at the Erbs Road Shelter as part of the Church's Big Serve project. Creekside had 8 volunteers who prepared a Saturday BBQ lunch in June for the Erbs Road Shelter residents.



Kitchener City Councillors Stephanie Stretch and Debbie Chapman join Joe Mancini and Roger Gilbert at the 97 Victoria construction site as the work progresses towards completion.

Hope Is A Choice

By Stephanie Mancini

Hope is a choice. Hope is a disciplined and spiritual practice that sustains our work.

These do not feel like hopeful times as we witness the despair of people living without shelter or housing, as we receive the growing anxiety of people looking for work in a tightening labour market, as we witness the tightening of funding options and increasing administrative burdens.

In our Job Search Resource Centre we witness the pressures faced by people looking for work in order to sustain their families and hold on to their housing. It used to be that social income supported people in difficult times, but Ontario Works is no longer enough to even pay the rent. Joe's article highlights the changes in work since the 1980s, changes we see daily as we work side-by-side with people searching for work. As opportunities tighten, finding entry level work becomes even more challenging for recent immigrants or refugees, many of whom are people of the global majority whose first language is not English, complicated by employers wary of the ongoing trade disruptions.

The issues of homelessness grow more complex in our community. The teams on the ground are working to respond to a person-at-a-time, but there are not enough suitable housing/shelter options for the people we are seeing. This leaves many people on the street, without hope and without options as we head into the winter months.

We see people so excluded they feel they no longer have anything to lose. Our health teams are exhausted by the growing numbers of people needing care as people experience inadequate and unsanitary living situations, serious wounds and growing unwellness. Our Outreach teams are frustrated by the lack of

resources they can offer people. We stand present with people, problem-solving solutions but it comes harder to resolve the main core issue of where to find housing or shelter.

The housing solutions are complex. The Working Centre has custom built, a community supported housing option at 97 Victoria and we are so excited to welcome 44 people to this new space. We are determinedly working to find operating funding for this purpose-built housing that sits available right across the street from our largest encampment at 100 Victoria Street.

97 Victoria is a place of belonging as people will make it their home. Located in the heart of the St John's Kitchen community are 44 units of housing that will offer a chance to build and maintain housing and personal stability. Together with each resident, we will strive for inclusion, independence and individualized support plans, in a manner that engages strengths and reinforces each person's ability to strive for stability and/or change. This begins with promoting community presence, community participation, capacity and respect.

While we stand witness to the harsh realities before us, we walk forward with determined hope into this fall as we continue to stand with people and search out possibilities a person-at-a-time. As we move into our beautiful new St. John's Kitchen space, the new housing is ready for occupancy, and we welcome all of you who stand with us in holding this hope, to join us for the tours and open houses we have set for the third week of September.

Across the Working Centre, we welcome committed volunteers in our projects and spaces. Volunteers help us to extend welcome as the complexities grow, helping us build community resilience and care.

Hope continues to be our choice.

Open Hearted Work

By Roger Gilbert

Roger Gilbert has recently joined The Working Centre as the St. John's Kitchen and Outreach Hub Lead, one of our new positions designed to sustain and support the main pillars of our integrated web of practical resources and creative responses.

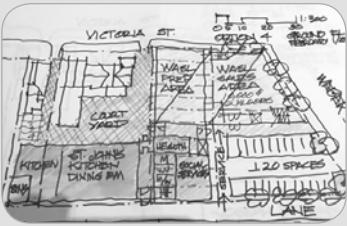
I have worked for 25 years in many roles with agencies and services providing support to the community and particularly to those most vulnerable and marginalized. It was always a calling for me from an early age. Throughout those years I worked with so many wonderful people and had experiences and growth from the community I was present with. While the work was always well intentioned, there were systemic blockages which hindered

truly aligned work. You could feel the blockages and the dissonance it created for individuals – a dissonance between your work-self and your true-self. I often felt that we were not able to be fully effective for the community we served. There are many reasons for this, but in summary, I often experienced how systems in place can limit how to do the most open hearted work that is needed in community. These blockages come in many forms and can repeatedly create tension for those working with community. There was always something that prevented workers from working fully aligned with their hearts fully open.

Over the years I had intersection points with The Working Centre

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Making Home Project Timeline: Re-envisioning 97 Victoria St. North



October 2019
A tour and inventory of Working Centre properties with David Gibson of Perimeter Development and Joe Bogdan of BNKC Architects

January 2020
The first sketches to re-envision 97 Victoria

February 2021
First preliminary detailed building outline

January 2022
Application to Ontario Trillium Foundation for funding capital equipment for new St. John's Kitchen

May 2022
Making Home website launched

June 2022
Making Home Project is announced; Perimeter Development commits a \$1 million contribution to Making Home

September 2022
Lyle S Hallman Foundation commits \$2 million to Making Home

November 2022
RHI-3 funding round announced focused on affordable housing for those with greatest needs

June 2023
RHI-3 is confirmed by Regional Council approving a \$9.8 million contribution to the housing at 97 Victoria; Jamie Critch, President of Auburn Development, and Savvas Chamberlain Family Foundation each commit \$1 million towards Making Home

October 2023
Worth A Second Look thrift store relocates from 97 Victoria to 37 Market Lane and St. John's Kitchen closes at 97 Victoria and reopens at St. John's Anglican Church where SJK started 40 years earlier

November 2023
Redesign issues allow for \$1.5 million dollars in savings as tenders go out for project construction

May 2024
Full Building Permit issued as steel beams are lifted on to the roof to create the new third story

July 2024
Construction workers pour and finish the main concrete floor comprising 7500 sq. ft.

December 2024
Mass timber structure for the new SJK is constructed in one week

April 2025
Bishop Douglas Crosby of the Hamilton Roman Catholic Diocese commits \$1.5 million to Making Home

September 2025
Open house events mark the official opening of the new St. John's Kitchen, medical clinic, housing units and on site supports



How an Inhospitable Labour Market Increases Homelessness

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in helping workers on the edge of the labour market. A 1995 article quoted a worker who expressed a common experience:

“They are pretending the working poor and people on social assistance are two different species of humans [...]. But all of us stuck in the nonstandard workforce are constantly cycling in and out of welfare [...]. They seem to think the jobs are out there and all we need is a kick in the butt to get us off welfare and into the job market.”

Today our Job Search Resource Centre supports thousands of workers each year, all of varying skill level but most will settle for low-skilled work when other options fail. The circumstances that the majority of job searchers face are not well understood, as those least able to compete are mostly hidden, trying to make ends meet, living by survival jobs. While the preference is to follow paths with more long-term opportunities such as entrepreneurship, skills retraining, or gaining access to post-secondary education, the vast number of people dealing with unemployment are not able to pursue such paths as they must focus on making ends meet.

The Contingent Labour Force

What does the labour market look like when you are discouraged and viewing it from the bottom rungs? It is not very comforting. It is a hard business activity with thousands of job searchers trying to get hired at any one time. The majority of jobs are in the private sector where jobs come and go on a quarterly basis depending on sales and profits. A business may have a hard time hiring for a specific skill, but at the same time they may have up to 400 applications for any job they post. The labour market is always over supplied by thousands of people.^[1]

When considering how unemployment is measured, those who are involuntarily out of work or who are discouraged workers are not counted. Their odds of getting work are slim, but they would proudly be part of the labour market if they could land a job. They want to work but give up trying because of the many rejections they receive. They come to this conclusion bitterly.

The rejections they receive can come from discrimination because of race, sex or religion. They can be based on their situation such as being a stay-at-home parent, having a disability, having a chronic illness, having been incarcerated, or dealing with mental health issues. All of these factors are part of a hidden criteria that makes it impossible and highly discouraging for some people to even job search.

It takes some calculating to understand how large the

Worker dissatisfaction is rooted in the minimal potential for personal growth, while experiencing an economy that rewards higher education. Those left behind, not only feel resentful, they feel the frustration of jobs in the service industry that do not have the dignity and quality that factory jobs formerly provided.

contingent labour force is. You have to start by including the number of discouraged workers, the number of unemployed and those who work in temporary/part-time jobs who would rather work full-time. There is another group, about 50% of those self-employed who only earn minimal income and would do other work if there were opportunities available. An analysis that includes these numbers finds that fully 30% of the labour market is made up of individuals who marginally participate in regular work. This group is under constant stress to make ends meet.^[2]

It is also important to understand that those on social assistance such as Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Assistance Program are not even counted in the labour market. In Waterloo Region there are 20,810 individuals or families on these two forms of social assistance which is another 6% of people who are on the outside of the labour market, often trying to get in.

Jeff Rubin, former chief economist at CIBC, takes a harsh view of the burden placed on those at the bottom of the labour market. He notes that focusing on GDP, the stock market growth and a seemingly low unemployment rate, only masks the reality on the ground. Those just holding on to jobs know what is going on, they “are aware that none of these conditions have trickled down to them. Instead they face unprecedented economic precarity at their workplaces.”^[3]

Paulina R. Tcherneva is even more trenchant when describing the labour market as “a cruel game of musical chairs. In fact it is worse, because many unemployed people cannot find a chair (i.e. paid work), and if they do (especially in the

low-wage sectors) they are often discriminated against, harassed, subject to wage theft and under constant threat of losing their jobs and benefits.”^[4]

How long term unemployment fuels growing homelessness

When St. John’s Kitchen opened in the early 1980’s, those who came for a meal were former workers that still had expectations that they could find new jobs that paid close to a living wage. Many of the resumes we typed up described their extensive factory work. Only a few were homeless, most lived in rooming houses within a kilometer of the Kitchen.

The change over 40 years could not be more stark. Society has created a large group of contingent labour workers that are sinking, right before our eyes, into homelessness as their social supports are strained and decline.

People do not just reject the labour market. Rather, the labour market rejects those who cannot maintain full connection. Former workers with less and less attachment to the labour market become highly discouraged. The few resources they have are stretched thin – they lack money, housing and food – all they can do is survive. If they struggle with mental health or have a physical disability then their situation is even more limited. If they do not have family to fall back on, or have alienated their family (which is often a result of their struggle) then their situation is even more precarious. Some are lucky to attain social housing which is a minimum base for survival, otherwise with rents so high, without housing an individual finds themselves on the street.

Contributing to discouragement are studies which show that long term unemployment creates significant health costs because,

“people are sicker, make more trips to the doctor and spend more on medications. They have higher rates of alcoholism, physical illness, depression and anxiety. Around the world metadata studies examine the effect of unemployment on several variables of mental health including mixed symptoms of distress, depression, anxiety, psychosomatic symptoms, subjective wellbeing and self-esteem. All these combine and complex health effects create a vicious cycle that makes it harder for unemployed people to

reenter the labour market.”^[5]

Case and Deaton in *Deaths of Despair* document how the evaporation of manufacturing jobs has weakened large sections of the working class. “Workers have had to move into less desirable, more casual work, more in services – healthcare, food services, cleaning, security – and less in manufacturing. The decline in commitment by employers is only matched by the decline in commitment by employees”^[6] Worker dissatisfaction is rooted in the minimal potential for personal growth, while experiencing an economy that rewards certain types of higher education. Those left behind, not only feel resentful, they feel the frustration of jobs in the service industry that do not have the dignity and quality that factory jobs formerly provided.

The labour market is not stable, and the experience of it is often called the yo-yo effect. Since there are not a surplus of jobs, an unemployed worker may finally find work, and get into the rhythm of working each day. Unfortunately,



that same worker is likely to be the first to be laid off when economic conditions change. This yo-yo effect produces high levels of discouraged workers bursting with frustrations.

It is at the point of hopelessness and despair that some people can fall into drug use. The process is well documented. The drug system is a mechanism of capturing people and if the individual caught in this trap does not find supports, it can lead to breakdown. A discouraged worker with a physical injury can easily fall into substance use which can lead to even higher levels of debilitation as users start to lose relationships and their physical health is severely compromised.

A subset of this cycle is that drug addiction can lead into drug distribution. People want to work, people want to earn money and for some, drug dealing becomes their only option. But it is not the kind of work that builds dignity. Drug dealing usually leads to greater addiction and gang involvement. Over time the desperation leads to jail sentences. Yet initially it pays some expenses. Breaking this cycle would require real and consistent supports to ensure that workers always have access to jobs in the regular economy.

The harshness of the labour market and unemployment create difficult personal and health conditions that prevent a person from escaping it. The isolation of unemployment compounds a multitude of social problems. Joblessness reduces a person’s social networks and reduces community participation that can be a bridge to

The Trend to an Inhospitable Labour Market

- 1 Labour market flexibility is reduced when Employment Insurance is harder to access with smaller benefits.
- 2 The significant loss of low-skilled factory work through automation and plant closings.
- 3 Contingent Labour market representing 30% of workers is made up of discouraged workers, those unemployed, those on social assistance, part-time workers and those working but not making a living wage.
- 4 Studies demonstrate that long term unemployment creates significant health costs.

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Inhospitable Labour Market

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re-employment. Breaking this cycle would require real and consistent supports to ensure that workers always have access to jobs in the regular economy, which would also address the long term social and health costs of the underground drug economy.

Expanding Opportunities for Work

The contingent labour force has intensified job alienation and, 40 years later, this process is contributing to growing homelessness. At the same time, the increasing sophistication of AI systems and automation seem to be continuing these trends we have observed on the ground. The next ten years could see even more dramatic job disruptions for workers. This will mean more people excluded from participating fully in society. Encampments are a clear example of this process, as they can also be described as places where workers, whose barriers to employment over time have left them marginalized from society, gather to use survival skills to stay warm and live with others.

As we reflect on these 40 years, it is clear that a labour market that excludes those less able to compete is an approach that undermines social solidarity. The task is greater than just providing an annual basic income, the task is about creating meaningful participation in the building of society. When that is missing and people are left without work, dependent and in survival mode, it becomes, in the words of Ivan Illich, a cruel form of “modernized poverty”.

When workers are excluded from productive work, they become rootless, minimally attached to values that would give shape to community living. Rather than participating in society where community bonds are strengthened through shared work, workers disconnected from meaningful labour are forced to see their struggle for basic needs as an affront, a breaking of trust, and a realization that society has little to offer.

There are no lack of opportunities for good work, but it takes a societal commitment to develop and build these opportunities. It is a simple and beautiful goal to enable communities of workers to intertwine labour, craft and community improvement to generate meaningful work. Work, held together through craft, has always enabled the common good to flourish with a combined sense of limits and aspirations of what can be accomplished together. Workers long for opportunities to truly express their creativity and skills. Presently society is going in the opposite direction and homelessness is an obvious symptom of this wrong turn.

1] Pavlina R. Tcherneva, *The Case for a Job Guarantee*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2020) p 27.

2] Joe and Stephanie Mancini, *Transition to Common Work*, (Waterloo, WLU Press, 2015) p 89, 90.

3] Jeff Rubin, *The Expendables, How the Middle Class Got Screwed by Globalization*, (Toronto 2025).

4] Pavlina R. Tcherneva, *The Case for a Job Guarantee*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2020) p 32.

5] Pavlina R. Tcherneva, *The Case for a Job Guarantee*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2020) p 36.

6] Anne Case, *Angus Deaton, Deaths of Despair and the future of Capitalism*, (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2020) p 165.

Stories of Determined Hope

A young man in his early 30’s

A young man in his early 30’s repeatedly visited the Emergency Department – 1800 times in three years. He appeared to be shelter seeking, but in reality had an untreated/undiagnosed mental health issue. Our team advocated for a longer term mental health admission and visited him in hospital every day, building trust and offering support for his wound care and mental health. He was discharged to King Street Shelter and when that shelter closed, we helped support him to interim housing. We continue to support him regularly, in collaboration with psychiatry, primary care and access to suboxone to address substance use. He has only presented twice at hospital since December. Recently as we supported him in the settlement of his outstanding court issues, the judge read pieces of our support letter to the court, and made a point of recognizing the changes and the work this person had done to build stability.

A 26 year old man arrived at hospital

A 26 year old man arrived at hospital from a physical health emergency exacerbated by substance use. He ended up in the ICU and he was initially not expected to recover. After surgery, he had to relearn how to walk/engage in physio and learn how to live with an ostomy. While trauma made it hard for him to engage with the medical team and other supports, the SOS team was with him at the hospital daily and worked with his social worker. He was set to be discharged but had nowhere to live. Once again, we were able to find him a spot in our Hospitality House, a supported assisted living house for those who are homeless. The palliative team visits the house to provide medical supports. He was

117 pounds when he left hospital and one year later is a healthy 150 pounds. He has not been readmitted to hospital in a year.

A 19 year old man immigrated to Canada

A 19 year old man immigrated to Canada and rapidly experienced significant challenges. He lost his housing and became homeless. He struggled to work in minimum wage jobs and then had 2 strokes that limited his physical capacity. While homeless, he lost all his ID and documents. Our Money Matters team were able to support him over six months to build up each piece of documentation, to stabilize on social assistance, find housing and to manage his own budget. He no longer feels alone when grappling with all of these realities and has found stability in his life.

A man living unsheltered

A man living unsheltered was diagnosed with a serious health issue. Our Street Outreach team supported him at his encampment with regular visits and sharing of resources. We accompanied him to ongoing specialist appointments and then in motel, until he has now arranged to live with a family member for ongoing connection.

An internationally trained finance professional

An internationally trained finance professional, fluent in both English and French, was applying to a number of different jobs, got interviews, but was not hired. She joined us as a volunteer in our Tax Clinics to gain Canadian workplace experience. Reviewing and honing all the basic job search tools, we also worked on strategically applying for bilingual positions, while also supporting her to secure child care. She found work full-time as a bilingual customer service rep.

Diploma in Ecological Economics



Finding the roots of economy in community and nature

Class begins September 10th

This community-based class explores the critical question:

Can we have an economy that meets human needs while at the same time being in harmony with nature?

We will share our own experiences with nature & the economy and connect our stories to larger ideas explored by economists and ecologists.

The class is open to everyone, and will both give an introduction to the key concepts of ecological economics and be a practical forum for discussing personal action.

The class runs for 10 weeks on Wednesday evenings, 7-9pm from Sept. 10th until Nov. 26th.

To register or for more information, please contact:
waterlooschool@theworkingcentre.org

Odd Duck Hosting Special Menu Tasting Event

Our neighbours, Odd Duck Wine & Provisions, have opened up their space for an evening to sample the tastes of Odd Duck Wine & Provisions, while also exploring the depth and breadth of the many projects of The Working Centre. There will be two sessions of tastings and conversation featuring a 5 course tasting menu.



Wednesday, October 22nd
5:00 – 7:30pm and 7:30 – 9:00pm
Odd Duck Wine & Provisions
93 Ontario St. S in Kitchener

Tickets for the event are \$150. Space is limited.
To book your tickets please send an email to:
liame@theworkingcentre.org

The Growing Tragedy of Fentanyl and the Potential for Recovery

By Sam Quinones

The following text is reprinted from the Dreamland Newsletter report on the Kensington area in Philadelphia, PA

I've been several times to the district in Philadelphia where dealers awaken their customers each morning with cries of free "Samples!"

Kensington was once all about heroin. But fentanyl has taken over and addicts are frozen in bizarre positions — "Kensington yoga," as it's called. They're also strewn on the street like yesterday's trash. All this takes place under the elevated metro train — the El — that periodically thunders from above.

As an open-air drug market, Kensington is only a few blocks long. But in my experience, it is second in horror-film nightmare only to Skid Row, near downtown Los Angeles.

Kensington also feels like a test market for the latest synthetic drugs coming out of Mexico.

Xylazine, the animal sedative, was found on Kensington first, and is now in the drug supply nationwide, almost always with fentanyl. Medetomidine, a more powerful animal sedative, has been replacing xylazine in Kensington recently. The chemical BTMPS, which I wrote about a while back, has also been in the mix for a while.

I've never written about Kensington before because I never understood it. Recently, though, I met some recovering addicts — "Kensington alumni" — at Limen House, a long-term residential treatment house in Wilmington, Delaware, 25 miles away.

They helped me understand a bit of what the zone is about. Mike Maziarz was one of them.

I also met Angie Pike, who grew up near Kensington.

Angie, 43, told me the history she knew, which is that Kensington was once a working-class neighborhood.

For years, Kensington was known as the 'Workshop of the World,' with textile and food factories, breweries and furniture factories.

Together these plants employed thousands in and near the district. Angie's grandmother worked at Anderson's Potato Chip factory. "We could walk the neighborhood and it was safe."

Kids got together at the Kensington Roller Rink.

"It kept us off the street corners," she said, "out of trouble and was a way for people to make friends. Last time I remember going to Kensington Roller Rink I was 12. It closed when I was a little older."

Kensington and neighborhoods near the Delaware River — known as the River Wards — were tough places. Large families jammed into small

For much of a year, she was off the street. She couldn't leave and she went through withdrawals hooked to an IV of antibiotics — enough of a pause, she said, for her brain to clear and see what she was doing to herself and assert her desperation to leave Kensington.

units. The schools were poor, futures limited. Dysfunction magnified — teen pregnancy, addiction, mental illness. Street fights among families were common.

This intensified as Kensington became a Rust Belt in the middle of a bustling metropolis, a centerpiece in Philadelphia's declining manufacturing.

Beginning in the 1970s, the factories began to close or move abroad. This accelerated through the 1990s.

Residents went on welfare; houses were abandoned, property values dropped, businesses closed. "By the time I was 14, [small] businesses were struggling," Angie said. "I knew to stay away from Kensington under the El because there were sketchy people."

Then Oxycontin and other doctor-prescribed narcotic pain pills arrived in ever-growing supplies by the late-1990s. Some people turned to selling their prescriptions to make money.

Angie had babies at 18 and 19 and that saved her, she thinks, from teen addiction. But at 21, she began using pills. She had her third child at 25. Escaping family chaos and cramped apartments, she was on the street and using daily by 2010.

By then Kensington was the open-air drug mart it remains today.

"At one time, I had six stops [on the El] to get what I needed. Then it was one stop away. When fentanyl started coming out was when I started overdosing. It was knowingly causing the death of people, and people were going to that street to find it. Kensington became known as the Bermuda Triangle because people got stuck down there."

Part of what keeps addicts stuck on Kensington is that the fentanyl sold on the street is so powerful that users develop an addiction that can only be satisfied with the drugs on that street.

"You cannot get well anywhere else," Mike Maziarz told me.

Fentanyl metabolizes quickly

Eventually, she found refuge in the Limen House, and after years of sobriety now works in marketing and fundraising for the treatment center. Being forced off the street where she was slowly dying was, to Angie, the first blessing.

in the body. This means folks on Kensington need to use daily far more often than denizens ever used heroin, when it was the drug on the street. So life has grown ever more desperate, as addicts scramble all day long for the few dollars another hit requires before withdrawals set in.

Meanwhile, Angie said, outreach workers on Kensington provided her clothes, food, and drug paraphernalia, which allowed her to focus on finding and using drugs.

"I never went without. Food was readily given out. There were places to shower. So I never strayed too far from the supply. I didn't have to go too far to get what I needed."

Thus she remained stuck, though desperate to leave, seeing death all around her.

Angie said her mother and aunt raised her children in those years.

What stopped her drug use, she said, was when she was admitted to hospitals for a brain abscess, then for endocarditis, a bacterial infection of the heart caused by dirty needles.

For much of a year, she was off the street. She couldn't leave and she went through withdrawals hooked to an IV of antibiotics — enough of a pause, she said, for her brain to clear and see what she was doing to herself and assert her desperation to

leave Kensington.

Eventually, her grandparents took her in. She pleaded with a judge to allow her to serve a probation term away from Philadelphia. "I told her I'd die if I went back to Philly."

Angie was sent to Delaware — another world for her.

Eventually, she found refuge in the Limen House, and after years of sobriety now works in marketing and fundraising for the treatment center.

Being forced off the street where she was slowly dying was, to Angie, the first blessing.

"You don't know what you want until you're forced into it," she said. "Once the fog cleared, you're able to look back and see what you walked away from. That will to live returns."

"Getting away from [Kensington] saved my life."

This article can be found online on Sam Quinone's Substack newsletter: <https://samquinones.substack.com/p/kensington-philadelphia>

The article is paired with an audio tale on Sam Quinone's Dreamland podcast titled "Leaving Kensington," the story of Mike Maziarz. You can listen online at: <https://samquinones.substack.com/p/leaving-kensington-an-audio-tale>

Open Hearted Work

continued from page 3

— making connections with staff and volunteers, learning about services and going on tours to see the beautiful work happening in action. From St John's Kitchen, to 58 Queen, to Recycle Cycles and all of the outreach services happening, the feelings always lingered with me and never really left. I realize now, more than ever, it was because I was experiencing a way of working that was aligned with who I was at my core and the kind of work I aspired to. I was learning that there was no way to experience work, other than with a fully open heart. It stayed with me. I found ways to stay connected over the years and eventually, as things often do when you're open to it, I energetically found my way to The Working Centre as a more aligned way to be immersed in community full time.

We live in a time where things can and often do feel more dire than ever. From the opioid crisis, the COVID pandemic, the housing crisis, escalating food costs and our current geo-political climates — there is so much fear and scarcity to get sucked into. We can feel deflated and defeated, like there is no hope.

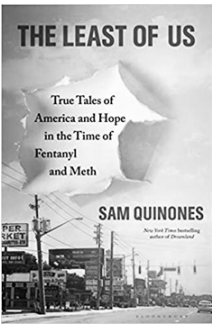
What I have found, seen and felt at The Working Centre is a sense of hope, a North Star for how we unite together as community to rise to meet these issues and feel truly connected. There is a web of open heart work happening here, one that has been cultivated for 40 years and is hard to put in words because it must

be seen and felt to be understood. It is understood through holding space for connection and community building with staff, volunteers and community, all as equals, all with our unique journeys, gifts and things we carry with us through our experiences. It is daily connection and welcoming into community. It is holding space for someone to be truly seen and feel like they are valued and matter. It is allowing yourself to be vulnerable and grow through connections to others. It is allowing the work and energy to be driven by this connection — for the work to grow based on the need that emerges from these tragic gaps, not from trying to engineer programs and solutions that do not emerge from holding space in community.

I see this happening daily in every part of The Working Centre. It is a consistent invitation to bring your true full self to the work. You are welcomed with a community of familiar energy that your heart knows. It allows for infinite possibilities and hope that anything is possible to emerge. It also allows you to remember, amongst all the worries and fears about the future that we can over-consume, that the most important moment is always the interaction you are having in the moment. This is what matters, the connections you make and your heart being open and aligned. These connections and webs of energy grow exponentially and cannot be measured, they are felt and continue to connect us in ways that heal and propel us forward in a way I can only feel with hopeful excitement. You find here powerful stillness of presence and my only wish is that everyone will someday experience this.

BOOKS FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVING

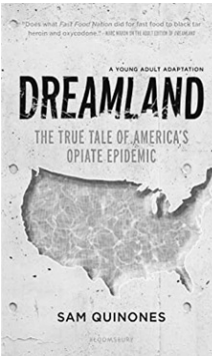
You can place orders by phone 519-743-1151 x111



The Least of Us
True Tales of America and Hope in the Time of Fentanyl and Meth
Sam Quinones

Quinones, a New York Times bestselling author of Dreamland, offers this searing follow-up on the opioid epidemic and stories of community repair. Quinones hit the road to investigate these new threats, discovering how addiction is exacerbated by consumer-product corporations. “In a time when drug traffickers act like corporations and corporations like traffickers,” he writes, “our best defense, perhaps our only defense, lies in bolstering community.” Quinones found hope in those embracing the forgotten truth that we are only as strong as our most vulnerable.

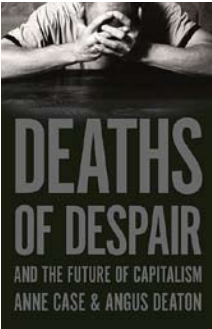
432 pages | \$24.00 softcover



Dreamland
The True Tale of America’s Opiate Epidemic
Sam Quinones

Acclaimed journalist Sam Quinones weaves together two classic tales of capitalism run amok whose unintentional collision has been catastrophic. the first story of unfettered prescribing of pain medications during the 1990s, peaking in Purdue Pharma’s campaign to market OxyContin, its new, expensive –extremely addictive–miracle painkiller. Meanwhile, a massive influx of black tar heroin–cheap, potent, and originating from one small county in Mexico, without a cartel, but driven by a brilliant, almost unbeatable marketing and distribution system. Together these phenomena continue to lay waste to communities from across the United States.

400 pages | \$22.00 softcover

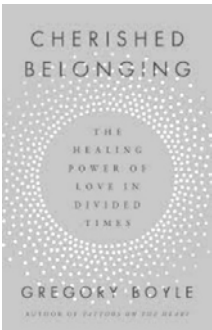


Deaths of Despair and The Future of Capitalism
Anne Case and Angus Deaton

Deaths of Despair paints a troubling portrait of the American dream in decline. For the white working class, today’s America has become a land of broken families and few prospects. As the college educated become healthier and wealthier, adults without a degree are literally dying from pain and despair. In this critically important book, Case and Deaton tie the crisis to the weakening position of labor, the growing power of corporations, and, above all, to a rapacious health-care sector that redistributes working-class wages into the pockets of the wealthy. Capitalism, which over two centuries lifted

countless people out of poverty, is now destroying the lives of blue-collar America. This book charts a way forward, providing solutions that can rein in capitalism’s excesses and make it work for everyone.

312 pages | \$25.00 softcover

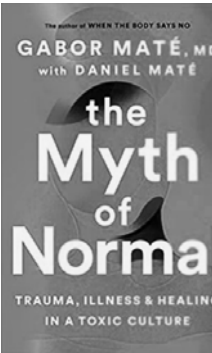


Cherished Belonging
The Healing Power of Love in Divided Times
Fr. Gregory Boyle

In a world marked by division and discord, Jesuit priest Gregory Boyle offers a transformative vision of community and compassion. Boyle has transformed tens of thousands of lives through his work as the founder of Homeboy Industries, the gang - intervention program running on two unwavering principles: 1) We are all inherently good (no exceptions), and 2) we belong to each other (no exceptions). Boyle believes that these two ideas allow all of us to cultivate a new way of seeing the world, beyond tribalism that

excludes and punishes, a narrative of a village that cherishes. Boyle calls back to Christianity’s origins as a spiritual movement of equality, and emancipation. Early Christianity was a way of life—not a set of beliefs. Boyle’s vision of community is a space for people to join together and heal one another in a new collective living.

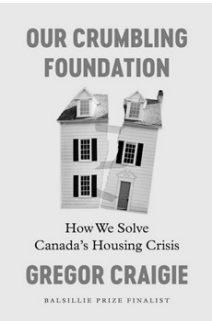
211 pages | \$39.00 hardcover



The Myth of Normal
Trauma, Illness and Healing in a Toxic Culture
Gabor Maté

Gabor Maté’s internationally bestselling books have changed the way we look at addiction and have been integral in shifting the conversations around ADHD, stress, disease, embodied trauma, and parenting. Now, in this revolutionary book, he dissects how in Western countries that pride themselves on their health care systems, chronic illness and general ill health are on the rise. So what is really “normal” when it comes to health? In *The Myth of Normal*, co-written with his son Daniel, Maté brings his perspective to the great untangling of common myths about what makes us sick, connects the dots between the maladies of individuals and the declining soundness of society, and offers a compassionate guide for health and healing.

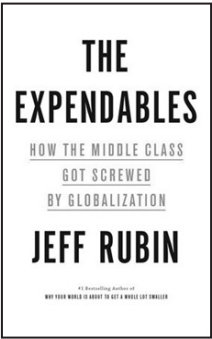
576 pages | \$39.95 hardcover



Our Crumbling Foundation
How We Solve Canada’s Housing Crisis
Gregor Craigie

Gregor Craigie, a CBC radio journalist in Victoria, has been talking for 17 years to experts about housing. Craigie has travelled to the places he profiles and in his interviews with Canadians he presents the human face of the shortfall as he speaks with renters, owners and homeless people. Through comparable profiles of people across the globe, (Tokyo, Paris, Berlin, Helsinki, Singapore, Ireland, to name a few) he shows models to house citizens better, faster and with determination—solutions that could be put into practice here. He offers numerous ideas to find our way out of the crisis, recommendations that can be used at all levels of government.

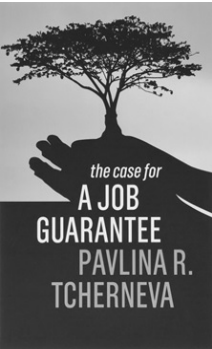
320 pages | \$25.00 softcover



The Expendables
How the Middle Class Got Screwed by Globalization
Jeff Rubin

Former CIBC World Markets Chief Economist Jeff Rubin argues that all this was foreseeable back when Canada, the United States and Mexico first started talking free trade. Labour argued then that manufacturing jobs would move to Mexico. Free-trade advocates disagreed. Today, Canadian and American factories sit idle. More steel is used to make bottlecaps than cars. Meanwhile, Mexico has become one of the world’s biggest automotive exporters. And it’s not just NAFTA. Cheap oil, low interest rates, global deregulation and tax policies that benefit the rich all have the same effect: the erosion of the middle class.

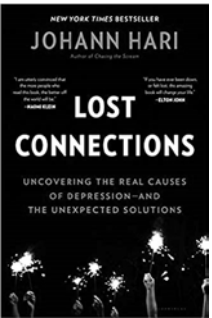
368 pages | \$32.95 hardcover



The Case For A Job Guarantee
Pavlina Tcherneva

One of the most enduring ideas in economics is that unemployment is both unavoidable and necessary for the smooth functioning of the economy. This assumption has provided cover for the devastating social and economic costs of job insecurity. It is also false. In this book, leading expert Pavlina R. Tcherneva challenges us to imagine a world where the phantom of unemployment is banished and anyone who seeks decent, living-wage work can find it - guaranteed. This is the aim of the Job Guarantee proposal: to provide a voluntary employment opportunity in public service to anyone who needs it. Tcherneva enumerates the many advantages of the Job Guarantee over the status quo and proposes a blueprint for its implementation within the wider context of the need for a Green New Deal.

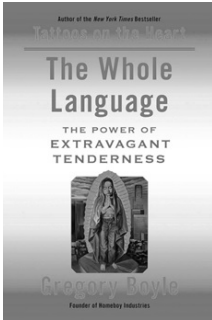
140 pages | \$15.95 softcover



Lost Connections
Why You’re Depressed and How to Find Hope
Johann Hari

When Johann was a teenager, he had gone to his doctor and explained that he felt like pain was leaking out of him, and he couldn’t control it or understand it. Some of the solutions his doctor offered had given him some relief - but he remained in deep pain. As an adult, he went on a forty-thousand-mile journey across the world to interview the leading experts about what causes depression and anxiety, and what solves them. He learned there is scientific evidence for nine different causes of depression and anxiety - and that this knowledge is about how we connect to one another. Read about ground breaking research on moving past depression.

336 pages | \$24.50 softcover



The Whole Language
The Power of Extravagant Tenderness
Fr. Gregory Boyle

Over thirty years, Gregory Boyle has transformed thousands of lives through Homeboy Industries. In a community struggling to overcome systemic poverty and violence, The Whole Language shows how those at Homeboy Industries fight despair and remain generous, hopeful, and tender. Boyle’s moving stories challenge our ideas about God and about people, providing a window into a world filled with fellowship, compassion, and fewer barriers. Bursting with encouragement, humor, and hope, Boyle invites all into — acceptance and tenderness.

256 pages | \$36.00 hardcover



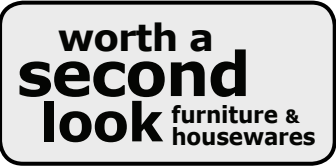
Transition to Common Work
Building Community at The Working Centre
Joe and Stephanie Mancini

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

212 pages | \$20.00 softcover

Community Enterprise at 256 King Street East

Located at 256 King Street East, just steps from the Kitchener Market, 256 King hosts several of our Community Tools projects that combine skills development with opportunities to support enterprise and community engagement.



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



Worth A Second Look, Fresh Ground and Recycle Cycles are hosting a monthly community table at the Kitchener Market. It has been a great way to introduce people at the Saturday Market to our Social Enterprises that are almost next door.

Thousands of affordable items available for purchase!

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

Donations welcome! If you would like to donate items, please contact us or drop off items at the donation door of the King St. East entrance during open hours. We also offer free pick-ups for donated items.

Tues - Fri: 9am - 5pm | Sat: 9am - 4pm

Contact us: 519-569-7566
wasl@theworkingcentre.org



37 Market Lane



256B King St. E
Kitchener

Recycle Cycles Community Bike Shop

Recycle Cycles Community Bike Shop puts a focus on promoting cycling by making bicycle purchase, maintenance and repair accessible and affordable.

Tools, maintenance supplies and bike repair stations are available for public use. Knowledgeable and skillful staff and volunteers can assist you with repairs and tune-ups.

Affordable used bikes are available for sale that have been skillfully repaired by staff and volunteers. We accept donations of bicycles, parts and accessories any time during our open hours.

Tues: 1pm - 4pm | Wed: 12:30pm - 6pm
Thurs, Fri, Sat: 10:30am - 4pm | Sun, Mon: Closed

Contact us: 519-804-2466
recyclecycles@theworkingcentre.org



FRESH GROUND CAFE

In our lively kitchen, we prepare fresh food daily, uniting individuals from diverse backgrounds to collaborate, acquire new skills and create delicious, affordable and healthy whole food dishes.

Discover our traditional favorites alongside offerings from our new café, which features a plant-based menu designed to encourage mindful eating and promote a lighter lifestyle. Our coffee roaster prepares fresh roasted coffee and the delicious teas and drinks make this a great spot to grab a drink, or meet a friend.

Monday to Saturday: 8:30am – 3:30pm
freshground@theworkingcentre.org

On the Menu

Try our Plant-Based Options:

- Salads
- Sandwiches
- Soups & Chillies
- Baked Treats
- Coffee Freshly Roasted On-site
- Wide Selection of Loose Herbal Teas and Drinks
- Hot Chocolates and Lattes



This summer, Deep Trekker – a Kitchener robotics company that builds underwater remotely operated vehicles – invited Recycle Cycles staff and volunteers to spend a morning tuning and repairing bikes at their office. In return Deep Trekker made a donation to the operation of Recycle Cycles.



Just Working Construction, the company that renovated our Queen Street Apartments, encourages their workers to spend some hours volunteering. Here volunteers from Just Working spend a morning refurbishing bikes at Recycle Cycles.