

GOOD WORK NEWS

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

Issue 96

March 2009

Subscription: A Donation Towards our Work

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Diploma in Local Democracy Guest Speaker Series

Wednesday March 18th at 7:30pm

~ Gregory Baum ~

Professor Emeritus of Theological
Ethics and Sociology of Religion at
McGill University presents

*Karl Polanyi and the Social
Economy*

This FREE event will be held at
St. John's Kitchen

97 Victoria Street North, Kitchener

For more information call 519-743-1151 ext. 119



John and Donna Weber

By Dave Thomas

If you do what you love to do, you'll be successful. For John and Donna Weber, their love of sports has brought personal fulfilment, and helped make Kitchener-Waterloo a stronger community.

As this year's Guests of Honour at the 22nd Annual Mayors' Dinner, Donna and John are being celebrated for their decades-long contributions to amateur sport, from managing teams to feeding hundreds of tournament participants.

Team sports are important to developing co-operation, competitive spirit and the bonds that make individuals stronger, as well as their connections with each other. "I'm a big believer in team sports," says John. "Solo sports like golf and swimming are fine, but who do you celebrate with? On a team, there is a sense of camaraderie, of hanging together."

The couple's connections with sports and their service to the community run deep. Born in Kitchener in 1939, John grew up in a home where athletic participation was a given. His father, Alson Weber, was "an all-around good athlete," excelling in football and volleyball. John and his two brothers, Jim and Ross, participated in football, basketball and track & field. When John played football in Victoria Park, where the clock tower now stands, his supportive parents rarely missed a game.

John enjoyed sports so much during his teen years that academic achievement took a back seat, for awhile. After completing Grade 12, he was accepted at Bluffton College in Bluffton, Ohio. With a substantial Mennonite heritage that reflected his own values, the college was attractive to John. It also featured strong sports facilities and teams. While studying there, John played

baseball and football.

"I was not yet ready for the real world," John recalls. "Playing baseball and football were my priorities. Education was not at the top of the list ... [but] by third year I got serious about my education." John remembers from his days there how important football is to many people in Ohio. He recalls the great football coach, Woody Hayes, who said there are three important things in life: football, football, and football. Many people's weekends consisted of going to a high school game on Friday night, a college game on Saturday, and watching an NFL game on Sunday. "The other four days are getting ready for the weekend."

But sport was not the only important lesson of Bluffton. John also remembers a bigger influence - an economics professor, Dr. Howard Raid ("Pappy"), who inspired him to do good. "Dr. Raid told us to remember three things," says John. "Support your family. Contribute time and money to church and community. And don't forget Bluffton College."

Donna learned similar values, in a Presbyterian environment growing up in Listowel, the daughter of farmers. "I was born on the kitchen table on our farm," she recalls. As a young girl, Donna learned the importance of kindness and generosity. "My heart steers me towards hospitality," she says humbly, "Everybody eats."

Professionally, Donna trained as a nurse in Wingham. After graduation, she moved to Kitchener, where she got a job at St. Mary's General Hospital, when it had a maternity ward. Later, she started working for two physicians in their private medical practice. (She's still there, 43

Revisiting the Ideas of Karl Polanyi

By Joe Mancini

We are pleased that Gregory Baum has agreed to do a Guest Lecture at St. John's Kitchen on March 18th. Gregory comes at a time, reminiscent of the early 1980's, when high interest rates and huge government deficits created growing unemployment. When The Working Centre established itself in 1982 unemployment was nearing 12% in Waterloo Region. We learned quickly about the struggles the unemployed faced, including the most basic, finding enough money to pay for rent and food.

Already in early January of this year, Stats Canada estimated the number of jobless in Waterloo Region at 27,000. This confirmed the reality that we already see each day

in the Job Search Resource Centre. Hundreds of people searching in every way possible to make their skills appealing in a labour market that demands increasing specialization. The economy ensures the unemployed conform by limiting the options they face. Unemployed workers have the stark choice of either finding work or being subjected to minimal income support from Employment Insurance or Ontario Works.

In the early 1980's, Gregory Baum, through his writings, demonstrated that capitalism had entered a 'neo-liberal' phase. A time when the "omnipresence of the market separates people from their commu-

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Twenty Fourth Year

Issue 96

March 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, Rachel Awour, Doug MacLellan, David Conzani, Ken Westhues, Azam Fouk Aladeh, Cassandra Roach, and Dave Thomas.

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Mayor Carl J. Zehr & Mayor Brenda Halloran

cordially invite you to attend the

Twenty Second Annual Mayors' Dinner
in honour of

John and Donna Weber

Saturday April 4th, 2009

Marshall Hall, Bingemans, Kitchener

Cocktails and Auction Preview: 5:30 pm
Dinner: 6:45 pm

For more details call (519)743-1151 x119

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



I would like to purchase:

- Individual Ticket: \$80 (includes one tax receipt for \$40)
- Contributor Sponsorship Package: \$195 (includes 2 tickets, recognition in dinner program, and one tax receipt for \$115)
- Community Group Package: \$600 (includes 8 tickets and one tax receipt for \$280)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

Visa Mastercard
Amount: \$ _____
Card #: _____
Expires: _____
Signed: _____

John and Donna Weber

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years later, working mornings).

Their mutual interest in sports brought John and Donna together. They met at a ball park in 1967, and married two years later. "We really became a team," John says. "Virtually everything is a team effort: Donna, the lead hand; John, the helper!"

Donna and John raised three kids, Deborah, David and John-Michael. John was also busy running the family business, Superior Memorials. But they regularly participated in organizing, running and fostering sports activities.

John was involved in various executive roles with the Kitchener Panthers baseball club for more than 40 years, coached teams from the Peewee to Junior levels, and chaired the National Junior Baseball Championships for five years. He also led the Inter County Baseball Association, Kitchener Sports Association and Kitchener Minor Baseball.

Donna's love of food and hospitality has mixed smoothly with her contributions to sports. In the mid-1990s, she prepared the food for a large dinner for athletes at the Kitchener Auditorium. When the World Women's Hockey Championships were held in Kitchener in 1997, she decorated the hall, and led the food preparation. "The people from the hockey association wanted me to get foods that would cater to the tastes of teams from around the world," she says, "such

as sardines for the Russians. We got lots of sardines. But no one ate them. They wanted to eat Canadian food." It was dishes like the four kettles of soup she made each day that the players really enjoyed. And the bark - cereal, peanuts and white chocolate - which Walter Gretzky and the members of the Chinese team particularly enjoyed!


The Canadian women's team wanted to hire Donna as their cook when they went to China, but she declined because she was so busy here.

In 2002, Donna headed up the catering for the World Fastball Championships. She featured a menu of Waterloo Region fare, such as locally made bagels and jams for breakfast, chilli at lunch, and pies from Anna Mae's Home Baking in Millbank (16 different kinds of pie, 6,000 slices sold). "It was not typical ball park food," Donna says, noting that the revenue ended up being twice as much as originally projected, bringing in more money than the beer tent. Of course, Donna did not do all the work alone. She commends the loyal team of volunteers who work at all the events, and who have developed a real bond with one another.

Donna has also been active with the Kitchener Minor Hockey Association for more than 35 years. She heads up the Sponsored Children's Program, which allows access to the game for kids whose families may

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Presented by the Multicultural Cinema Club at The Working Centre

LOCAL FOCUS 2 

March 15th - March 22nd
at 7:00pm each day

Kitchener City Hall/Walper Hotel

A free film festival featuring short, feature, documentary, and animated films produced in and around the Region of Waterloo.

Local Focus is a regional film contest organized by the Multicultural Cinema Club. Films are eligible to win artist fees, Jury Awards, and Public Choice Awards.

The festival aims to highlight the great work of local film-makers in feature, short, documentary, or animated films, as well as young film-makers' work in our youth category. Local Focus provides a good opportunity for the public and local businesses to meet local film-makers, cast, and crews.



Call 519-743-1151 ext. 146 or e-mail
film-making@theworkingcentre.org for more information

St. John's Kitchen

In Memory: Dave Conzani

On Friday December 12 over 70 family members, friends and members of The Working Centre and St. John's Kitchen community gathered at St. John's Kitchen for a memorial service celebrating the life of Dave Conzani who passed away on December 5, 2008. The service was led by family friend Manfred Koehler. Dave's son Ben was accompanied by his grandmother Eva Jonas. The family of Christopher Prins and his wife Becky travelled from Orangeville to participate in the service with stories, remembrance and prayers. The service fully celebrated Dave's life with readings from Scriptures, poetry, singing, an aboriginal chant, and stories that lasted almost two hours.

Dave was a constant friend of The Working Centre and St. John's Kitchen community since 1986, when he was only 23 years old. As we came to learn, his life was a struggle. He was taken away from

his aboriginal mother, Ruby Greene when he was only 3 years old, a frightful situation that he vividly remembered. Many of Dave's colleagues from different AA groups offered thankful remembrances for all the times that Dave was there to support those learning to deal with their alcoholism.

His writings in Good Work News between 1995 - 2000 comprised 4 long stories that documented his life on the street, in his words. In every story, he cast his critical eye on the situation around him, while upholding his own dignity as a human being. He recognized his failures and described them in detail, but at the same time, he had expectations of grace and understanding from those he encountered. A booklet of Dave's writings, including some remembrances from his memorial service is now available. The following passages are excerpted from Dave's articles.



The View from the Other Side

Issue 63 December 2002

My name is Dave and I am a very proud and grateful Canadian. Recently my son and I shared in our country's collective grief over the passing of Pierre Trudeau, and I have always tried to instill my great love and pride in this country into my son. My father served in the Second World War and paratrooped behind the lines on the beaches of Normandy on D-Day. My mother is a Mohawk of the Six Nations and our people were recognized by the Queen for having played the pivotal role in preserving this country from American invasion during the War of 1812. When I was in high school I won the Waterloo County High School English Awards' Poetry Contest two years in a row and was publicly honoured by Ken Taylor, the Canadian Ambassador to Iran who rescued those American hostages. One need only to watch the 6:00 news to realize how extremely fortunate we are to live in Canada.

The Miracle on Duke and Water

Issue 39 December 1994

After all, isn't it all us 'welfare bums' who are the cause of all our country's economic woes? Don't we take yet give nothing in return? I would challenge you to rethink this stance. One of those welfare bums is a little boy's loving father, a straight A honour student, a lay-worker in the field of alcohol recovery and an extremely grateful member of society. With the help of welfare and places like St. John's I am able to work toward my education goals and pursue a career in social work where I can make use of my experiences and help others in similar dilemmas find hope. What better place would I be suited to contribute to society?! I am not a bum. I am contributing in my own way, blooming where I'm planted. I am by no means alone.

"Have you no shame?" I was asked one day by a passer-by. "Shame?" I replied, "Do you think this is fun for me? I have shame that would make your toe-nails curl!" That is a great



A very deep Thank You to all those who contributed so generously to The Working Centre and St. John's Kitchen during the Christmas Season



So many donations were received, both large and small that help make possible all the projects of The Working Centre. We appreciate all the support you provide to make this work possible. In the June issue of Good Work News, we look forward to thanking the many who generously support this work.

John and Donna Weber

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not be able to afford the equipment and fees. The program pays for the registration. Partnerships with providers such as Play It Again and Sportco bring in equipment. Financial support from funeral homes, other donors, and the Kitchener Rangers, make the program sustainable. The Kitchener program supports players at the rep level as well. "It's the best program of its kind in Canada," Donna says. "The hugs and kisses and smiles from the kids" prove that.

What drives John and Donna to contribute so much of their time and energy to sporting activities? It is the notion of community service, that one should give back to the community that provided so much for them. "It's not a burden," says John. "We enjoy doing it."

The two have been recognized

for their contributions. Both have been inducted into the Waterloo County Hall of Fame. Donna has been made a life member of the Kitchener Minor Hockey Association, and was volunteer of the year in minor baseball in 1995 and hockey in 2003. Both John and Donna were presented the Queen's Gold Medal Jubilee Award in 2002 for her service to country and community. John was recognized as volunteer of the year in 1992 for Kitchener Minor Baseball, and in 1999 he received a Special Achievement Award from the Ontario Government for his work in amateur baseball.

The Webers don't seek recognition, though. They participate because they love sports and because they feel strongly that they want to contribute to making the community stronger. And though they now spend part of the winter in warmer climes, and have three grandchildren to dote over, they haven't really slowed down. When one game ends, there is always another one coming up.

part of the problem. 'When we are put down and shamed and blamed and vilified, it's hard to find any incentive to try to get back up again one more time. No, where shame and blame have never worked, love, encouragement and self-esteem have worked wonders. In the end our own personal desperation and willingness must become activated, but I believe I have a strong case for saying that a word of genuine encouragement along the way can sometimes be a crucial deciding factor.

Our Daily Bread ...And Forgive us Our Trespasses

Issue 47 December 1996

The cruel winter wind blasted through the broken window, setting my already frazzled nerves even

more on edge. The piece of styro-foam I had tried to jamb against the window to keep out the cold had not worked. The candle I had scrounged that day had gone out, and the bottle of Chinese cooking wine I had bummed was now empty as well. It wasn't working anymore either. It could no longer knock me out for the night like it used to. As my alcoholism had increased, so too had my tolerance for it and what had landed me in the Intensive Care Unit the first time I had tried it, could no longer whack me out of my misery for more than a few hours. I had come to, in the middle of the night, the booze had all but worn off, and I began to shake with the first waves of withdrawal.



Queen Street Commons Café

Experiencing Place

By Stephanie Mancini

The Queen Street Commons Café is the kind of place that fits the description by Tony Hiss in *The Experience of Place*; the blending of people from all walks of life, of simple food shared among friends, of music, of conversation, and of the fostering of reciprocal relationships.

Ken Westhues describes reciprocity as “an ongoing relationship in which the parties talk and listen to one another in turn, each responding to the other so that what actually happens is genuinely new, beyond what anybody could have decided in advance.”

In a recent article written by a St. Jerome’s student who is volunteering at The Working Centre, she describes how surprising these encounters can be.



“I’ll admit I’ve never been a really good listener. I drift in and out of conversations.... But The Working Centre is all about communication and interaction. It breaks you out of your comfort zone, and places you in a situation where you need to learn in order to make the interaction work. ... But the more I sit in The Queen Street Commons Café, the less I want to tell you about my experiences, and the more I want to tell the stories that I hear, and learn through my time spent there.”

There are many stories that are shared between people who might not otherwise meet – downtown office workers, men and women who live through the winter months at Out-of-the-Cold and come in for a rest or a coffee, people looking for work who stop by on their way to their appointment, moms and young children, people from the neighbourhood, folks from downtown agencies.

The sharing of stories is only part of the whole fabric of the goings on at the Café. Embedded within the flow of people are outreach workers providing formal and informal connection and support; a housing support person meeting with one of the residents in our housing; meetings between the Psychiatric Outreach workers and the individuals they are supporting; outreach workers from other agencies offering support over a cup of coffee; downtown street outreach workers checking in with people – everyone building strong relationships on which to base their work together.

“We all react, consciously and unconsciously, to the places where we live and work... our ordinary surroundings, built and natural alike, have an immediate and a continuing effect on the way we feel and act, and on our health and intelligence. These places have an impact on our sense of self, our sense of safety, the kind of work we get done, the ways we interact with other people, even our ability to function as citizens in a democracy. In short, the places where we spend our time affect the people we are and can become.”

- Tony Hiss in *“The Experience of Place”*

Sean, an employment counselor with The Working Centre, told of a morning where he was moving a bit slower than usual as he came out to the Job Search Resource Centre to meet a newly unemployed person to work on a resume. What he noticed right off was the intensity of the stress this man was experiencing, so instead of moving to a computer and working on the resume, he invited the man for a coffee at the Queen Street Commons Café. The coffee and conversation was a welcome diversion for both, and a follow-up meeting was made to work on the resume.

Sometimes the noise in the café overflows with the range of activities going on. People cluster for more formal meetings around the larger back tables, business lunches take place around the café tables, and people meet as they mill around – many new ideas have been cultivated as one person introduces another and serendipitous exchanges take place.

Music is one of the most delightful elements of the café. On the last Friday of each month the New Vibes Jazz Quartet overflows the café with music and people. Wednesday evenings Mark Evans gathers friends to play music, a monthly Open Mike evening draws local songwriters, other local musicians contribute an evening of live music from time to time, the Wilfrid Laurier Faculty of Music performs regular concerts, and many individual piano players drop in to share a few tunes.

Handiwork is celebrated and encouraged – a monthly knitting circle, homemade crafts for sale in the gift shop. Interesting books are for sale and many are available for reading in the back of the café. Items from our Community Tools projects are for sale including handmade paper, woven rag rugs, soaps, recycled crafts, and more. Barter Fairs fill the space with creativity every month or two.

Evenings and Saturdays can

often be filled by activities like a games night, writing workshops, movie nights, etc. Monday evenings hosts Open Space, an evening for people with a disability, their families, friends and others who want to build relationships and get to know others. Thursday evenings host the Speak English Café where New Canadians practice conversational English, explore a variety of cultures, enjoy potlucks, and share laughter and conversation. The WRAP small business program hosts training, info sessions and graduations.

The place is made possible by the many volunteers and youth on work experience projects who share the

work. As a Community Tools project, we operate both the Café and Maurita’s Kitchen (which serves up our delicious vegetarian meals) with mainly one staff person, joined by a variety of volunteers. Sometimes we precariously rise to the challenge of the day, and other days we overflow with helpers. Diners might wait a little longer some times, but most approach this with a good spirit.

Some 250 people per day come to the Queen Street Commons Café, sharing culture, conversation, food, and friendships. It’s the kind of place that can have a true impact on the kind of people we are, and the kind of community we like to build.



- Fair-trade coffee
- Specialty coffees
- Fresh herbal teas
- Hot chocolate
- Apple cider



- Games Night
- Knitting/Crochet Group
- Movie Nights (coming soon!)



The Café hosts live concerts performed by local musicians such as the New Vibes Jazz Quartet.



We use whole, vegetarian ingredients to serve a range of diverse foods including:

- lasagna and other pasta dishes
- a variety of salads
- pizzas
- quesadillas
- soups of the day
- sandwiches and wraps
- cookies, squares, cakes, and pies
- bagels and breads

Monday - Friday:

8:30am - 9:00pm

Saturday: 10:00am - 4:00pm

43 Queen Street South

Downtown Kitchener

519-743-1151 x. 227



Exploring the Commons

By Cassandra Roach

Standing behind the counter of the Queen St. Commons Cafe gives me an unsurpassed vantage point on community in its truest form. The informal nature of such gatherings as Open Space, Speak English Cafe, and the Knitting Circle allow conversation, laughter, and friendship to flow freely between participants. Other events like Jazz Night and Barterworks Sales invite the community in to experience the work of local musicians and artisans. And the Cafe itself is, every day, a place of mutual respect and welcoming to which people are drawn for many different reasons. Whether it’s the “post-yoga crowd”

that stops in for a meal, those who pass through to say “Hello” on their way to Out of the Cold, someone who wants to treat a friend to a tea, or a volunteer always willing to help out, our Cafe is unique in its ability to bring people together.

Although called the Queen St. Commons, the Cafe is simply one of The Working Centre’s projects that embodies the concept of ‘the commons’. Each of the Community Tools projects is imbued with Ivan Illich’s philosophy of “conviviality”. For Illich, ‘convivial’ is used to define “a modern society of responsibly limited tools.” Our market society, however, would look at

Thank You to J. H. Ryder Machinery

We would like to extend our gratitude to J. H. Ryder Machinery for their generous donation of a forklift given in support of our thrift shop, Worth a Second Look Furniture and Housewares. The gift also included a C&D Technologies' battery and charger. We will value this significant contribution for many years to come.



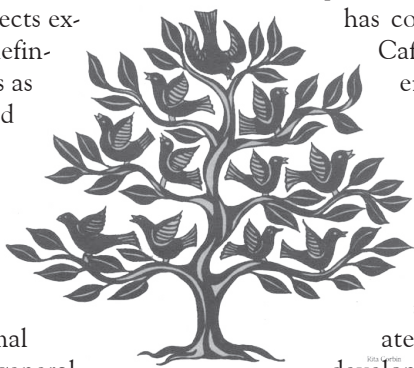
Exploring the Commons

continued from page 4

the word "limited" with disgust as, for so long, we have been a "sky's the limit" culture where acquiring the bigger, better, best of industrial tools has defined the road to success. Karl Polanyi saw that the market's self-regulation "created isolated, competitive individuals and undermined the bonds of social solidarity, the matrix of human well-being." Paradoxically, then, it is precisely this limitlessness and self-regulation that has enslaved us. Instead of each person owning more and competing for more tools and technology, the Community Tools projects exist under such defining characteristics as "the materials used are either free because they are being recycled or procured very cheaply" and "administration is very minimal – it consists of general project coordination and the maintenance of a cooperative, friendly and inviting atmosphere." These principles put real limits on the tools used, but open the flood gates of creativity and interdependence, articulating Illich's "triadic relationship between persons, tools, and a new collectivity."

The Second Floor Art Space is an inherently creative commons that easily epitomizes this triad. The space offers the community common sewing machines, tools to make paper and journals, a plethora of donated materials like buttons, fabric and children's books, as well as people willing to share their skills and knowledge. The shared and donated tools are simple and provide the community with means to be imaginative by creating beautiful cards, rugs, and bags. At the same time, minimal administration gives people the autonomy to use the tools themselves. At Recycle Cycles people apply the common tools and expertise avail-

able to fix their own bikes. This accomplishment would give cause for someone to cherish their bike, taking pride in the fact that they took time to fix it and had the ability to do so. The common tool provided by the Queen St. Commons is space. According to Illich, in Mexico City "roads were not built for people. Like any true commons, the street itself was the result of people living there and making that space livable." Our Cafe is the result of the community finding a common meeting space and feeling safe to connect there with others. In turn, the atmosphere of mutual respect and welcoming that



has come to define our Cafe is only present because of the community that is developed there. The joy found in using one's own imagination and energy to create art, fix bikes, and develop community with common tools is not present when a society is based on isolated individualism and ownership. We think that freedom is synonymous with independence: the more institutional wares we each have, the less we have to depend on others and, therefore, the freer we are. On the contrary, according to Polanyi, "(u)n fettered capitalism has disembedded people's economic activities from their social relations and led to widespread rootlessness, loss of identity and spiritual anomie." This mentality has also enslaved our creativity and has kept us from developing community.

Having common access to common tools and space allows each person to have "equal power to shape the world". Who would be more powerful, Illich questions, the person owning the loudspeaker or the person without the ability to have one? The Working Centre defies one's need for a loudspeaker, opting for tools and space for us to create the commons together.

WHOLE FOOD BOX

COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE

What is the Whole Food Box Community Supported Agriculture?

Community Supported Agriculture connects the growers of food directly with the people who eat it, in a way that benefits everyone.

The Farmers

The Whole Food Box CSA shares are grown by nine farm families of Old Order Mennonite and Amish background from the Milverton & Wellesley areas. Many of our growers have been providing organic produce for Waterloo Region for more than a decade!



Whole Food Box Pick-Up

Whole Food Box CSA market day will be at 43 Queen St. S. in Kitchener on Wednesdays from 4-7pm. Come by to pick up your box, meet other members, and check out our extra produce!

Ecological Farming

CSA share members receive great tasting produce, freshly picked that morning, which is organically grown, without using genetically modified seeds. The produce is grown without synthetic fertilizers, pesticides or herbicides. Instead, ecologically sound practices are applied, including maintaining fertile soil and using natural pest control methods.

Share Members Benefit

Share members support local farm families and the local economy, rather than corporate agribusiness. Buying directly from the farmer also makes organic produce affordable for members. Our Whole Food Box prices for organic produce are comparable to conventional produce prices at the supermarket.



Local Farm Families Benefit

Farmers benefit by having a secure market, income earlier in the season, and support for growing food in an ecologically sustainable way. They also enjoy growing vegetables and filling the weekly boxes, knowing they are directly feeding families who appreciate the quality of the food.

Half Share Members receive 10 deliveries / Full Share Members receive 20 deliveries of ecologically grown vegetables & fruit between June-October.

The cost is \$25 per box.



Examples of what to expect in the Whole Food Box (weather dependant): Radishes, Green/Yellow Beans, Spinach, French Filet Beans, Lettuce, Cucumber, Kohlrabi, Potatoes, Peas, Onions, Herbs & Flowers, Garlic, Broccoli, Sweet & Hot Peppers, Beets, Cabbage, Carrots, Cauliflower, Sweet Corn, Winter Squash, Tomatoes, Pumpkins, Zucchini, Parsnips, Green Onions, Eggplant, Tomatillos, Brussel Sprouts, Ground Cherries, Turnips, Swiss Chard, Kale, Strawberries, Melons, Leeks, and Watermelons.

Please call 519-743-1151 ext. 130 or e-mail rebecca@theworkingcentre.org to register for the 2009 CSA growing season!



Sustainable Agriculture at the UCRC

Editor's Note: On November 16th, Rachel Awour and Rose Ong'ech from Ugunja Community Resource Centre (UCRC) presented a workshop on sustainable agriculture at the Queen Street Commons Cafe. Rachel, an agricultural extension worker at UCRC, was invited to Canada to accept an award from the Farm Radio Network for her radio script that teaches listeners about sustainable agriculture. This is her script that is applicable to Kenyan farmers and Waterloo Region vegetable gardeners.

Introduction

Many parts of Africa are recently experiencing rising average temperatures and more unpredictable weather events, such as flooding or drought.

Farmers can influence the conditions on their farm by their practices, which may worsen the effects of climate change, or help farmers adapt to them. When temperatures rise, water evaporation increases, which leaves the soil dry. This contributes to very poor agricultural yields or no produce at all. The temperatures do not only affect the crops but also livestock, which may be more vulnerable to disease.

In the following script, we will hear how a farmer learns from a daughter and a friend about coping strategies for climate change.

Host: Hello listeners, welcome to your favourite program on overcoming negative changes. Today we'll hear how a daughter advises her father and his friend on ways of overcoming drought. Maybe drought or dry weather has been a problem for you too. Stay tuned and learn.

Vivian (daughter): Good afternoon, Dad. You have had a long walk in the hot sun, eh! The sun was so hot it was almost ripping the skin off my body. I wonder how the people of Siaya feel about mishandling all the resources that could help prevent such hardships. Do you know that, if the trees were not cut down, it would not be so hot? Otherwise, how was your day?

Olima (Vivian's father, farmer): Good, daughter. But you talk a lot without giving my ears enough time to follow what you mean. You talk of the people of Siaya mishandling resources. What kind of resources do you mean, my dear daughter? And how do they mishandle them? At times, I feel as if your head is failing you and my having taken you to school is of no good use because all you can do is criticize. Ah, anyway...

Vivian: (Interrupting)... Dad! Now why do you like making me mad?

Olima: Sorry, daughter. If only you could let me know what you

mean.

Vivian: It is very clear and simple. I meant that our soils have been washed away by wind and rain because of our farmers' careless farming practices. And others are cutting down trees that could help us preserve the soils and our environment at large.

Olima: You are only saying this because you are young and haven't experienced the difficulties that those who practice such activities have undergone.

Vivian: But who is the loser here, Dad? Who?

Bell (Olima's friend, farmer): How are you, daughter of the lake? You seem to be saying something crucial to your father! And how are you, my friend Olima?

Vivian/Olima: (In unison) We are fine.

Vivian: Yes, and let me excuse you two great friends.

Olima: Vivian, get a chair for my friend to sit under this tree. (To Bell) You really meant it when you said that you would spend exactly a week in the city.

Bell: Yes, the city is not a place to stay long when you are a farmer. I was only finding new ideas and trying to implement them to overcome this dry season. Doesn't it worry you?

Olima: How can you ask a question like that? Tell me about these new ideas.

Bell: The new ideas are about our farming systems and cropping systems. As the climate is becoming warmer and dryer and the rainy



Rose and Rachel reading Rachel's award-winning script at Queen Street Commons Café

season more unpredictable, we need crops and crop varieties that can tolerate heat and drought. Some of these crops we already have – like cassava, millet and sorghum. Some of the farming systems, though, are very hard to remember unless I refer to the book that I got from my son.

Olima: Yes, I think that, even as you were coming in, we were having some sort of argument over the cause of the dry weather and...

Vivian: Yeah, I was coming to

that. Some of the tillage systems that can help us cope with dry, hot weather are: composting – that means piling up crop residues and other farm wastes in layers to make them decompose quickly; double digging, where the soil is dug two feet deep, then fertilizer is added at the bottom, and the soil returned to the hole; nine-maize hole, where a two-foot square or round hole is filled with organic materials and topsoil and nine maize seeds are planted in it; then there is...

Bell: (Interrupting)... Sorry Vivian, do you mean that this kind of gardening – this nine-maize hole gardening – can only use maize seeds?

Vivian: No, you can also plant five seedlings of sukuma wiki (kale), or even five cow-pea seeds, planting them in the four corners and the middle of the two-foot square hole. This practice is also referred to as 5-9 seeds per hole. It would be wise to grow varieties of these crops which mature more quickly, with our unpredictable rainy season. There are other farming techniques like fertility trenches where deep trenches are dug, then filled with layers of soil, weeds, grass, manure and kitchen scraps, and, lastly, mulching.

Olima: How do all these techniques help if I may ask, Vivian?

Vivian: I'll talk about the benefits of these techniques one at a time. Composting produces organic materials to fertilize the farm. Deep soil digging creates spaces in the soil, which allows it to hold more water, leaves space for plant roots to penetrate easily into the soil, and provides enough air space for the better growth of crops.

Bell: What about 5-9 seeds per hole?

Vivian: This helps in many ways. First, you get maximum production out of a small plot. Second, the moistness in the hole means that the crops are protected from drought. The fertility trench acts in the same way as nine seeds per hole. The difference is only in the method of making them. Mulching, which is using organic matter like dry grass to

Cover the topsoil, prevents evaporation of water into the air. In that way, the soil remains moist, so that the crops can tolerate dry spells.

Olima: Are there any techniques that are particularly useful for swampy areas?

Vivian: Yes. If you use raised beds, these will allow water to pass through the spaces separating one ridge from another. All the techniques that I have mentioned prevent soil erosion, and maintain soil



fertility. They are also an advantage to those with small pieces of land. And remember that all this can be achieved if only we could tend our gardens rightfully. You would be amazed at how lush everything will be, whether it's dry or not. Families will be fed – drought or no drought. These are the only ways that can give us peace – peace on the skin, my heart and my stomach filled always.

Bell: These are all words of wisdom, daughter, but old heads like ours don't understand unless we put these ideas in practice.

Vivian: Yes, safeguarding the environment is important for ensuring sustainable development. We can develop agriculturally by preserving the little land that we already have and trying to improve it with the useful ideas that we acquire daily. This is also about poverty eradication because, when we have preserved the little we have, we will not go begging for food or depend on relief food that is never enough. This is one of the foundations of peace and security. Because, when our brains are full with skills, we will not fight for resources. Instead, we will be secure and peaceful.

Olima: Are you able to demonstrate these practices? You are only a woman!

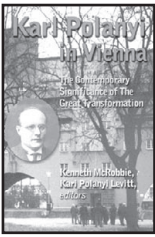
Vivian: Woman or no woman, Dad, when climate change or any other problem strikes, it doesn't spare anyone because of their sex or age. Everybody must restore the land for a better future. And remember: many small things done by many small people in many small places using many small ideas ... can change the world. You know that starting is hard work. But if you are sure of your determination, you can be successful.

Bell and Olima: (In unison) Thanks.

Bell: I believe my coming here has been a blessing to me.

Host: Welcome back, listeners. We have heard how our own activities can cause us problems. When we cut down trees or use the wrong methods of farming, it can worsen the impacts of climate change. This makes our lives and our livelihoods more difficult. But we have our own solutions when we learn about fertility trenches, deep soil cultivation, mulching and other practices. Are we not lucky that we know how to overcome hard situations, as Vivian puts it? Drought or no drought, difficult situation or not – a healthy life must be ensured. Now that we have discussed these things, listeners, I believe we are blessed today and will face such challenges head on.

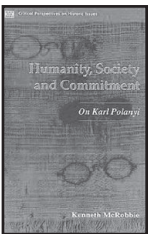
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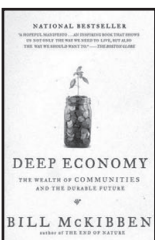
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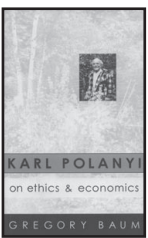
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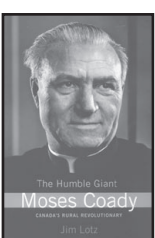
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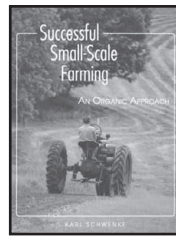
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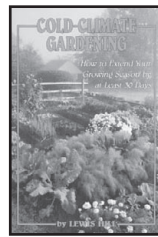
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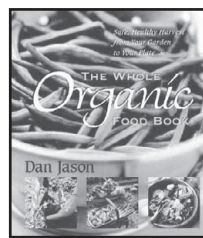
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WATERLOO SCHOOL FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The Ideas of Karl Polanyi

continued from page 1

nities, undermines their traditional values and destroys their regional culture." Karl Polanyi described neo-liberalism as the process of capitalism reverting to its unregulated 17th Century Ricardian roots. John Paul II's *On Human Labour* and Baum's Massey Lecture *Compassion and Solidarity* both described this 1980 neo-liberal phase as promoting a society where each individual competed against the other. Rather than cooperative values, we were entering a period of anti-solidarity.

When Gregory Baum retired from St. Michael's College in 1986, he moved to McGill University where he came in contact with Marguerite Mandell and Kari Levitt-Polanyi, principals of the Karl Polanyi Institute for Political Economy. It was here that Baum learned about Karl Polanyi's deep respect for humanity that can only be advanced by "the universal call for solidarity, responsibility and respect for nature."

Polanyi's works have enriched Baum's theoretical work on social justice. He has used Polanyi to demonstrate how material poverty is not a tragedy when a culture embeds social solidarity through daily economic relations of producing and selling. When given community freedom, people can be creators, capable of inventing cultural tools that will sustain them.

"For Polanyi the destructive aspect of modern society was the self-regulating market, introduced in society by state power, which created isolated, competitive individuals and undermined the bonds of social solidarity, the matrix of human well-being. Polanyi showed how unfettered capitalism disembedded people's economic activities from their social relations and led to widespread rootlessness, loss of identity and spiritual anomie. Polanyi recognized a curious contradiction in the market system. On the one hand the system depended for its efficient operation upon many cultural (non-market) factors: virtues like honesty, trust, diligence and the support of families, neighbourhoods, communities. On the other hand, the market system undermined these cultural factors inherited from tradition and introduced fragmentation and instability. (Baum, *Karl Polanyi on Ethics and Economics*, MQUP, 1996)

Polanyi's main work, *The Great Transformation* was written in the United States in 1941 with the goal of deciphering why so many cultures succumbed to fascism in the 1920's and 1930's. He wanted to

demonstrate how the 17th century choice to transform land, labour and money into commodities and the accompanying disembedding of the economy from community, where it had formerly been submerged, was the root of the social tensions that had erupted in all out European war.

Polanyi cannot easily be categorized. He was a researcher of markets embedded in communities, he understood the benefits to human societies of increased material production and he was a critic of the bureaucratic welfare state. These ideas tie together in a coherent relationship that emphasized the importance of social protection and cooperation envisioned through mutual aid and democratic values where all transactions promote dignity. Polanyi sought to bolster democratic communities. In 1959, he emphasized these points in a review of Galbraith's *The Affluent Society*,

"What we all need... (is) not another car, a more expensive suit of clothes, of sales pressured pseudo-commodities, but the services provided by the village, town, the government, the voluntary association that add up to those preconditions of true life."

The Working Centre fits neatly into Polanyi's conception of how communities can function. Ken Westhues described this as, "acquiring of skills and seizing opportunities to produce many necessities and luxuries of life on one's own or in small groups. Unemployment from this perspective need not mean deprivation, the loss of the good life, but a chance to redefine the good life in a more genuine, joyful and sustainable way, more in terms of producing power than purchasing power." We try to continually express these ideals through supporting small scale production of things people use through our Community Tools projects, supporting simple living, assisting home production and helping people rethink the nature of work.

Gregory Baum kindly provided the Forward to The Working Centre's 1995 book, *Experiment in Social Change*. He concluded with this remark, "My hope is that in the present culture of anti-solidarity, the efforts of (cooperative) communities will not only help a growing number of people to live a life of dignity in difficult circumstances, but also promote a counter-cultural undercurrent in society spreading the ideals of cooperation and solidarity." We are honoured that Gregory will join us to further explore the deep meaning of social solidarity.

Diploma in Local Democracy: Guest Speaker Series

Wednesday March 18, 2009 at 7:30pm

~ Gregory Baum ~

Professor Emeritus of Theological Ethics and Sociology of Religion at McGill University, Baum presents Karl Polanyi and the Social Economy

Gregory Baum's work has helped define social justice work from a Christian perspective. A second edition of his seminal 1975 book, *Religion and Alienation* was republished by Novalis in 2006. Three of Baum's books are relevant to the cultural and spiritual development of The Working Centre and include *The Priority of Labour: Commentary on John Paul II's 'Laborem exercens'*, Paulist Press, 1982, *Compassion and Solidarity: The Church for Others (The 1987 CBC Massey Lectures)*, Anansi Press, 1988, and *Karl Polanyi on Ethics and Economics*, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996. In 1990, he was made an Officer of the Order of Canada.

Wednesday April 22, 2009 at 7:30pm

~ Jim Lotz ~

Author of The Lichen Factor: The Quest for Community Development in Canada, Lotz presents his people-centred community development ideas and experience

Jim Lotz is a freelance writer, teacher, consultant and independent researcher who has garnered wisdom watching and describing how community development, governments and individuals can work together to create better societies. His wisdom comes from 25 different jobs and volunteer assignments in community development. Jim, who lives in Halifax has been a friend of The Working Centre for almost 25 years and has provided ideas, guidance and support. His book, *The Lichen Factor: The Quest for Community Development in Canada* is highly recommended as an excellent guide to non bureaucratic practice. Jim will present his concept of community development and tell stories of effective community work.

Wednesday May 13, 2009 at 7:30pm

~ Ken Westhues ~

Sociology Professor at the University of Waterloo

Like people in most other countries, Canadians are divided into right and left. Those on the right want to enlarge the economic pie by encouraging technical innovation and competition in a market free of tampering by government. Like John McCain in the recent US election, they want everybody to get rich. Canadians on the left want government to take greater control of the economy, for the sake of a more equal division of the economic pie. Social justice is their watchword. In Part One of tonight's presentation, we look at the Working Centre from a conservative, rightist point of view, as a charitable organization by which those who succeed in the market economy take pity on those who fail and lend them a helping hand.

In Part Two, we look at the Working Centre from a liberal, social democratic, leftist point of view, as a way of resisting oppression and combating the cruelties inherent in the capitalist system. In Part Three, we look at the Working Centre from the inside, and see the inadequacy of both rightist and leftist points of view for understanding it. We review the principles and values that have guided the Working Centre from the beginning, like its nonmaterialist conception of a human being, its cultivation of reciprocity in human relations, its higher priority on making economic pie (producerism) than on eating it (consumerism), and its preference for personal, small-scale initiatives over mega-projects, whether run by private corporations or by governments. We highlight the institutions (like the Catholic Worker and Hull House) and thinkers (like E. F. Schumacher, Christopher Lasch, Ivan Illich, and Wendell Berry) to whom the Working Centre looks for guidance. The aim of this evening is to gain as accurate and comprehensive an understanding as possible of what the Working Centre is, and of what gives it special importance in the current economic crisis.

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