

Inn improvements



Charity Bull, supervisor at the Inn Out of the Cold homeless shelter, tends to laundry at the facility. A newly-installed washer and dryer, for use by shelter staff and volunteers for such things as blankets and linen, is an improvement at the shelter, which operates at Old St. Paul's Anglican Church in Woodstock.

By Eric Schmiedl

From increased security measures to an on-site washer and dryer, this season has seen plenty of changes for Operation Sharing's Inn Out of the Cold homeless shelter program.

"(The changes) mean improved dignity and safety for the guests and staff," said Coordinator Darryl Watson.

Where in past seasons there was an open-door policy for the Inn, which is hosted at Old St. Paul's Anglican Church in Woodstock, in its 14th season the facility has a newly-installed doorbell that people have to use. The door to the Inn remains locked until a staff member or volunteer opens it for an incoming guest. There are also plans in the works for security cameras.

And the washer and dryer, donated by Inn Supervisor Charity Bull, make things much better for Watson and his crew. In the past, blankets and other items had to be taken to a volunteer's home for washing – under the old system, items tended to pile up and take up space. Now, that isn't a problem.

Shower facilities, which have been recently added, enhance the experience at the Inn for the guests. Previously, guests could go to the

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Christmas Day Event

Close to 350 people gathered at College Avenue United Church for Operation Sharing's annual Christmas Day Event. They enjoyed food, gifts, music and games.

Shelter improvements

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YMCA in Woodstock for showers but that system added a layer of complication – now, guests can have a hot shower, hot meal and sleep comfortably all under one roof.

Cots have also been added to boost the sleeping experience for guests. Students in the College Avenue Secondary School woodworking department are also looking at making coat racks for people at the Inn.

“It’s great,” Watson said of the additions, which also include cable television this year. “I think it’s going great this season.”

Watson also heads Operation Sharing’s Cynthia Anne Centre for Addictions and has linked that program with the Inn this season, which provides guests

with support for addictions and mental health issues.

Evening meals are provided by Boston Pizza, Swiss Chalet, East Side Mario’s, Kelsey’s, Montana’s and Algonquin Public School teachers as well

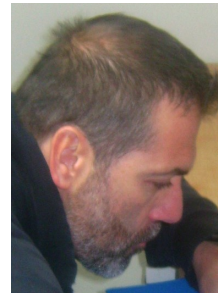
as other volunteers.

Watson thanked them, saying the Inn could not run without donations and volunteer efforts. And he had high praise for Old St.

Paul’s for all the church has done over the years.

Near the end of January

this year, Watson said, the Inn has averaged eight guests a night. And female guests have been on the rise – at that point, there had been seven female guests, compared with a high of six for a whole season previously. “Maybe it’s a change in society,” Watson said of the increase in female guests.



**Darryl
Watson**

Submissions to newsletter are welcome

Submissions to *Helping in Unity* are welcome. They are subject to editing for spelling and grammar, legal issues and other editorial considerations. Submissions could include information on events concerning Operation Sharing and letters to the editor.

The editor reserves the right to withhold publication of various submissions in the newsletter.

Submissions for consideration to be published can be e-mailed to eric schmiedl@yahoo.ca — first and last name as well as a phone number should accompany submissions.

Call 519-539-3361 for information about any of our programs.

County backs poverty eradication

By Eric Schmiedl

County of Oxford Council has voted to eradicate poverty within the municipality's borders.

However, just how that will play out remains to be seen.

"We don't have a definite plan," Peter Crockett, county CAO/clerk, told Oxford councillors before the vote at council's Nov. 22 meeting. Rather, citing various leaps of faith council had made previously regarding such things as aiming for a zero target for waste in Oxford, Crockett asked council to make another such leap.

Something is certain: Cutting poverty to nil in the county won't happen quickly. In addition, it could involve various levels of government.

"It will not happen overnight. It will happen incrementally," Crockett said, adding other support programs for people in poverty are mere band-aids.

"It (eliminating poverty) is possible and it's the right thing to do.

"It's about the well-being of our community," Crockett said.

The council vote comes on the heels of a two-day event in September, organized by Operation Sharing, that included a town hall meeting and

subsequent gathering of local leaders. That gathering led to the formation of the Zero Poverty Oxford Action Committee and a joint declaration against poverty. The declaration is as follows:

"Reducing poverty in Oxford County is the right thing to do. Through leadership, innovation and transformed relationships, by working to eliminate poverty, Oxford County will achieve health, well-being and prosperity gains, and be a stronger community for all."

Council voted to support that declaration in addition to its zero poverty in Oxford move. In addition, it directed county staff to work in consultation with the committee to come up with a draft Zero Poverty Oxford strategy.

Crockett said the aim would not be to provide people in poverty with lavish living. Rather, the goal would be to provide "reasonable lifestyles." Such things as housing and transportation are other issues that would need to be addressed.

A delegation representing the committee outlined the need for an anti-poverty strategy to council.

Delegation member Dr. Tracy Smith-Carrier, professor and researcher at King's College – University of Western Ontario in the department of

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Food for Friends

OXFORD COUNTY - Please remember to continue to give generously your 25 cents each time you shop at local supporting grocery stores in Woodstock and Ingersoll year round.

Extended Family

OXFORD COUNTY – The Extended Family Project is helping people in poverty in a variety of ways.

Potential volunteers are asked to call 519-539-3361.

Cynthia Anne Centre

OXFORD COUNTY – The centre, the head office of which is at Old St. Paul's Anglican Church in Woodstock, supports those with drug and alcohol addictions. It's free of charge for those 16 and up.

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County backs poverty eradication

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social work, explained that “eliminating poverty is doable.”

“Poverty is expensive,” she said, remarking that increased health and social costs come as part of the price tag, in addition to issues of suicide ideation. Also, generally, 70 per cent of the people in poverty

are working, sometimes juggling three to four jobs. And council heard that 61 per cent of those in poverty in the county are working.

In September’s town hall meeting, renowned researcher Dr. Lynn McIntyre pegged the guaranteed annual income a person in poverty should receive at \$16,850.

Opinion

County action on poverty welcome

The time has come for poverty eradication.

County of Oxford Council has voted to rid residents within the municipality’s borders of this plague, which has afflicted people here and beyond for far too long. The devil is in the details, however. Just how it will happen remains to be seen.

But, by making what has been described by county staff as a leap of faith, county councillors are doing the right thing.

Such things as a guaranteed annual income are welcome but are nothing new. Other areas of the world have experimented with these matters, and indeed, testing in guaranteed incomes in various Ontario municipalities is already underway, thanks to the provincial government.

And in Canada, specifically in Manitoba, the idea was tested years ago.

That testing in Dauphin, Manitoba between 1974



Eric Schmiedl
Helping in Unity

and 1979 pointed to the success that comes with giving everyone money, regardless of their socioeconomic status – for a time, everyone got a top-up to a basic income. The Canadian experiment was so successful in battling poverty that the participants thought it would go national. The program was ultimately buried under boxes of paperwork.

Such a program, if it came to fruition here and around the world, would greatly benefit society in a number of ways. First of all, we could bid farewell to poverty once and for all.

Social service and health costs would plummet, as everyone could afford a healthier diet and their medications – things that people in poverty often can’t adequately pay for. In addition, everyone would have more money to spend on goods and services, sparking the local, national and international economies in ways that nothing else could.

With the world as a whole richer than it’s ever been, the time has come for a guaranteed annual income.

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