

May 2006 Unity Project Newsletter

The Unity Project provides emergency shelter and transitional housing, supporting self-help where people are struggling to escape and avoid homelessness.

BEAT

UP Residents hold press conference

On December 9, Unity Project residents held a press conference on the special difficulties of having no home for the holidays. The residents did a great job communicating concerns and the journalists did a great job conveying their message. Stories appeared in the London Free Press, 'Respect Can Help the Homeless'

(Ian Gillespie, Dec. 10, '05); London This Week, 'Unity Project Offers Shelter without Labels', (Cyndi Mills, Dec. 14, '05); East Side Story, 'Unity Project Asks for Compassion' (David Dimitrie, Jan. '06); UWO's The Gazette, 'Homeless population rising: London shelters strain to meet demand' (Nancy Gray, Jan 27, '06);

Fanshawe College's *The X* did a feature documentary. Residents felt the coverage helped to break down the stereotype of homeless people as lazy freeloaders. As one resident put it, "homeless people are doing the best they can to take care of themselves and the people around them, just like everybody else....."

Unity Project Asks for Compassion

Thoughts on building life UP

Millard MacDonald

The other day as my girl and I were walking downtown, we came across a group of men who were about to tear a building down... and with a lofty heave and a mighty yell, they swung this big steel ball... then the side wall fell. I asked the foreman, "Are your men skilled like the ones you would use if you had to build?" He just laughed at me and said, "No indeed! The most common of labourers is all I need, for I can

destroy in a day or two what many, many builders may have taken a year to do."

So, I thought to myself, as Kristina and I wandered away, "Which of these roles at the Unity Project will we play? Will we be wreckers who will go around content with the labour of tearing down, or will we be builders who will build with care, yet take time to love and time to share?"

Working together, our lives are better!!!



Holidays good time for Unity
Residents enjoy backpacks donated by Canadian Auto Workers. Thanks to Santa (Monty) and his elves (CAW local 27 Women's Committee) and to Londoners for the outpouring of support.

Unity Golf Classic: Unique 2-Man Scramble

Wednesday June 14th

Greenhills Golf and Country Club in Lambeth

Lunch on the course, putting contest, cocktails, silent auction, dinner and prizes!

Format: 2-Man Scramble

Entry Fee: \$200/player - Golfer's Gift, Power Golf Cart, Lunch and Dinner
Shot Gun Start Noon, 18-Hole, 144 player limit, 3 flights - men, women, mixed
Sponsorship opportunities available for Hole, Lunch, Cart and Major Sponsors
Contact: Rick Odegaard (t) 473-4661 (f) 1-866-251-7066 (e) rick@odegaard.ca

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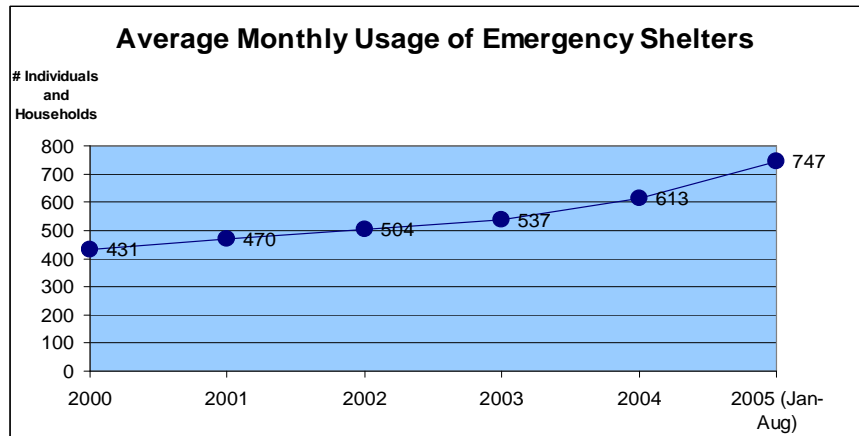
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Homelessness Sucks Even More

Silvia Langer

Our experience of rising demand for emergency shelter and transition housing is confirmed by the city's published statistics included in the January 16, 2006 agenda for the Community and Protective Services Committee. Since 2000, average monthly usage has increased some 73%.

Hundreds of beds have been added to emergency shelters since the summer of our tent-city protest, and still there are not enough! Community supports are good, but likewise too few for the need. Very little new affordable or supported housing has been built. We all do what we can with the resources available, but pure inputs to the homeless person, like gassing up a car or fixing its



Appendix A: emergency shelter Utilization Item #4, p. 15 Agenda – community and Protective Services Committee (Jan 16, 2006)

broken axel, do not get the person up and running and housed again. Homelessness exists for a variety of socio-economic reasons, almost none of which are curable by social service programming alone. This growing crisis cannot be a permanent or acceptable feature of life in London.

What's a citizen to do?

Get Involved...

The London Homeless Coalition exists to advise, shape and coordinate community responses to homelessness, and related needs to the London area. Visit the web site at www.housing.london.ca or call (519) 963-0199

Endorse the Toronto Disaster Relief Committee *1% Solution* at www.tdrc.net

"At the Unity Project we have each other, and the staff are real, quality people. It was unfair how I got here... but people here do really well because of the home atmosphere. We respect the rules that keep us safe while allowing us to be free. We do everything together in running things, cooking and cleaning and doing things for ourselves, which is more like reality and brings us together."

Young resident, homeless for 3 years.

City Cap Lifted

The City of London has lifted a cap on the number of Unity Project beds it will fund. Under the cap, the UP could bill the city for up to 23 emergency shelter places per night, even though, like the other shelters in London, UP was regularly providing more. However, the UP was not paid for services provided beyond the 23-bed limit. Now, we are funded for all eligible shelter residents. We continue to serve all those in need and to depend on community support, but we are beginning to leave dire straights behind. Thanks to London's service providers for supporting our cause. The City also provided \$3,000 to support emergency needs in the high demand winter period. Thanks for that. It really helped.



UP in pictures:

The Ontario Real Estate Association Foundation films on site at the Unity Project. The OREA Foundation granted the UP over \$6,500 to support furnace replacement and repair to heating and cooling systems.

UP WITH ART



Call to Patrons of the Arts

Support the **Art in the Community** project with donations of art supplies including canvasses, paint, paint brushes, and more.

Call Rachel Ayres for more information at 433-8700.

The first Annual **UP with Art!** show, (Nov 11, 2005) was a fun-filled evening of art and music with a social conscience. The show brought close to 100 supporters to the Guildhouse Gallery to schmooze over wine and cheese and to buy *great art* at *affordable prices!*

Some of the proceeds from the event will support the *Art in the Community* project, a UP plan to encourage the talents of impoverished artists. Workshops and art supplies will be offered to shelter residents and interested Londoners with the intent that some of the work produced will seed future **UP with Art!** shows and other creative products, such as post cards, to be sold to provide income to the participating artists.

UP with Art! thanks Tamara Moro (above) of Guildhouse Gallery, contributing artists; Mary Young (yum, yum food); Matti Paquiz (music!), and; most heartily the *UP with Art!* committee of coordinating volunteers, including Linda Moore, Rachel Ayres and Paris Meilleur.



photographs by Ian MacEachern

Many, many thanks to artists donating their work and contributing to the relief of homelessness in London...

Rachel Ayres, Bob Bozak, Sarah Bronwyn, Jen Cunningham, Daniel Grace, Chuck Lazenby, Eugene Lee, Linda Moore, Tamara Moro, Peyton Moro-Kirton, Nathalie Moynagh, Judy Odegaard, Sandra Odegaard, Matti Paquiz, Craig Peltzer, Mo Vasquez, Vilmos, Jack Wiggett, Katherine Wiggett, and an Unknown Contributor

Who's UP

Staff

Chuck Lazenby
Matti Paquiz
Trevor McNaughton
Mike McGregor
Jim Corbett
Rachel Ayres
Shirley Gordon
Linda Moore
Vydel Sands
Mary Young
Eithne Griffiths
Yvette Conley
Sandy Thompson

Directors

Silvia Langer
Rick Odegaard
Christina Benedict
Gil Warren
Michael Klug
Susan Eagle
Donna Sharon
Tammy Conner
Amanda Grzyb
Chuck Stafford



UP Spotlight

Jeremy McNaughton has been involved in anti-poverty activism a long time. As a founding member, Jeremy has shown his dedication to the Unity Project by contributing years of hard work and time, and currently working to revise policies, procedures and bylaws. Jeremy has also worked at the Housing Registry as a Youth Housing Worker and Rent Bank Coordinator, served on the London Homeless Coalition Steering committee, volunteered at Street Connection, and is currently engrossed in his newest personal project www.londoncommons.net

Becca MacDonald has contributed over 300 hours to the front-line over the last year. Becca is an inspiration, with her bouyant personality and enthusiasm for even the most mundane tasks. Thank you Becca, for your dependability and for giving it your all! Becca is 28 years young, plays baseball and volunteers at the First Church of Christ for their free store and food bank.

Welcome to our new Frontline Volunteers: Jolene Sankey, Glenda Gilbert, Susan Ramsay, Jackie Strybos, Barb Bonk, William Handler, Jodi Blewett, and Kim Mater

“Unity Project believed in me until... I believed in myself!”

Linda Moore

Leathers With Class was an action plan that got into motion when Chuck Miller came to the Unity Project in the depths of a depression. “I was ready to get on my motor bike and hit the road... I had no where to go, and nothing to believe in... basically it would have been a suicide run”. It started to snow, so he checked into the UP. There he found privacy of thought, people who listened without prying, and cared without judgement.

Gradually, Chuck began to act on an interest-- an old passion of his-- in leather work. He picked up some leather scraps and crafted a few pieces. People liked what they saw and requests poured in:



Front-line staffer Shirley Gordon shows off custom made boots by Chuck Miller. Leathers with Class

from bits and pieces and recycled coats he gave birth to a dream.

Forfeiting a military pension, Chuck channelled energy and time into his business. He was awarded start-up funds for submitting one of the top business proposals in the Small Business Association's Entrepreneurial Program

At Leathers With Class, each hand-sewn original brings more requests. Since *Chatelaine* and *Loulou*, featured some of Chuck's work, he has had hundreds of hits on-line. Recently, Chuck was approved for a small business loan, and he plans to open a store in London's fashion district, midsummer.

contact Leathers with Class
cjmiller@hotmail.com

Personal Needs Drive at *Your* Workplace or School

It's easy to help UP residents to meet personal needs for good health and hygiene. Organize a *Personal Needs Drive* in your workplace (or school or group). Here's what you do:

- Choose an item or two to feature or provide a list
- Distribute a flyer explaining what to do and when
- Collect the items in a bin
- Deliver to the Unity Project, or call us and we'll pick up

We can help ... we can make a presentation, make a poster, or put out a media release to recognize your act of kindness.

For information, call Silvia Langer at 433-8700
or email unitylondon@bellnet.ca

Personal Needs List:

socks, underwear, toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, shampoo, conditioner, tampons & pads, razors, shaving cream, hand sanitizer



Front-line staffer Rachel Ayres cuddles a 3-month old cutie who is back for a visit. Matti Pauquiz looks on.

Volunteer Opportunities

Front Line Volunteers for evening shifts, 7-10pm are greatly needed

House help: volunteers with car/truck for occasional donation pick-ups needed.

Jack-of-All-Trades: we would welcome a volunteer maintenance supervisor to assess and complete minor and ongoing building repairs.

Team Leaders and Players:

Volunteer positions available in Marketing and Communications, Corporate and Foundation Proposals, Event Coordination, and Community Outreach

Support the Unity Project for Relief of Homelessness in London

Donate today! Send cheque to: Unity Project

717 Dundas Street London ON N6C 1E8

You can also donate by credit card – call 433-8700