

MINDING OUR OWN BUSINESSES

Chapter One

How Lemon & Allspice Cookery Began 1997 - 1998

A Little Cookie Business

It all started with Cathy Lemon and some of her friends. They began selling donuts and coffee at the Community Living¹ building at 20 Spadina Road in downtown Toronto. They set up a table near the front entrance of the building and someone from the group (perhaps Donna or Cathy) would walk down Spadina Road to Bloor Street, buy boxes of donuts and bring them back. Then they would put them out on a table for sale at a slightly higher price. They made decaf and regular coffee in a small kitchen and served it hot from thermoses. The staff people who worked at Community Living bought the donuts and coffee. At the end of each day, one of the staff, Paul Samson, would count up the money. He gave the profit to the people who had worked at the table that day. Cammie Gatiss worked as the receptionist at the front desk at that time. She always welcomed and encouraged the people who sold donuts and others who "hung out" there. That was in the days before Community Living built the Harry Foster Clubhouse.²

Cathy and her friends decided to call their snack table "The Coffee Den". One day Cathy asked Paul Samson if she could bake some chocolate chip cookies at home in her kitchen and bring them to the table to sell. Paul agreed. Each week Cathy baked one or two dozen cookies and took them in to sell. People liked them and bought them. That was the beginning of the idea of a little cookie business!

Cathy lived in her own apartment in the Croll building on Bloor Street. It was not very far from the Community Living building on Spadina Road. Five of Cathy's friends lived in the same building: Blair, Petra S., and Petra T. and two others. They each lived in their own apartment. None of them had a job, but they wanted to work. They and their families found out that the Ontario government wanted to help

¹ Community Living is an organization that provides services to people with developmental disabilities.

² Reference harryfosterfoundation.org/biophage.html

them find jobs. By this time, Cathy had a dream. She wanted to start her own business where she could bake and sell more of her chocolate chip cookies.

Getting a Grant

My husband Jim and I are Cathy's parents. We were one of the six families who applied to the government for money to help our adult children find work. Our family asked for enough money to pay someone to help Cathy start a bakery. On December 16th 1997, good news came. Cathy was accepted for the Ontario government project on individualized funding!³ The five others living in the Croll building were also accepted. The project was to be handled by Family Services.⁴ Our families hoped that this would assist our young people to find lasting meaningful work. Family Services asked each of the adult children to work with their families to write down some ideas about the work they wanted to do.

1998 - Making Plans

The six families got together in the next three months to make plans. But it was not easy to figure out how to start up a business. Only Cathy wanted to do baking. Others in the group had different ideas. There were many things that had to be worked out for Cathy. We would need a commercial kitchen and someone to help us. It all seemed like a lot of work. It was easy to get discouraged.

One day in March, David Pitt called me. He was a manager at Community Living. David knew about our group of families. He was certain that Family Services was going to give some money to us if we could come up with good plans. David spoke with me for a long time. He said, "Don't be discouraged and don't give up on your plans. Community Living will help you". And Community Living did help!

Just two weeks later, on April 4th, Community Living held a workshop. Many families attended. Wade Wright from Community Living in Kingston, Ontario came to speak to us. He told us about the businesses that he and others had started up in Kingston six years before. He gave us a lot of hope that we could do the same!

I worked all the next day to write a proposal for Cathy's funding. The workshop had given me the help I needed to plan the business Cathy wanted to set up. I didn't

³ This Ontario Government project was called Individualized Quality of Life, or IQOL. Today it is called Options. It is still operated by Family Services Assn.

⁴ Family Services is an organization that serves families, individuals and communities living in the City of Toronto, especially those who are marginalized and disadvantaged.

know at the beginning of the day if I could complete the proposal for the business. But I wrote, and I talked with people, and the proposal came together.

A few days later I attended another meeting of "The Coffee Den" group at Community Living at 20 Spadina Road. I was amazed at how this project was making changes in the lives of those who participated - Cathy and all the others. I listened to them and I learned. I began to work even harder on the plans for a business.

By this time, David Pitt had become more interested in the bakery project. He told me that I was in a unique position to extend the good things happening at The Coffee Den. David helped me to arrange a meeting with four of the staff people at Jessie Manson Centre, a sheltered workshop run by Community Living. They listened to my idea. They asked questions, and made suggestions. At the end of the meeting they were very enthusiastic about the bakery business project. They were willing to help get it started. I had asked for help and found what I needed. I believed this would be wonderful for Cathy and her friends!

On April 30, 1998, I sent in a proposal to Family Services. I asked for the money to pay a part-time Job Coach for Cathy's business. On May 7th, the proposal was accepted. Cathy and I signed the papers on May 21st to start a bakery business. Community Living told Cathy she could use their kitchen at Sibley House. Sibley House is a group home near Victoria Park and Danforth in Toronto. Cathy decided to open for business on July 2nd. Community Living referred two of their clients to us - Mark and Gregory. They wanted to join her business. Cathy tells it this way: "I first started baking chocolate chip cookies at home. I decided to sell them at Community Living. When we started to sell cookies there, people got interested and wanted to work with me, and that is how my friends, Gregory and Mark, started to work with me."

Opening the Business - Making a Dream Come True

Things moved very fast once Cathy had decided to go ahead with her plan! But there was one more task that had to be done. Cathy and I needed to find a Job Coach. We didn't have to look very long. I met David Chivers at a Karma Food Coop⁵ party on June 20th. David and I had never met before. He told me he was looking

⁵ Karma Co-op is a non-profit food store owned co-operatively by its members who shop there. Karma has sold cookie packages from Lemon & Allspice Cookery for many years.

for part-time work. He said that he had once worked for Community Living in Sarnia, Ontario. I invited David Chivers for an interview the next day with Cathy, myself and Cathy's worker, Julie Ugwu. We liked David and he accepted our offer to be the very first Job Coach for the little cookie business! The money to pay David Chivers for this part-time job would come from the Family Services grant. Now everything was ready to open the business on July 2nd.

But first I invited David, Mark, Gregory and Cathy to go on a trip by car all the way to Kingston, Ontario. There we met Wade Wright who had come to speak at the workshop at Community Living in April. He was the person from Community Living Kingston who had helped start some businesses there. He was pleased to have us come and see their businesses and meet the people who ran those businesses. We had a great day and drove back home full of ideas for starting our own business!

Five days later, the same five of us made a visit to Sibley House. There we saw the kitchen for the first time. The kitchen had everything we would need: counters, sinks, cupboards, a big oven and a refrigerator, pots and pans, knives and mixing bowls. We all agreed, "It's going to be super!"

On July 2nd, David C., Mark, Cathy and Gregory were hard at work. They were getting the kitchen organized on their first day at work. I stopped by for a visit. I told them it looked like the work of the business was unfolding very nicely. They seemed to be enjoying it. Everyone was gaining confidence. The next day, they made and sold their very first batch of cookies!



CATHY, MARK AND GREGORY MAKE THEIR FIRST BATCH OF COOKIES

Deciding on a Name for the Business

The first week went very well. But there was one problem. The business did not have a name! We talked among ourselves, trying to decide what to call it. We agreed that maybe it should be Lemon and.... something, but what? We were thinking of different spices that might sound good with Lemon. Suddenly Cathy remembered one spice she used in making special meatballs and pumpkin pie at Christmas time every year. It was called allspice. We found out that allspice is a small brown berry that grows on a myrtle tree. The scent and flavour of this spice is like a mixture of cloves, cinnamon and nutmeg. They were the kind of spices we used in our cookies. So we tried saying "Lemon and Allspice". It sounded good when we said it a few times. We thought about calling the business Lemon and Allspice Bakery. But we finally decided on Cookery because it meant we could make other kinds of food, not just baked goods. So we all agreed on the name Lemon and Allspice Cookery!

David Calls Ireland and Joan Joins the Cookery Staff

Jim and I took a trip to Europe in July. We left the Business in the capable hands of David Chivers, Cathy, Mark and Greg. I gave them telephone numbers where I could be reached while I was away. One day, Jim and I were visiting friends in Ireland. A long distance phone call came through from David Chivers. He said he was taking courses. He didn't think he could handle both the job coaching at the Cookery and his courses. He said he had found someone to replace himself. I asked David if he could reduce his hours at the Cookery and keep on working with us. He could share the job with the new person he had found. David agreed and we were happy not to lose him.

When we came back from Europe in August, I met the new person David had found. Her name was Joan Barnett. She was willing to share the job with David! Julie Ugwu, Cathy, and I interviewed Joan the next day. We decided to hire her. We didn't know then that Joan would become our most senior Job Coach, staying with the Cookery for many years. We liked her right from the beginning. Joan and David, working with Cathy, Mark and Greg, had the business going very well in its first three months.

Down to Business and Hard Work

When September came, business really picked up. There were lots of small orders for cookies. At the end of the first week of September, we got our first big order

for 200 cookies! Then the Annex Fall Fair was announced. The Fair was in the neighbourhood where Cathy lived. Lemon and Allspice took their cookies to sell at a table there. Our new promotional flyers were ready and we took them along too. More and more people were getting to know about us.

The next big order was to cater a special reception. Community Living was going to celebrate the opening of the brand new Harry Foster drop-in centre on Birch Avenue. Preparing the food for the reception was a lot of work. But the table looked beautiful with all the Cookery food on it. About 60 people came and many took our flyers.



MARK AND CATHY CATERING THE COMMUNITY LIVING RECEPTION OUR FIRST BIG ORDER

By the end of September, Greg, Cathy and Mark were feeling tired. That's because they were so busy baking and delivering the smaller orders of food on the buses and subways of the TTC. Mark and Cathy were working five or six hours every weekday. Greg worked with them in the mornings and then went to Jessie Manson Centre sheltered workshop in the afternoons. Greg wasn't sure which

place he liked best. (He decided a few months later it was Jessie Manson.) Cathy and Mark felt a similar conflict between the business and their other activities, such as Special Olympics. All three were not used to the responsibilities of steady work. But Cathy and Mark were beginning to thrive as they gained confidence and recognition. They began to realize they were now part of the work force.

One year earlier, I had retired after many years of teaching school. I felt some conflict too. Here are some thoughts that I wrote down at that time:

What I'm learning is that this business of ours is going to be a full-time job for me for a while. I did not really expect this when I retired. I feel divided too, like Gregory, Mark and Cathy. I enjoy working on the business and seeing it do well. I like meeting new people and finding support for the idea. I like seeing our idea coming to be... But then I think about other things I could do in my retirement. The business is not something I can set aside - its demands are there all the time every day. It would be nice to "keep it simple", as David Pitt advises, but business is not simple. I can try to make my work easier by bringing in consultants to help. But it takes time to arrange that. It would be nice to just live one day at a time but the business demands planning. I will call a business meeting. I want to talk about how we can divide the responsibilities better. But the reality is that part-time Job Coaches are not going to be enough.

Here is a typical day at the Cookery in early October 1998: I drove at 6:30am to a bakery in Kensington Market to buy fresh rolls for sandwiches. At 7:30 everyone arrived at Sibley kitchen. We baked and we made sandwiches, everyone feeling happy. Joan and David took some orders on the phone. I worked on inventory and finance. At 11:30 I dropped Gregory and a punch bowl off at Jessie Manson workshop. At noon, we delivered foods to a luncheon at Trinity St. Paul's United Church. At 12:15 we delivered an order to Community Living at 20 Spadina Road. That day it began to feel like a real business!

Helping the Business Grow

By October, we had found a wholesaler company. The wholesaler would deliver food supplies, such as flour, butter, eggs, sugar, bread and milk to the Cookery. That meant we didn't have to take time to go out and purchase them ourselves. We got busy with Halloween cookies. We delivered the last few orders just in time for

Halloween on October 31st. It was the end of a very happy and successful month at the kitchen!

We were finding many good friends. Trinity St. Paul's United Church donated \$500 to the Cookery. Our good friend Chris Tolley (Petra's dad) gave the Cookery a used computer. He did even more than that. He showed us how to use a spreadsheet programme on the computer.

Joan, David C. and I got together to talk about how it felt working together in the business. David said he liked working in the Cookery and he wanted to stay on. Joan felt the same way. We were very grateful for good, caring and devoted Job Coaches like David and Joan.

As December began, our workers and coaches planned special treats and packaging for Christmas. Bigger and bigger orders were coming in. One day, Cathy and I delivered 22 dozen cookies to Emmanuel College while Mark and Gregory folded new flyers. On another day we received an order from Karma Co-op for dozens of cookies and brownies. They were all for a movie shoot! It took six hours to finish all that baking! Cathy, Mark, Gregory, Joan and David worked every weekday that month to bake hundreds of Christmas cookies. Cathy and Mark used their earnings for their work in November (\$172 between them) to buy Christmas presents for their families.

Chapter Two

Building a Circle of Friends

1999

The New Year

The Cookery closed over the holiday season in December. But we looked back on successful sales of Christmas cookies. In early January, we called a meeting of everyone who had a part in starting the Cookery. The 18 people who came were the beginning of a new circle of friends that Lemon and Allspice was building! A big snowstorm arrived on that day but people came to the meeting at Sibley House anyway. All who attended were amazed at what we had accomplished in the first six months of our operation.

Our First Open House

At that same meeting, we decided to have an Open House at the Sibley kitchen in February. It would be our very first of many Open Houses to follow in the coming years. We made invitations on sheets of lemon yellow paper. Joan designed a logo for the Cookery and we printed it at the top of the invitation. We mailed some invitations out, and gave some to our friends. The Open House was wonderful! There were not a lot of people, but those who came were impressed. Cathy and Mark were amazing hosts. They were proud of their business. They showed how they could be so much more than we, or they, imagined!

Valentine Cookies and a Valentine Luncheon

On Valentine's Day, we served lunch to 75 people at Trinity St. Paul's United Church. Cathy, Mark, Joan and David had help from two volunteers who were friends of Cathy's - Miriam and Robbie. The lunch went well and we received much positive feedback! It also led to three new lunch orders from members of the church for the month of March. February was a good month because we made and sold lots of Valentine cookies.

New People Arrive

Word got around about the Cookery. People began to ask if others could join Cathy, Mark and Gregory in the kitchen. With business increasing, the workload was heavy. So in February, we asked Paul C. to start work with the Cookery. On March 1st Donna joined us too. That made five - Cathy, Mark, Greg, Paul and Donna! There was a good feeling of openness and enthusiasm.

One day, Paul burst into the kitchen, He told us with great excitement that he had made his first sale for the business! Soon after, we had our first Saturday order - to bake and deliver muffins. Joan and Donna volunteered to look after that, coming in early on Saturday morning. It was good to have the extra help from Paul and Donna.

Goals

My aim by this time was to see the Business grow and succeed. I hoped that more young people could benefit from working in the kind of atmosphere that we were developing in our kitchen. I found the following words and thought it sounded a little like us:

"We believe in an ethic of work in which all participants enjoy what they are doing and are learning together. 'We share our work and the lessons of our work. In learning together, we are strong, and our work deepens and thrives.' In the work we do here, 'we begin to define and re-define the world for ourselves, making the world our own, rather than someone else's place that we inhabit and serve.'* Our richest quality is enthusiasm for what we are doing together."

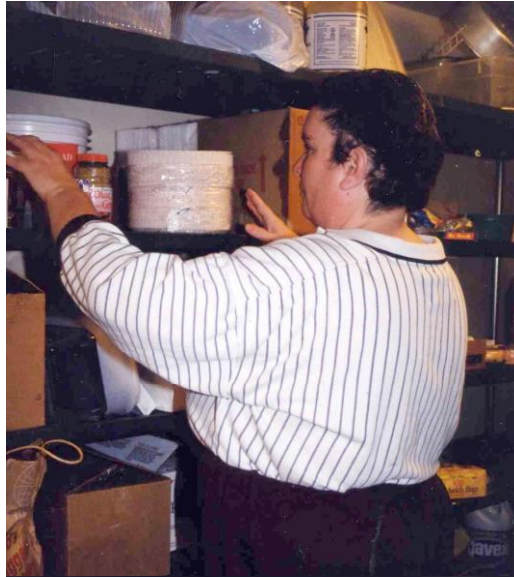
*Quotes from Gladys Acosta, Peruvian human rights lawyer. She worked with women in Peru who had started a business of making and dying yarn from sheep's wool and selling it. Inter Pares Bulletin.

Special Visitors Arrive

We had some special visitors at the end of March. Thinking back a few months, we remembered the trip Cathy, Mark, Gregory, David and I had made to Kingston. That was just a few days before we first opened the Cookery. We visited Wade Wright there and learned about the businesses he had started with the people there. Now it was Wade's turn to visit us and see the Business we had started. After Wade saw the Cookery, I invited him to meet with me and with Brian Iler. Brian was my lawyer and friend. Brian, Wade and I talked about the ways we could help the business to grow. That same day we had a visit from Robert Bingham from Community Living. He offered his help to grow the business. I was feeling surrounded by people who understood the joy of working with people with disabilities. We saw ourselves as their equals.

The TTC Strike

The participants in the Cookery Business depended on the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) subways, streetcars and buses to get to work. They also used the TTC to deliver many of the smaller orders. On April 19, 1999, the TTC drivers went on a strike. That made things difficult for the Business! But Cathy, Mark and Donna, Joan and I all got to the kitchen and worked hard to complete the orders. The next day the strike continued. We completed four orders in my kitchen at home. It was easier to get there when there was no TTC. Those were two difficult days, but we filled all our orders. The team agreed we had fun during the strike.



DONNA CHECKS THE INVENTORY IN THE STOREROOM AT SIBLEY HOUSE

Learning to Work Together Better

Greg, Cathy and Mark were struggling to learn how to work with one another. They got angry sometimes, but looked for solutions. They stuck with the Cookery Business because it had become important to them. Donna had started to develop an attachment to the others and to the Business. Paul was enthusiastic but was not able to continue with us. David and Joan expressed their concerns to me about some of the behaviour going on in the kitchen. They came up with some ways to try to change that. We decided to start each morning with a gathering. The purpose was to talk about what needed to be done that day and who would be responsible for each part of it. Each individual would tell the group about other activities they had in their day. They planned how to balance the work with these other commitments. We needed to apply a time frame to all our activities in order to reduce a feeling of pressure. We needed to start the day believing we could finish everything and feel enjoyment about what we were accomplishing.

We decided to make a list of the morning's work and the people who would be responsible for each task. Toward the end of the morning we reviewed that list. We got a better sense of our accomplishments. We could say, "Look how much we did!" Then we could evaluate how we did it. Did we have a "gold star" morning? Or did we fall short? If we did, how could we change that for tomorrow? A "gold star" morning meant every individual enjoyed our time together throughout the morning. Or, if there was a problem, it was dealt with in a satisfactory way for everyone. So our list of accomplishments included what we produced for the Business and how

well we cleaned up. But the list also included the good things we did for one another and for ourselves.

Looking After Our Money

Running the Business meant we had to keep track of the Business's money. For most of the first year, I did that job. I asked David Chivers to help me with that. But we didn't know very much about keeping accounting books. We didn't have enough money to pay someone to do it, so we looked for a volunteer bookkeeper. Hai Ling, a student in accounting, came to our rescue in June. When she had to leave, Chunha Park came to help with the bookkeeping. It was good to have help from these volunteers for a few months.



IN THE SIBLEY HOUSE KITCHEN: MARGARET, JOAN, HAI LING, CATHY, CAROLYN, MICHAEL MACKENZIE, KIRK, DONNA

The Cookery's First Anniversary

Suddenly it was the end of June. It was time to celebrate our first year in the Sibley House kitchen! It was also Mark's birthday. So-o-o we had a wonderful party in my back yard with Mark, Cathy, Donna, Paul, their friends Margaret and Ron, plus David and Joan. We photographed fruit and veggie trays for our flyers. We barbecued hot dogs and Cathy baked a cake with 33 candles for Mark. We played croquet and laughed a lot!

Getting Organized

Now that the Cookery was up and running, we had to think about how to organize ourselves. We wanted each person who worked in the Cookery to have a say in growing the Business. We asked ourselves, should we become a worker co-op like the ones we saw in Kingston?

I had asked that question when I met with Wade Wright and Brian Iler in March. Brian said no to the worker co-op idea after his discussion with Wade's lawyer in Kingston.⁶ What Brian did suggest was that we set up the Cookery as a legal Business **Partnership**. Then we could set up a **Co-op**, as a separate organization. The Co-op would have a Board of at least five Directors from the community. The Co-op would sign a contract with the Cookery for the services the Cookery would need from the Co-op. The Co-op could be a non-profit organization. That would make it easier to raise funds (money to pay job coaches) and develop the business to benefit more people.

The Birth of a Co-operative

By the end of September, I had found two new people from the community who were interested in what we were doing - Marg Murray and Ann Rowland. They got together with me to help set up a Co-op. The paperwork was done. We needed to talk about insurance and liability before we signed the papers. Karen Oster, from the Roehr Institute, called me to say that she and her husband, Ray, were very interested in what we were doing. Michael Mackenzie had been giving support to Margaret, a new worker in the kitchen. They were both in L'Arche⁷ and Michael was interested in our project too. When we had our second meeting there were five of us: Marg Murray, Ann Rowland, Michael Mackenzie, Ray Oster and myself.

Ray visited the kitchen a week later. He brought with him a set of new beautiful cutting Boards to donate to the kitchen. They were different colours for different foods, so meat and vegetables would never be chopped up on the same Board. It was wonderful to have so much good will, generosity and commitment!

⁶ Worker co-ops must pay minimum wage. Business partners are self-employed so they do not have to meet minimum wage standards.

⁷ L'Arche is an international organization, founded by Jean Vanier, where people with and without disabilities live and work together. There are four homes that make up the **L'Arche Toronto** community. There are 4-5 core members in each house and a team of 4 assistants.

Deciding on a Name for the Co-op

At the third meeting of the Co-operative, our five good Board members decided to call our new organization Common Ground Co-op. The idea came to me one day on my way to Sibley House from Victoria Park Subway Station. I liked the idea of people with disabilities sharing common ground with other people who work for a living. The other Board Members agreed to the new name.

Expanding Our Business

I had a friend who worked at Surrey Place Centre⁸ downtown near Women's College Hospital. I told her about the Coffee Den at Community Living and about the Cookery at Sibley House. My friend thought it would be wonderful to have a snack bar at Surrey Place. It could be a place where the people who worked in the Cookery could sell their cookies and coffee to the people who worked at Surrey Place. There was an extra table in the lounge on the third floor where the staff ate their lunches. We got approval to use that table.

Partners Donna and Margaret from Lemon & Allspice began serving food and coffee at Surrey Place in July. Donna and Margaret enjoyed working at Lemon & Allspice. But they decided they would like to sell cookies at the table in the lounge at Surrey Place instead. This was one year after we started the Cookery. (It was a long time before there was a Coffee Shed at Surrey Place.) Donna and Margaret did well at Surrey Place. The Cookery Partners were making plans to expand that little snack bar in the fall.

I bought a new computer for myself at home. I went on the internet for the very first time. I also set up my first e-mail address. Little did I know how that would change my life!

The summer months were not so busy. In the spare time we sometimes had in August, we tried some new recipes. Then suddenly on August 13th three big orders came in. I also set up an office. Lois Snow, the manager at Sibley house, had given us a tiny office space upstairs on the second floor above the kitchen. We put in some used office furniture and Lois got the office painted for us.

⁸ Surrey Place Centre is a community-based agency in Toronto that delivers services and programs to enhance the health and well being of people living with a developmental disability.

Starting Interviews for New Workers

Kirk wanted to work at the Cookery. On August 19th, he came in for an interview. Everyone had agreed it would be best to have interviews before taking on new workers. Mark and I interviewed Kirk and decided to bring him into the business in September. The next day we closed the Cookery for the last two weeks of August. Everyone was happy about that!

The Second Fall Season Begins

After our two-week break, eight people gathered in the kitchen at the beginning of September. We were six workers and two Job Coaches: Mark, Cathy, Donna, Margaret, Kirk, Joan, David, and another new worker, Richard, from Jessie Manson. Greg had decided to leave the Cookery. On our first day back, we tried out some new recipes. We continued our routine of meeting at the beginning of each morning to plan for the day. This worked well. Sibley kitchen was a lively place and new orders were coming in.

Sometimes everyone had to work long days. Mark worked 7½ hours one day when we had a big order early in September. He helped me with inventory and photocopying in the morning. In the afternoon, he cut veggies and did other food prep in the kitchen. He was pleased with himself. He was struggling to be responsible against the wishes of his friends who wanted him to go fishing.

The size of our orders was growing. We served food to over 100 people at the welcome back lunch at Trinity St. Paul's United Church. It was a wonderful sunny day at the Annex Fall Fair when our workers looked after a table. We made \$94 in sales of cookies and muffins. We celebrated total sales of over \$1800 in September and everyone was happy with their pay cheques!

Halloween Cookies

When October arrived, it was time to try out some batches of Halloween cookies. There we were, once again, a year later, making Halloween cookies - now eight people working with us, five in the kitchen at one time. As Halloween came nearer, our committed workers set up a table at Trinity St. Paul's United Church open house. They sold Halloween cookies. They made \$90 and took orders for more. It seemed like a miracle that our business was still growing!

Out of the Cold Programme - Bag Lunches

Another big step was the opening of an Out of the Cold programme. Trinity St. Paul's United Church decided to help homeless people. They gave space in their church gym for drop-in visitors to have a meal and a place to sleep. They did this for one day and overnight each week during the winter. The volunteers who ran the programme wanted to provide bag lunches from the Cookery to give the people some food to take away with them in the morning.

On Sundays, each month, I asked members of the Church congregation if they would purchase lunches from Lemon & Allspice. Every time I asked, members of the congregation purchased between \$300 and \$400 worth of lunches. The money went to the Cookery. We packed and delivered these lunches to the Out of the Cold Programme at the church on one Tuesday night each month. It was very good business for the Cookery. It was much appreciated by the homeless people who stayed overnight on mats on the gym floor in the church. After they were served breakfast in the morning, they would each receive a lunch for that day. The purchase of lunches from the Cookery went on in this way for eight years until the Out of the Cold programme was closed in 2008.

Hard Work

Some days we had hard work to do. Once we had to go to the kitchen at 7:30 on a Sunday morning to prepare and then deliver orders. Another day we had two big orders for 132 sandwiches. Kirk, Richard and I drove one of the orders all the way across the city to a community centre in Etobicoke. It felt good to be busy and working together. These eight young people were maturing rapidly as they took on more responsibility. Just once in a while I felt anxious about the future of the Cookery. Would we be able to keep it going?

A Partnership Agreement

Common Ground Co-op was getting a good start. At the same time, the Partners were working on an agreement with Brian Iler's help. It was called a Partnership Agreement. It would bring our workers together in a legal Business Partnership. The Agreement explained how a new partner could be brought into the business. It stated a method for removing a partner. It said that all Partners would share equally in the Partnership. It explained certain rights for the Partners, such as a two-week vacation every year. The Agreement said that the Partners would make all major decisions about the business. It also explained how disagreements among

the Partners would be settled. This was possibly the first ever Partnership Agreement written for people with disabilities who were running their own business!

Our Job Coaches, Joan and David, spoke to our workers about the Agreement. They invited Mark, Cathy, Kirk, Donna and Richard to discuss the Agreement with their counselors and parents at a meeting on November 26th. After that meeting, these five agreed that they would sign the Partnership Agreement on December 10th. On that day, Cathy, Donna and Kirk signed the Agreement. Richard had agreed to sign on the following Monday.

Mark was taking more time to consider. He knew it was a big commitment. He didn't want to sign it if he felt he couldn't live up to it. Also, Mark and Richard were having a difficult time getting along with one another. Mark wasn't sure he could continue to work with him. Mark took a break from the business for a few days to think things over. He came back saying he wanted to make a new effort to get along with Richard and to participate in the business. He knew they must try to resolve their differences.

On the 15th, Mark finally signed the Partnership Agreement. Three hours later, he and Richard got into an argument out on Sibley Avenue near Sibley House. After many smaller disagreements that were discussed and resolved temporarily, Mark "blew it", as he said himself. A man on a bike stopped and restrained Mark long enough to let Richard move on and get his bus. We who were in the kitchen did not see this happen. Lois Snow, Sibley House manager, witnessed the whole scene and was not happy. She worked hard to create the right image for Sibley House in the neighbourhood. The next day, Mark ended his relationship with the Partnership by quitting the Business. A few days after, the other four Partners signed a new copy of the Partnership Agreement.

As the Christmas holiday approached, Donna, Kirk, Cathy and Richard finished the last orders for the year. They were sorry to lose Mark but they wanted to continue to work at Sibley kitchen. Now that the Partnership Agreement was signed, these four workers had become the first Partners in the Business. They belonged to the Lemon & Allspice Cookery Business Partnership. From that time on, they called themselves **Partners**.

Chapter Three The Cookery Grows 2000

A New Century

As we began a new century in the year 2000, four exciting things happened.

1. Founding Members of Common Ground Co-op signed the incorporation papers.
2. Lemon & Allspice Business Partnership registered with the Ontario government.
3. The Co-op began to apply to organizations for more money for our project.
4. We bought a new computer for the business.

Cathy had this to say about registering Lemon & Allspice with the government: "I really wanted the business to be around for a long time, so we registered as a Partnership. That way no one but us could decide who worked here."

Working Together and Making New Friends

We had several interesting sales in February. Community Living's Foster Clubhouse building at 40 Birch Ave. had its official opening. This time the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario was there. Lemon & Allspice Cookery brought the refreshments.



OFFICIAL OPENING AT COMMUNITY LIVING'S NEW HARRY FOSTER CLUBHOUSE

A few days later, Donna and I set up a table at Karma Co-op and sold Valentine cookies from the Cookery. The next week we prepared a lunch for the Annual Meeting of Trinity St. Paul's United Church congregation. We made new friends in all these places. And we made nearly \$2000 when these sales and many others were added up. February was our best month ever!

Purchasing Food

If anyone asked Cathy about the food we made in the kitchen, she would say, "We were making all different things in the kitchen - like oatmeal and raisin cookies, muffins, lemon squares, brownies, date squares, sandwiches, and bean and pasta salads."

And how did we purchase the food we needed for the food we were preparing in the kitchen? We still ordered food from a company that delivered. But the company would not deliver our orders if they were too small. We had discovered Knob Hill Farms, a warehouse store not too far from the Cookery. It was in a huge building with high ceilings and wide aisles. People rode golf carts to get around to shop! We registered to shop there as they had special wholesale prices for food businesses. The Partners and Joan and I had great fun cruising around in a golf cart, taking the goods to the check-out, and then loading them into my brand new car. It was a

Toyota Rav 4 with a lot of space in the back. I also drove everyone to the Creative Bags store we had found out about. They had lovely baskets and decorative wrappings for Easter and other holidays. That spring we sold Easter baskets with cookies in them.

The First Business Partnership Meeting

Donna chaired the Business Partnership meeting on March 1st. I was impressed by the maturity the Partners showed in this meeting. This was the first meeting they ran by themselves! The next day, Kirk brought me a list of ideas about how to improve our lives together in the kitchen. He was going to chair our next meeting and he wanted to present the list there. He was very serious about taking responsibility for the business. Our job was to encourage him and the others to do this. Kirk did present his ideas at the next meeting. David Pitt attended along with all the Partners and the Job Coaches. Afterward, Joan invited everyone to her house for a potluck dinner. Richard played his reggae music and danced, and some of us joined in. We all laughed and enjoyed ourselves.

Selling Cookies in a North York Theatre

On March 29th, we saw a wonderful show at the Performing Arts Centre in North York. It was put on by the members of L'Arche. They had asked us to sell cookies at several food stands in the lobby before the show. We baked 3000 cookies for this event! We didn't sell all of them, but we gave out 70 of our flyers. It was a monumental effort and our Partners did very well! This was a great accomplishment for them. The evening job for L'Arche brought in \$700 for the business.

Wellesley Hospital Kitchen

The Cookery began a friendship with the Afghan Women's Catering group.⁹ We found out about them from one of our new friends, Nancy Slamet, who had been helping some women from Afghanistan to start their own food catering business. They invited Lemon and Allspice to share the use of a free kitchen at Wellesley Hospital. That hospital was gradually being closed down. The hospital no longer used the kitchen. So groups like ours could use it for free. David Chivers, Joan

⁹ The primary purpose of this Community Economic Development (CED) project was to alleviate the economic and social hardship experienced by Afghan women and their families living in the Greater Toronto Area, particularly as a result of the cutbacks to social assistance and services.

Barnett and I went to look at the Wellesley kitchen. We decided we didn't want to move there and that we were fortunate to have Sibley House.

BUT two weeks later we took the Partners to visit the Wellesley Hospital kitchen. They liked it! We talked it over and decided to share this kitchen with the Afghan Women's Catering group. We would use it on a part-time basis when we had large orders. We could store the orders in the walk-in cooler there, especially on weekends. Donna and Cathy were excited about working in that kitchen, even just sometimes!!

An Herb Cafe

Trinity St. Paul's United Church had an Herb Fair every spring to raise money for the church gardens. This year they invited the Cookery to sell baked goods, coffee and herbal teas. The Partners added herbs like rosemary and poppy seeds to some of the baked goods. On April 3rd & 4th, our Partners set up a table and called it "The Herb Café". There were tables and chairs for the customers too, just like a café. They sold a lot of goodies!

Our Second Open House

On April 19th, we had another wonderful Open House at Sibley kitchen. Everyone worked hard and enjoyed it. Many people came, including the women from Afghanistan with whom we established warm relations.

On May 5th, we had a Partners' meeting with Richard as chair. We discussed Wellesley kitchen. We worked out a formal arrangement for sharing the Wellesley Hospital kitchen with the Afghan Women's Catering group. We also signed a Sponsorship Agreement with Community Living for insurance coverage. Our Partners were showing their maturity and responsibility when it came to business decisions.

First Visit to Queen's Park

We went to Queen's Park to be present for Community Living Day at the Ontario Legislature on May 16th. The MPP's (Members of Provincial Parliament) said they were pleased to see us in the gallery.

Meeting Diana Capponi

May 23rd brought a "turning point" in the history of the Cookery and of Common Ground Co-op. I had a meeting with Diana Capponi. She was head of the Ontario Council of Alternative Businesses (known as OCAB).¹⁰ She was very interested in our business and was helpful to us. She also challenged us. She suggested I get in touch with Kerry Ann Markle. Kerry Ann worked at the Employment Supports department in the Ministry of Community and Social Services of the Ontario government. Employment Supports had money to help innovative (new and different) projects like ours. If the Cookery were to grow, we would need more Job Coaches and the money from Family Services would not be enough. Employment Supports might be able to give us more money in addition to the money we received from Family Services. I didn't know it then, but Kerry Ann would turn out to be a wonderful friend of Common Ground Co-op and the Cookery over the next five years and more.

A Party

The next day, May 24th, was Kirk's birthday. Donna baked a cake for him at the Cookery. David Gouveia, Richard's worker at Jessie Manson, came by and enjoyed it with all of us. He often dropped by to visit us at the Cookery. One week after Kirk's birthday party, Cathy chaired our Partnership meeting. Everyone participated and discussed problems together and agreed on solutions. The Partners were becoming an amazing group!

Making Waves

Don McNair called the Cookery. He lives in British Columbia. He had heard about us all the way out there! He worked for a magazine called Making Waves about Community Economic Development in Canada.¹¹ He asked us to write an article about the Cookery for the Making Waves magazine. We did write the article and Don published it. People all across Canada might have read about us.

¹⁰ OCAB is an organization that advocates for employment opportunities for psychiatric consumer/survivors and emphasizes the importance of work in the lives of people who have been marginalized by poverty and mental health issues.

¹¹ The Canadian Community Economic Development Network (CCEDNet) is a national member-led organization committed to strengthening Canadian communities by creating better economic opportunities and enhancing environmental and social conditions.

The First Metro Credit Union Fair

In June, Kirk went with David Chivers to the Metro Credit Union annual fair. (Today it is called Alterna Credit Union.) They told a lot of people at the fair about Lemon & Allspice. They sold our cookies and gave out 50 flyers.

The Co-op Chooses its First Officers

Common Ground Co-op's Board of Directors was set up in 1999 when five people from the community got together to support the Cookery. In June 2000, it was time to meet again. Margaret Murray agreed to be the first chair of the Board. Ann Rowland agreed to be the secretary. The other three Members were: Ray Oster, Michael McKenzie and myself.

The Co-op Has its First Official Board Meeting

The first official meeting of the Board of directors of Common Ground Co-op, Inc. was held on September 27th 2000. Margaret Murray, Ann Rowland and I approved the by-laws (the rules of order for our meetings). I reported that I had met with Kerry Ann Markle who encouraged Common Ground to apply for funding from the Employment Supports programme she was managing. Now that we had formed a Co-op, it meant that we could ask the government for more money for the Cookery project. Marg and Ann had met with me to finish writing our funding proposal and send it in to Kerry Ann. We were waiting anxiously to hear whether Common Ground would receive funding from the Ontario Government Employment Supports.

Our Co-op also needed to begin to seek out Members. At this time we were just five Directors and we were looking for people to become Members who would attend our annual meetings and elect Directors in the future. Collecting Membership fees would give people a small part in what we were doing and increase our presence in the community.

Tafelmusik Orchestra

At the end of June the Cookery faced its biggest challenge. Here is what happened. There is a famous orchestra in Toronto called Tafelmusik.¹² Every year they give 44 concerts in Trinity St. Paul's United Church. About 300 people are in the audience for each concert. During each concert, there is an intermission when

¹² Tafelmusik's mission is to engage audiences locally, provincially, nationally and internationally with historically informed live and recorded musical experiences on period instruments.

the people in the audience go into the church gym for coffee, cookies and juice. The musicians at Tafelmusik found out about the Cookery from people in Trinity St. Paul's Church. The musicians met with me to discuss having Lemon & Allspice serve coffee and snacks at their concert intermissions - all 44 of them over the next year! I thought, Wow, this is an opportunity to take our Cookery to a new level of success! It will be a benefit to our Partners. However, I thought it would be a great challenge. I was right on both counts - the benefit and the challenge!

On June 30th, we had a special Partnership meeting at Sibley House and decided to accept the Tafelmusik offer. Tafelmusik asked us to write a formal proposal about our food and services at the intermissions. We did that. On July 31st, Sandra Parsons called us from the Tafelmusik office to say they were very happy with our proposal. She told us the first concert series would be in September. A series of five concerts would be given every month until June 2001.

A Quiet Summer

The summer of 1999 was very quiet as we had just a few catering orders. But we had other things to keep us busy. One day we tried out recipes for a new product - banana bread. Another day, we bought our own coffee-making equipment from Alternative Grounds Coffee House and delivered it to the little snack bar at Surrey Place. All the Cookery Partners were keen to learn how to make coffee with the new equipment. They learned fast! (This was still long before there was a Coffee Shed at Surrey Place.)

Preparing for a Busy Year

September arrived and we had never been so busy before! The Partners would need to look their best when serving coffee and snacks at the Tafelmusik intermissions. So, Joan and I shopped for uniforms. We needed additional helpers to prepare for the first series of five Tafelmusik concert intermissions. So, David Gouveia brought four people from Jessie Manson to Trinity St. Paul's church for a workshop on coffee making with the Tafelmusik equipment. We had to find volunteers to assist the Partners and helpers at the concert nights. Joan and David would not be able to work all those extra hours. One Sunday, I stood up in the church service and asked for volunteers to help with the concert intermissions. I got an amazing response from four people! Lily Gibson, Lynn Jondreville, Linda Huestis, and Betsy Anderson. Kirk's mom, Doreen Cluett also volunteered. Those volunteers took turns helping our Partners with the Tafelmusik intermissions all year!

The Busiest Week So Far

On September 15th, 2000, we started the busiest week of our business lives. One week earlier, we had sent sample sweets to the people at Tafelmusik. They thought they were delicious. So they made their order for the first concert series.!

We were all working five or six hours a day at the kitchen. We catered a big welcome back luncheon for the church people on Sunday the 17th. We were baking hundreds of cookies and bars. We didn't have room for them at Sibley kitchen, so Joan and I drove them to the Wellesley kitchen. There we stored them in the walk-in cooler until the concerts began.

On September 20th, we served our first concert intermission in the five-concert series that week. Nearly 300 people arrived at once for a fifteen-minute intermission! We had to have all the baked goods and juices set out on tables. We had to serve cups of coffee to everyone in that short time period before they all went back to the church sanctuary for the rest of the concert. It was very hard work but it went well. Donna did an amazing job. Yasmin, one of the helpers from Jessie Manson, worked with her and with me. Carol Campbell, the intermission supervisor from Tafelmusik, was there and worked wonderfully well with our Partners. We did the same thing again, with different Partners and volunteers for the next three nights.

On Sunday, September 24th, Cathy and I went out to Sibley kitchen very early in the morning to bake an additional 100 additional cookies for the matinee concert. Cathy served at the intermission with Leila, another helper from Jessie Manson, and with Kirk's mom, Doreen. Everyone was very positive about our participation in the Tafelmusik intermissions.

On the Monday after the first concert series ended, Cathy announced that she had worked 15 days straight without a break and she wanted two days off! We had all been too busy to notice! We agreed to take the next two days off from the kitchen. But Donna offered to go with Joan to Surrey Place.

On payday at the end of September, the Cookery distributed \$1000 among the Partners!

October

The Tafelmusik order had made a big difference in helping our business grow. But there was an increase in other orders too in October. There was another lunch at the church. It was prepared and delivered by Job Coach David Chivers and Partners Cathy and Kirk. The church helped in other ways: the Mission Action and Service Committee of the Church gave a \$1000 grant to Common Ground. That was so Job Coach Joan could work extra hours until the end of the year. Susan had joined the Partnership. She and Donna began looking after the table at Surrey Place on their own. Joan stopped by to do their cash count at the end of each morning. (There was still no Coffee Shed, just a small snack bar at a table in the third floor staff lunchroom at Surrey Place.)

Our First Big Government Grant

The Co-op had sent in an application for \$90 000 to the Employment Supports Programme of the Ontario government. Great news came on October 16th! Our Co-op's application had been accepted!! Members of the Board of Directors met with Kerry Ann Markle at the government offices. Kerry Ann was willing to approve our budget. She wanted us to include all that we needed for our innovative project. What a wonderful confirmation that our Cookery was really helping people who wanted to work!! It meant we would have new responsibilities.

But we would also have fantastic opportunities to expand the work and the model of our Cookery. If all went well, we would receive the first \$\$ on January 1st. When our Co-op Board met in October, Ann, Marg, David Pitt and I began making plans for our newfound wealth. We had a good discussion about the basic principles of our Cookery and the Co-op.

The Cookery Partnership at Work

At the end of October, this is how things stood with our Business Partnership: Cathy, Kirk and Donna had become the mainstay of our business. After many attempts to work things out with Richard, the Partners asked him to leave. Margaret from L'Arche worked with us most days and Susan and Donna were working at Surrey Place. By this time Kareena and Beth Jo had joined the group. Since we had begun doing the intermission refreshments for Tafelmusik, we had taken on two new workers from Jessie Manson - Yasmin and Leila. We worked long hours at the kitchen as we filled all the orders. And our monthly sales had reached over \$3000.



KAREENA AND BETH JO JOIN JOAN DAVID, DONNA KIRK AND CATHY AT SIBLEY

Although we were all busy at work, some days I made time to talk things over with the Partners. I wanted to hear their opinions and ideas. I explained aspects of the business so the Partners could understand it better. I wanted them to know they can learn to do things they didn't believe they could do. Some days the kitchen was not only for baking. It was a classroom for learning about their business. And all the Partners were gaining confidence. My Toyota Rav4 was now very necessary to our business. Our orders were mostly too large by then to be carried on the TTC. Joan and I were the drivers for shopping and deliveries.

We were making good use of the Wellesley Hospital kitchen. An order came in to make and deliver 160 lunches to Bloor Street United Church for a large choir rehearsal that took place there. We enjoyed that day at the Wellesley - everyone got along well and helped one another: Donna, Margaret, Cathy, Yasmin, Joan and myself. We made and stored the lunches there overnight.

415 Bag Lunches for Massey Hall!

The choir was just one of several choirs that came to Toronto for an annual concert at the old Massey Hall. The combined choirs had ordered 415 lunches from the Cookery for the day of the concert. So we were at Wellesley kitchen again, this time from 8-6:30, making all the lunches, storing them in the walk-in cooler there. Although it was a very long day, it was another good day! The next day, Mark and

I made three trips in the Rav4 from the hospital to Massey Hall to deliver the lunches. Although Mark was no longer a Partner, he was often a willing volunteer assistant outside the Sibley kitchen. This lunch delivery was one of those times. The two choir orders were from Soundstreams and were our biggest order ever. Altogether, we made 560 bag lunches to the tune of over \$2200. These were exciting times indeed. We were all learning how hard work can make a business succeed!

Big Changes and New Responsibilities

Every day brought new people, new ideas, and new opportunities to our company. Here's what happened on just one day in November: we received five new orders; Stephen, a new trial partner from L'Arche, arrived at the kitchen; Hilda Houghton a new volunteer office clerk, came to help; and a man came to put a new phone line in the office!

A few days later, we were given the go-ahead to advertise a position for a Coordinator. The Co-ordinator would be hired full time by Common Ground Co-op, using some of the Employment Supports grant money. That person would take over much of the work I had been doing in the office. The new person would become our leader and co-ordinate all the work we were doing. The ad was out for our position of Coordinator.

Our proposal included the start-up of a second business. So we planned to hire a new full-time Job Coach too. The funding would go to our non-profit Co-op. The Co-op would use the money to pay the salaries to the Coordinator and the new Job Coach. The Directors on the Board of the Co-op wanted to plan a meeting with the Partners to discuss a Services Agreement.

We now included Yasmin from Jessie Manson, and Stephen from L'Arche as Partners in training in our business. Together with Leila, who helped with the concerts, we now included nine people: Cathy, Kirk, Donna, Margaret, Susan, Yasmin, Stephen and Leila.

We had a Partner and Staff meeting together. I explained these changes that would come about as a result of receiving the grant from the government. The Partners and Staff raised questions and expressed their views on the concert proceedings. We were really enjoying one another's company.

Worries and Work

On the first day of our five-day concert series in November, we began to feel overwhelmed. We found ourselves making many small mistakes. However, good things were happening too. The morning after the end of that concert series, we had a good group meeting at the Sibley kitchen before starting work. We did some problem solving and reviewed what we needed for our work. We decided to buy an easel and chart paper and write out each day's work at the kitchen for all to see. Everyone was feeling better after our talk.

Lemon & Allspice made more than \$5000 in sales for the month of November. Everyone went home with nice pay cheques! But we were working long hours most days. Often a few of us worked on weekends too. (We didn't work shifts back then!) The financial picture was good. But the whole project had become a huge responsibility for a small number of people. We were fortunate in four ways: 1) Joan Barnett and David Chivers were committed to continuing to work with us.
2) We had willing and reliable volunteers.
3) Our Partners were very good workers.
4) We would soon have a Coordinator to help with all these responsibilities.

A Happy Ending to the Year 2000

In early December, we began to receive applications for position of Coordinator. Over 50 applications came in! Board Members Margaret, Ray and I looked them over. We decided on questions to ask the candidates. We set up interviews with nine people. After we had spoken with the candidates, we made a "short list" of three people. We thought these three would be the best for the job. We invited two of them to each come for a separate visit to the Cookery. We wanted to see how they engaged with our Partners and give the Partners a chance to meet them. Finally, we invited Paula Murphy to be our new Coordinator. She accepted the job offer.

On the morning of December 8th, there were eleven of us at Wellesley kitchen, including eight Partners. Everyone worked hard and had fun - good feelings indeed. Gorian, our friend from Dixon Hall,¹³ stopped in. He was quite amazed to see how well everyone was working. I felt that way too when I saw how everyone was growing along with the business.

¹³ Dixon Hall helps people make changes and improvements in their lives and a better future for themselves.

December continued to be a very busy month. Ray and I opened a bank account for Common Ground Co-op at Metro Credit Union (now called Alterna Savings). We prepared food for another five-day concert series. We had an order for a two-day conference at Holy Trinity Church.

At Sibley Kitchen, on the last work day before the holidays, we cleaned up, took inventory, distributed pay cheques and closed the business for the year 2000. Since September 1st, we had made \$15 000 worth of sales!

A Tree Trimming Party at My House

Just after we hired Paula to be our Coordinator, we had a wonderful party at my house - a tree-trimming party - with the Partners, the Staff and the Co-op Directors for Lemon & Allspice and Common Ground. There was so much love, laughter and enjoyment - a great blessing! It was the first of many holiday parties to be held with all of our Partners.

Chapter Four Getting Organized 2001

A New Year - a New Coordinator- Paula Takes the Lead

Paula Murphy began work at the Cookery the day we came back after the holidays. On the following morning, we had a **Partners' Meeting** and, in the afternoon, a **Co-op Meeting**. Joan Barnett began working full-time, and she and I met with Paula for a planning session.

Working Shifts

We decided to introduce work shifts for the first time. Right away we found that the kitchen was less crowded. We were not all in the kitchen at once. Partners knew what time to arrive at work and when it was time to leave. The shift system worked well. The Partners liked it because it meant no one person would have to work long hours. There were enough Partners to share the work!

More and More Orders!

Orders began rolling in again. We got so many orders that we didn't know if we would be able to fill all of them. We also had to meet the demands of the January Tafelmusik concert series. Then suddenly Paula got sick with tonsillitis. She was in the hospital a couple of days. Getting all the work done with one less staff person was not easy, but we managed it.

After the concert series was over, Paula returned to work feeling much better. We all settled into our new shift schedule. Some Partners were having problems with the routines. Yasmin and Margaret needed extra help. Paula met with them and their workers to talk about their needs.

Historic Moments!

Getting in the Media for the First Time

One day, a representative from CBC television came by the Cookery. She asked if she could make a film about Lemon & Allspice Cookery. It would be for a TV programme called "Moving On". We agreed to be on TV! Three weeks later two people came from CBC and filmed all day at Sibley kitchen. Donna, Kirk and Cathy

played the starring roles. They were at their most impressive selves. The film was shown on TV on a Sunday morning in the spring. We were given a videotape of the film and viewed it together in May. We thought we did pretty well!

Signing the First Services Agreement

February 7, 2001 was a special day. The Co-op Board Members met with all the Cookery Partners, and everyone signed the first Services Agreement - an historic moment in our project! This Agreement was different from the Partnership Agreement that only the Partners signed. The Services Agreement was between Common Ground Co-op and the Cookery. It explained the services the Co-op would provide to the Partners.

Meetings, Meetings

Cathy chaired the next Partnership meeting. The Partners decided to invite Kareena to be interviewed to become a Partner in the Cookery.

When March came, Kerry Ann Markle came from Employment Supports to Sibley House. She met with Board Members about the money we would need for the next year. Marg Murray, chairperson of the Board, led the discussion. John Biggs, our new accountant, came to the meeting. John had become our accountant at the Cookery. (We were now able to pay someone to help with our money.) John helped us to better understand our finances. He showed us how to make a budget that we could use in our applications for funding. He submitted our income tax forms in the spring. At the meeting, we told Kerry Ann about how well the Cookery was doing. She seemed pleased with what we had accomplished, and so were we! Paula gave her first report to the Board of Directors.

At the next Co-op meeting, Ann, Ray, Michael and I finished writing our funding proposal for the coming year. We sent it to Kerry Ann. How wonderful it was to know we would have enough money to plan for the future! Even one year before, we could not have dreamed of such blessings.

At the next Partners' meeting, we talked about the "Coffee Den" at 20 Spadina Road. Cathy no longer worked there, but others were still selling baked goods and coffee to the staff at 20 Spadina Road. (See Chapter One, Page One.) They also had been buying cookies from the Cookery to sell at the table there. Suddenly they had stopped purchasing from the Cookery. Kirk was not happy about that, so he proposed a "takeover" of the Coffee Den by the Cookery. I explained to the

Cookery Partners that four years ago, the Coffee Den had inspired us to start the Cookery. But the people who worked there now wanted to go their own way. So we agreed that a "takeover" was not a good idea.

Struggles with the Concert Series

We had another concert series in March. I stopped in one evening to see how things were going. I found one Partner was not cooperating with our volunteer helper. Another Partner had backed out at the last minute; and Kareena was filling in for the first time. The juice from our freezer that we kept in the church basement had not had time to thaw. Fortunately, none of the people in the concert audience observed all this. They got their coffee and snacks. We had many good concert nights over the year with Tafelmusik. But this was not our best one.

Disappointment

After all the Tafelmusik concert series were over in June, a letter from Tafelmusik arrived at Sibley House. The letter thanked the Cookery for helping with the 44 concerts all year. But Tafelmusik had decided not to renew our contract with them. We would not be providing the refreshments during the intermissions in the coming year. That was a great disappointment. But we decided to learn from this and carry on.

City Inspections

Paula reported that the city inspector visited the kitchen earlier in the week. She suggested the Cookery needed to put some new systems in place in the kitchen so we would be sure to pass the city inspections.

Our Third Annual Open House

April 4th was a Wonderful Day! We had our third annual Open House at the Cookery. Nearly 40 people came to Sibley House kitchen! Many were families of our Partners and it was so good to have their support. The Open House made us realize what a full and exciting life we had at the Cookery!

More Media

Word was spreading about our Cookery. I had written the article for Making Waves magazine, and they published it. Then Cathy was interviewed at the kitchen for Homemaker's Magazine. Her recipe for Lemon & Allspice Cookies (our signature

cookie) was printed in the May 2002 issue. Homemaker's named Cathy the "cook of the month".

Outgrowing Our Space at Sibley

We had been three years in the Sibley kitchen by July 1, 2001. We liked Sibley House. The people there had given us an upstairs office and a large storage space for our inventory in the basement. We had the use of the dining area as well as the kitchen. We were close to public transit. Community Living was giving us all of this space free of charge. But our business had grown and we needed more space. We had access to just half of the big refrigerator in the kitchen. We had only a small freezer in the basement. The people who lived and worked at Sibley House were feeling squeezed too.

The people at Community Living could see Lemon & Allspice was growing, so they made an offer to us. Would we like to move to the larger kitchen at their Jessie Manson building? One day Paula and I sat down with David Scott from Jessie Manson at a picnic table outside Sibley House. We talked about whether we could use the Jessie Manson kitchen for Lemon and Allspice. We thought it was a good idea, but no decision was made to move at that time.

A New Job Coach and a Second Business

Paula had used some of our grant money to hire a new Job Coach. Her name was Carolyn Teal. Her job was to help start up a second business. She and Paula organized a meeting of people who were interested in this new business. Ten people met with them in September at the Community Living building at 20 Spadina Road. The group included their family members and caseworkers. They wanted to find out about the new business. There were lots of ideas and enthusiastic discussion. The group decided to meet again in October.

At the next meeting, Petra S., Petra T. and Blair (Cathy's friends from the Croll building) along with Lynn and Astra, came with their families. They talked about what kind of business they would like to have. It didn't have to be a food business. But the more they talked about it, the more they thought it would be great to open a snack and coffee bar. They asked Paula and Carolyn Teal to find a location for a snack bar. They met again two weeks later. They were very excited about moving forward to start their own business! In this story, we will call them the New Group.

The Snack Bar at Surrey Place

After the summer break in August, the Partners of Lemon & Allspice came back to work at Sibley House kitchen. This was also the beginning of the Cookery's third year running the snack bar in the third floor staff room at Surrey Place. Two of the Cookery Partners made plans to set up their table there again. Our purchase of a new fridge for Surrey Place made it possible to start a sandwich service there. Donna, Yasmin and David Chivers wore their new bright yellow Lemon and Allspice t-shirts on opening day. Customers from Surrey Place staff began dropping by early on the first morning.

The New Group Takes on the Snack Table at Surrey Place

The New Group was still trying to find a location for a snack bar. I spoke with Paula about an idea. What about turning over the snack table at Surrey Place to this New Group so they could get some experience with the food business? We agreed to take the idea to the next Cookery Partnership meeting in November.

At that meeting the Partners at Lemon & Allspice talked about how they had become very busy. All the Partners were needed in the kitchen. Having two Cookery Partners at Surrey Place each morning left not enough Partners in the kitchen. When they heard that the New Group was looking for a space, they decided to offer the Surrey Place operation to them, but only for a short time. The Cookery Partners said they would sign a temporary four-month contract with the New Group. That would give them time to see whether the plan would work.

On November 26th, Partners from Lemon & Allspice met with the people from the New Group. Lemon & Allspice Partners agreed to sign a contract for the New Group to run the snack table at Surrey Place for just four months. Petra T. and Blair signed the contract for the New Group (that also included Lynn and Petra S.) Cathy and Donna signed for Lemon & Allspice.



LYNN AND CORY OFFER THE FIRST CART SERVICE TO STAFF AT SURREY PLACE



PETRA T. SERVES A CUSTOMER IN THE SURREY PLACE STAFF LOUNGE

Partners at Lemon & Allspice delivered goods from the Cookery to the Surrey Place staff lounge. So they visited the snack table at Surrey Place every few days in the next couple of months. Carolyn Teal was working as Job Coach to the New Group. Bonnie had joined the New Group too. (There was still no Coffee Shed at Surrey Place.)

The First Annual General Meeting of Common Ground Co-op

The CGC Board of five people had already met a few times. Now it was time for other Members of the Co-op to meet with them. When all the Members of the Co-op get together once a year, it's called an Annual General Meeting or AGM. The Co-op's first AGM took place in November at 20 Spadina Road. A group of about a dozen people attended. Chris Tolley agreed to join the Board. Even though it was a small group, the meeting seemed like a small miracle, something we never imagined when we began.

Public Recognition of Our Work

Michael Prue had become a friend of ours. He was the Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP) for Beaches East York where the Cookery and Sibley House were located. Michael visited us in the kitchen in November. He had just been re-elected to the Ontario government. He became one of our strong backers and promoters. Many people heard about the Cookery from Michael Prue over the years.

City of Toronto Human Rights Award

Every year, the City of Toronto makes Human Rights Awards to people who are helping to improve life for people in Toronto's communities. One of these is called the Access Award. It is given to someone for making a difference in the lives of people with disabilities. Paula had nominated me for this award. I was chosen to receive it.

The awards were made in the chamber of Toronto City Hall on December 12, 2001. That evening, several of the Cookery Partners came to City Hall. Joan Barnett, Paula Murphy, Ray Oster, Ann Rowland and David Pitt were there too. Councillor Joe Mihevic made the presentation. The Partners came to the front to have their photo taken with me. Olivia Chow was there too because, at that time, she was Councillor of the ward where I live. (Later she was elected to be a Member of Parliament.) A number of other people received awards too. A lovely reception

was held in the Members' Lounge. I was grateful for all of the people who came and who were helping to make the Cookery a success.

A New Partnership Agreement at the Cookery

Four Partners had signed the very first Partnership Agreement. (See Chapter Two, page 18.) Now that we had eight Partners, it was time to sign a new Partnership Agreement. On December 14, 2001, eight Partners at the Cookery signed a new Partnership Agreement: Cathy, Donna, Kirk, Yasmin, Kareena, Beth Jo, Susan and Stephen.

(Two of these Partners, Cathy and Stephen, were still working at the Cookery at the time this story was written in 2011. Susan worked at the Cookery until her retirement in 2009. Kirk worked in the Cookery and then at JVS Coffee Shed and decided to leave the Partnership in 2009. Kareena unfortunately passed away far too young of heart failure in March 2005, when she was still a Partner in the Cookery.)

Our Second Holiday Party

Before we closed the businesses for the Christmas holidays, we had our second tree-trimming party at my home. There were many exchanges of gifts and cards and hugs and love. The sense of our circle widening to welcome in those from the New Group was very positive. Every Member of the Co-op Board came. We all felt blessed to have this little community.

Chapter Five Spreading Our Wings 2002

Telling Our Story to Others

Members of Trinity St. Paul's United Church congregation were very important to our work together at the Cookery and Common Ground. By 2002, it was time for our Partners to thank them and to tell them more about their work at Lemon & Allspice. Cathy, Donna, Kirk and Kareena came one Sunday to a meeting after the church service. They showed the video that CBC made of the Cookery at Sibley House kitchen. Ann Rowland led a discussion with them. We donated a lunch for the people who came. Quite a few people stayed after church to participate.

A member of Trinity St. Paul's Church was responsible for recording much of our early history. Linda Huestis volunteered her time to produce two issues yearly of the Common Ground Newsletter for four years, from spring 2002 to Fall 2005. They were printed in black and white with interesting graphics, photos and stories about the Business Partnerships. Their distribution helped to build our organization by letting many people know about our work.

Applying for More Funding

As the New Year began, Members of the Board and Partners of the Cookery started thinking about the future. Would we be able to find the money we needed to pay our Staff? Would the government want to give us another grant?

In February, Kerry Ann Markle and the other people from Employment Supports came to meet with us about funding for the following year. They told us that they liked what we are doing. But they were concerned that the Partners were not earning minimum wage. (Minimum wage back then was about \$7 an hour.) We explained that the Cookery is a Business Partnership and the Partners are self-employed. Minimum wage is not a requirement. Partners share among themselves whatever money the Businesses make. They asked us to make an application for funding for the coming year. So Marg Murray, the Common Ground Board chair, sent in an application for funds to Employment Supports.

Fourth Annual Open House

We held our Fourth Annual Open House at Sibley kitchen on March 27th. More people came than ever! The feeling was all excitement and enjoyment in sharing one another's company. What a pleasure to see how much everyone had grown.

They were taking responsibility for themselves and one another through the Business Partnerships. Several Partners were there from the New Group too. And our friend, MPP Michael Prue dropped in!

How the First Coffee Shed Began 500 University Avenue

The contract between the Cookery and the New Group for the snack bar at Surrey Place was for just four months. The temporary contract would soon end. So I was still looking for a location for the people in the New Group to start their own snack bar.

Linda Burnside is a Member of the Co-op. She owns a busy coffee shop in the west end of Toronto. It is called Alternative Grounds Coffee House. She and her husband Kevin were thinking about opening up a second shop. They were looking for a location for it. They asked if the people in the New Group might like to work in their new coffee house.

Then a big opportunity came our way. Ancillary Services at the University of Toronto offered to Common Ground the possibility of a snack bar at 500 University Avenue. This was a building the University was redeveloping for classrooms and offices. I cycled over and looked at it. The building was ten stories high! Wow! If the University built a kiosk for a snack bar, it might work. Perhaps Linda and Kevin might be interested in the University's offer.

The next day, Linda Burnside told us she was interested! She wanted to talk with us about how her Coffee House and our New Group might work together at 500 University Avenue. I picked up the plans for the snack bar on the first floor of 500 University Avenue. The plans looked good - something the New Group could do! Chris, Ray, and I got to work on a business plan. Maybe something really exciting would come of all this!

New Location for a Snack Bar?

Members of the Board met with Linda Burnside to discuss a partnership. It would be between Alternative Grounds Coffee House and the New Group. Together they would run a business at the new building on University Avenue. In early May, Linda and Kevin had a look at the space at 500 University. But they decided that location did not fit their plans. All sales would have to come from inside the building. There likely would be few customers from the street outside. We were sorry that it didn't work out to partner with Linda, Kevin and the Alternative Grounds Coffee Shop.

But for Common Ground and the New Group, 500 University looked like a good safe location. We would have about as many sales as we could handle, just from the people inside the building. We decided to go ahead with a bid for the space. Linda said she would help us with the bid. On May 15th, I delivered our business plan for the snack bar on University Avenue to Ancillary Services at the University. A committee would interview several groups who were interested in the space. They would decide who would get the 500 University location.

The OPSEU Strike

This new possibility would depend a lot on whether the government would give us another Employment Supports grant. We had put in our application for funding in March but we hadn't heard anything one month later. What had happened was a strike by government workers in the OPSEU union. The strike was going on day after day. As a result, we had no decision from Employment Supports on our funding for the coming year. Our new Job Coach, Carolyn Teal, had resigned. The New Group was still working temporarily at the snack bar at Surrey Place. But they had no coach. We could not hire a new Job Coach until we were sure that we would have money from the government to pay the salary.

More About 500 University Avenue

At the next meeting of the New Group at 20 Spadina Road, I showed everyone the plans for 500 University. Chris Tolley and I met with Robin, head of Ancillary Services, at the University of Toronto. We spoke about the business prospects for 500 University. Robin encouraged us to apply for the space. Then Rashmi Nathwani, one of Common Ground's Members who was in the construction business offered a wonderful gift - \$5000 worth of help to build a new kiosk at 500 University! These offers of help from people were wonderful gifts.

On August 16th, Lynn and Petra T., went with Linda Burnside, Chris Tolley and myself to the University. We met with a committee of eight people to explain our plan for a kiosk at 500 University Avenue. We made a very good presentation, but on August 22nd, the University turned down our proposal. It was a great disappointment.

Searching Again for a Kiosk

But Lynn, Petra T., Petra S., Bonnie, Blair and Cory did not give up on their hopes for a kiosk. They met at 20 Spadina again, along with Chris Tolley, Larry Sherman, Cory's mom and Petra S' worker. Everyone participated in our discussion about what to do now that the U of T had turned us down. The Partners took hold of their future and expressed their ideas. This was wonderful to see!

The Partners at the Cookery still needed all its own Partners to run the Cookery business. They thought of a new idea for Surrey Place. Why not ask the New Group if they would like to take over the Surrey Place operation permanently as their very own snack bar? This seemed to make sense because the New Group had already started working there.

The First Coffee Shed Partnership is Set Up

So, on September 4th, the Cookery Partners and the people in the New Group met together. The Cookery Partners offered to make a new agreement to turn over the snack bar at Surrey Place to the New Group for keeps. The people in the New Group were happy to accept the offer. They had already chosen a name for their snack bar. They wanted to call it the Coffee Shed. So the snack bar became the Coffee Shed at Surrey Place. For the first time, we had two Business Partnerships!

Moving On and New Faces

Our first Job Coach, David Chivers, had filled in for Carolyn Teal at Surrey Place after she resigned in March. When the OPSEU strike ended, we finally received our funding! The Partners hired Leonard Ribeiro to be the Job Coach at the Coffee Shed. In the meantime, David Chivers had found other work and resigned from Common Ground. He had served us well as a Job Coach for nearly four years!

Getting Ready to Move Lemon and Allspice Cookery

Invitation to Move the Cookery

Now the Coffee Shed was settled in at Surrey Place. It was time to think again about the Cookery. We had been planning to move the Cookery kitchen to Jessie Manson. Ray and I visited the Jessie Manson building to look at their kitchen. We talked with the two Davids (Pitt and Scott) from Community Living. The two Davids said they would be pleased if the Cookery moved from Sibley House to the kitchen at Jessie Manson.

The next Common Ground Board meeting approved 1) the new Coffee Shed Business at Surrey Place and 2) a new kitchen location at Jessie Manson. But it was going to take several months to make all the arrangements. We had to find money to make some renovations before the Cookery could move.

Moving Ahead on Kitchen Renovations

Later in July, our Common Ground Board met at the picnic table in my garden. It was a beautiful cool sunny day. I was happy to see how engaged the Board Members were and how much they wanted to be involved in our work. By August, the arrangements with Jessie Manson for a sub-lease of the kitchen were in progress. Then Trillium Foundation gave us the go-ahead to apply for funds to renovate the kitchen at Jessie Manson. The path was being made clear for us.

Big Changes

A busy fall season began at the Cookery at Sibley House. We asked Amir Gilani of AG Designs to draw for us a design of how the new renovated kitchen would look at Jessie Manson. The Cookery Partners saw the drawings. They contributed their ideas about how our new kitchen might look! We had funding to pay for the design from a CEDTAP grant. In granting the funds, the CEDTAP selection committee wrote to us. They made "very positive comments about the important work in which your organization is involved". They believed that "this project could serve as a model for other communities across the country." It was wonderful to hear that!

At the end of August, Members of the Board completed the Trillium application. We took it to the Trillium Foundation. We also took letters of reference, our sub-lease agreement with Jessie Manson and a copy of Common Ground's incorporation papers. If we were to receive this grant of \$75 000, we would be able to renovate and move into our new kitchen within a few more months!

Spreading the Word about the Cookery

In the meantime, the word was spreading about Lemon & Allspice. A CED group in the St. Lawrence Market printed information about our businesses in a new catalogue. Cathy was featured in the catalogue for Lemon & Allspice. She gave a speech at the Market about how she started Lemon and Allspice. She was on the platform with Joy Kogawa, a Canadian author! Cathy received a copy of one of her books.

In May 2002, Cathy was featured in *Homemaker's* - that handy little magazine people pick up at the supermarket checkout counter. A full page told the story of the Cookery and the Co-op. The page included Cathy's recipe for Lemon Allspice Cookies. Our cookie recipe had been given the Homemaker's Seal of Approval!

People across Ontario were starting to hear about Lemon & Allspice. The Cookery received an invitation to travel to Barry's Bay, Ontario. Cathy, Yasmin and I drove @600km (round trip) to Barry's Bay to make a presentation. Cathy and Yasmin each spoke to the few assembled parents in the high school cafeteria, and they did well. We took some baked goods and promotional materials. Wade Wright from Kingston spoke as well and it was good to see him again. Yasmin, Cathy and I stayed overnight in a local motel and took the long drive home in the morning.

Summer Time - Party Time

The first of our annual summer parties for Partners and Staff happened in July. It was also a celebration of four years since we began the Cookery! There was a wonderful pool party at Paula's parents' home. All the Partners, with Joan, Paula, Marg, Ann and I spent the hot afternoon in and out of the cool water. We had a barbecue and gave Joan a gift to thank her for her first four years of service. Paula told us some big news - that she was expecting a baby!

Staff Changes and Hard Decisions New Job Coaches

By this time, we had our funding from Employment Supports. So Partners from both the Cookery and the Coffee Shed - Kirk, Cory, Lynn and Cathy - interviewed several people for two new job-coaching positions. All the candidates were good,

but the Partners decided they wanted Gladys Bumanglag as a second Job Coach for the Cookery and Leah Dolmage as the new Job Coach for the Coffee Shed. Paula, Ann and I were pleased with their choices.

Paula Takes Maternity Leave

Paula was getting ready to have her baby. She was going to take a year of maternity leave. Marg Murray and I from the Board were asked to find a Coordinator to replace Paula for the year. We went through 70 resumes and chose to interview eight people who wanted the job. Three were invited to the Cookery to meet the Partners on October 7th. A decision was made to hire Sonja Persram. The Board approved the hiring the next day. Sonya joined our Staff at the beginning of November. Soon she was meeting with the Board Members, the Job Coaches and the Partners.

Sonya Takes the Lead

I took Sonja to meet our good friend, Michael Prue, MPP for Beaches-East York, at his constituency office on Danforth Ave. He had recently come to visit us at the Cookery to share with us his own recipe for cookies. Michael would continue to be helpful to the Cookery over the years. Sonja attended her first Partners' meeting at the Cookery. The next week, she met with Partners at Surrey Place.



PARTNERS SUSAN AND BLAIR PROMOTE COMMON GROUND CO-OP WITH HELP FROM JOB COACH GLADYS BUMANGLAG AND INTERIM COORDINATOR SONJA PERSRAM

Changes

Paula's leaving and the arrival of a new Coordinator was difficult for some of the Cookery Partners. They were unsure about the change and it affected their work. Joan helped them to set boundaries and expectations. Donna had been a good and willing worker for four years. But she found the changes were hard to adapt to and she left the Cookery Partnership.

The Second AGM for CGC

It was time for the Second Annual General Meeting of Common Ground Co-op. It took place at 20 Spadina Road. This year, seven Partners came and a few new Co-op Members. There were good ideas and lots of excitement. Marg Murray and Michael MacKenzie, two of our Founding Members, announced they would leave the Board. They had each given three years of service. Marg Murray chaired the meeting for the last time. John Radford and Larry Sherman said they would join the Board. So the six Members of the new Board were Ann Rowland, Ray Oster, Chris Tolley, John Radford, Larry Sherman and myself. Chris replaced Marg as chair. The number of Members of the Co-op was 27, including the six Board Members. We had four Staff people (Sonja Persram, Joan Barnett, Leah Dolmage, Gladys Bumanglag), In the Cookery, there were six Partners, (Kirk, Cathy, Yasmin, Kareena, Stephen, Susan), one trial worker (Jack) and one student placement (Angela). At the Coffee Shed we had six Partners (Lynn, Petra T. Petra S. Blair, Cory, Bonnie). So we were beginning to grow!

The year 2002 was a successful one for the Cookery. The customer list grew to over 60 businesses and institutions from across the city. Some of them were regular daily or weekly customers and others called the Cookery for special events. This produced a growth of 20% in sales over the previous year.

Partner Income

Most of our Partners have two official sources of income. The government has set up the Ontario Disability Support Programme (ODSP). People with a disability can apply for ODSP benefits. If the government approves, a single person will receive about \$1000 per month. Our Partners receive benefits from the Ontario government. Each partner receives a cheque from the ODSP each month.

The Partners also receive paycheques from their businesses every two weeks. Their earnings are based on a share of the proceeds from sales. The amount depends on how many hours they work in a week. Our Business Partners work only a few shifts a week. They earn just a little extra money from their businesses, maybe \$100 or \$200 per month or less. Here are the reasons why they earn just a little money.

- 1) At that time, people who received ODSP were not allowed to earn more than a few hundred dollars a month or they would lose their benefits.
- 2) Half of what they did earn had to go back to the government.

Paying Minimum Wage

Common Ground Board Members were trying to solve the problem of funds for the coming year. The government funders had been giving us the dollars we needed to run the project. But they wanted the Partners to be earning minimum wage. The Cookery Partners had been working very hard, but they had not been selling enough goods, so far, to earn that level of pay. They had been paying themselves one-third of the cash they received for the sale of their baked goods and other foods. The Cookery put any left over revenues in their account at the credit union.

The Fundraising Committee met in early December to look over the business finances. The Cookery business had been doing well. The Committee Members discovered that there were extra revenues in the Cookery's account. So they explored the idea of paying the Cookery Partners minimum wage. There was enough money in the account to do that for the next three months (January, February and March 2003). The Committee and the Board decided to offer the Partners minimum wage for those months. They hoped that would improve Common Ground's chances of receiving Employment Supports funding for 2003. The Partners were very pleased to accept the offer!

Holiday Time - Party Time

We had our annual Christmas party at my house with all our Partners, Staff and families and it was wonderful! Five Partners came at noon and helped set up the tree and make the soup and mulled cider. Many people came and the Partners decorated the tree and enjoyed exchanging gifts and cards. Paula brought her new baby boy. It was a very happy time!