

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/biopage.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 wholesale 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."

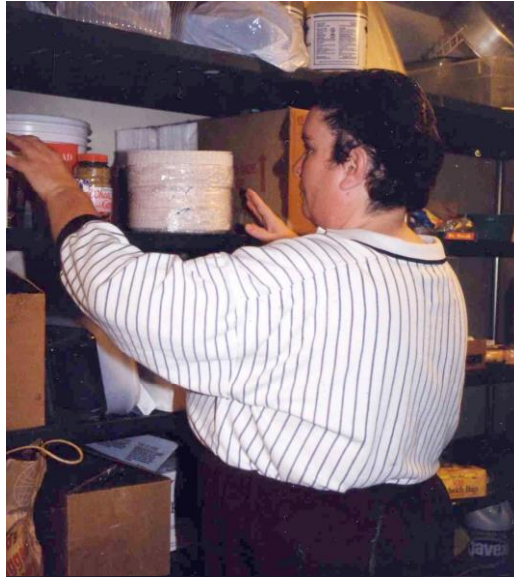
*Quotes from Gladys Acosta, Peruvian human rights lawyer. She worked with women in Peru who had started a business of making and dying yarn from sheep's wool and selling it. Inter Pares Bulletin.

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 $7\frac{1}{2}$ 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!

Chapter Six

Moving

2003

Starting the New Year-Workshops & Meetings for Partners-January 2, 2003

To start the New Year off right, the Partners and Staff from both businesses met at 40 Birch Ave. (the Foster Clubhouse). They had a morning of workshops that Sonja organized. "There was much laughter and learning," said Sonja. "The Partners are actively involved in the businesses, in wanting to make them better." There was a sense of pride in the way everyone was working together in this way. They were beginning to understand the nature of the Partnerships. They could see how the two businesses could interact positively together. It was marvelous to see them expressing themselves to one another. The Staff did an excellent job! There was a plan for another round of workshops on the next day but a big snowstorm forced us to cancel it.



SUSAN, CATHY, KIRK, JACK AND KAREENA AT THE WINTER WORKSHOP
AT THE FOSTER CLUBHOUSE

Signing on the Dotted Line

The snow melted in time for the Board meeting a week later. Lynn and Blair from the Surrey Place Coffee Shed met with the Board Members to sign their first Services Agreement contract with Common Ground Co-op.

Employment Supports Funding 2003

The Cookery Partners came to 20 Spadina for a special meeting that lasted all morning. There was a lot of positive discussion. They had a session on minimum wage. They agreed to use their current surplus from sales to boost their pay to minimum wage for the next three months. The four Staff met with me afterwards. They agreed that much good was happening.

The very next day, Sonja and I made a presentation to Kerry Ann Markle at Employment Supports Innovative Funding Programme, saying that we would be able to meet the requirement for minimum wage. Kerry Ann gave us a go-ahead! In early March, we learned that Common Ground would receive a grant from Employment Supports for the coming year! This grant meant we could go ahead with our plans to move the Cookery from Sibley House to the Jessie Manson building. Graham Baldwin was a manager at Community Living. He told the Common Ground Board that Community Living would support the Cookery's planned move to Jessie Manson.

Trillium Foundation Grant Application 2003

The Fundraising Committee had applied in 2002 for a grant from the Trillium Foundation. We needed it to pay for renovations to the kitchen at Jessie Manson. On June 16, 2003, Trillium Foundation approved Common Ground's grant application. We would have \$75 000 to renovate the kitchen at Jessie Manson so Lemon & Allspice Cookery could have a new home!

Moving Days for the Cookery!!

On August 25th I went to the Sibley House kitchen. There the Partners and Job Coaches were packing up to move to the newly renovated kitchen at Jessie Manson. This was my last visit to Sibley. I still cherish today lots of memories from our five years at Sibley House.

Three days later, I went to Jessie Manson Centre. I found the kitchen renovations almost complete and it looked wonderful! The last of the renovations and the move were soon completed and a phone was installed in the kitchen. Joan, Cathy and Kareena brought the last boxes of goods from Sibley to the new kitchen at Jessie Manson on Overlea Boulevard. On September 2, the Cookery Partners began work in their new location! The newly renovated kitchen provided the Cookery with much needed additional space, a walk-in fridge and freezer, a new oven, a

dishwasher and an industrial mixer. The kitchen space was available to the Cookery on evenings and weekends. These extended hours would allow the Cookery to accept orders it used to have to turn away.



KIRK AND ANGELA AT WORK IN OUR NEWLY RENOVATED KITCHEN AT MANSON

A New Office Assistant

Our new location at Jessie Manson provided more office space than was available at Sibley House. So, throughout the move, Sonja, Ray and I interviewed candidates for a permanent financial manager. We couldn't seem to find the right person until we met Shelina Akter. She was partway finished with a course in accounting and was very interested in the position. We decided to hire her. She settled in to the new office space at Jessie Manson.

More Grants, More Planning, More Work, More Business!

In April, we had learned that we would receive the Family Services grant again, plus grants from CEDTAP and from the Oullette Family Foundation! When the Fundraising Committee met, it was all about how the funding would be used instead of how to find funding. But we did not stop planning for the future.

When the Board of Directors met, all Members were present. We worked through a detailed agenda in two hours. Everyone was aware of how our success was

creating greater demands. But these Board Members were an amazingly committed group just like the Partners and the Job Coaches!

The Queen's Jubilee Medal

Good things kept happening. MPP Michael Prue presented to me the Queen's Medal for service to the community. The ceremony took place at Queen's Park. There were a number of other people from Michael Prue's riding who were receiving the Medals too. Lemon and Allspice catered the refreshments to over 100 people there! Five of the Cookery Partners, two Board Members, and our Coordinator attended. It was a wonderful evening. After I got home I was so excited that I couldn't sleep until 2:30am.



HERE WE ARE AT QUEEN'S PARK WITH MPP MICHAEL PRUE (ON THE LEFT). BOARD MEMBERS ANN ROWLAND AND JOHN RADFORD WERE THERE WITH PARTNERS SUSAN, JACK, KAREENA, ANGELA, KIRK AND COORDINATOR SONJA PERSRAM. MY HUSBAND JIM WAS THERE TOO,

Space for another New Coffee Shed!

The next Common Ground Board meeting was full of energy, concern and humour. Everyone was excited about the growth of the businesses and the Cookery's move to Jessie Manson Centre. But that was not the only good news. There was talk of starting up another Coffee Shed. Just a few days later, Dean Carl Amrhein at the

University of Toronto called us. He was a friend and colleague of my husband Jim and myself. He knew about the work we were doing in the Business Partnerships. He said he had spoken to the Principal of New College at the University of Toronto, David Clandfield. They talked about a space for a snack bar at New College. Within one week, we had a meeting with the Principal and the Dean and they invited Common Ground to set up a Coffee Shed in New College!! We felt overwhelmed!

By early April, we had put up a two-week trial table in Wetmore Hall at New College. It looked great! Blair and Bonnie worked there that first week. They and the other Partners at the Surrey Place Coffee Shed had agreed to take turns operating the two-week trial at New College. That was teamwork!

A Permanent Second Coffee Shed Gets a Green Light

At the end of May, Sonja, Larry and I met with the business manager at New College, Chris Sparks. We talked about whether we would be able to start a new Coffee Shed in the fall. Sonja made an excellent written and verbal presentation to Chris. She reviewed the two-week trial we did at Wetmore Hall in April. She explained the plans for the future. Chris said he was eager for us to go ahead with a new Coffee Shed at New College in the fall.

The Coffee Shed's Official Opening at New College

The Coffee Shed at New College began selling coffee, sweets and sandwiches in early October 2003. Three Partners from Surrey Place Coffee Shed had decided to move from Surrey Place to the new Shed: Lynn, Petra T, and Mimi. They ordered baked goods from the Cookery and sold them in Wetmore Hall five days a week.

More New Job Coaches

As Common Ground started new Coffee Sheds, we needed to hire new Staff. The Cookery Partners hired Tashana Wint to become a Job Coach in the Cookery. Gladys Bumanglag moved from the Cookery to be the Job Coach at the New College Coffee Shed. Leonard Ribeiro had finished his term as temporary Job Coach at Surrey Place Coffee Shed. Susan, Lynn and Blair interviewed two potential Job Coaches in early August. At their next Partnership meeting, they decided to hire Christine Womijolou as Job Coach for Surrey Place Coffee Shed.

More New Partners

Many, many people were becoming interested in joining our businesses. Agencies like Community Living, Employment Training Services, Youth 2 Work, Jewish Vocational Services, Family Services and Adult Protective Service Workers were referring people who wanted to work at one of our Business Partnerships. In the early years, people who were interested in joining one of our businesses would be interviewed and then invited by the Partners to join the Partnership on a trial basis. But with so many people interested, we decided to organize an Apprenticeship Programme.

Starting an Apprenticeship Programme

Common Ground was certainly ready to begin to look for new workers to become Apprentices. That's because of the opening of a second Coffee Shed and the growth of the other two businesses, Two Job Coaches, Joan Barnett and Gladys Bumanglag, organized a full day workshop for candidates who wanted to join our Partnerships. They invited the candidates' families, and their support workers. At the workshop, Board Members, Job Coaches, and family members of current Partners made presentations. A series of small group discussions gave the candidates a chance to hear from the Partners. They told about their experience of working in the businesses. They shared information about the businesses and how they operated. Staff conducted individual interviews with the candidates throughout the day.

After the workshop, those who were interested in working at one of the businesses were asked to fill out an application form. On this form, each applicant wrote down their first and second choice of where they wanted to work - in the Cookery or in one of the two Coffee Sheds. Most of the candidates made applications. Sixteen candidates were invited to become Apprentices: Larissa, Roland, David C., Mei Yee, Robin, Dan, Julie, Joseph, Kaveh, Wendy, Karen, Veronica, Stacey, Christina, Mark T. and Mimi. All of them accepted the offer. The applicants were contacted and a start date was set.

Each Apprentice began a three-month Apprenticeship at one of the businesses. During this Apprenticeship, they learned about the business, and the duties and the responsibilities of each Partner. The Job Coaches and the Partners taught the Apprentices the routines of working on the job. A Partner acted as a mentor to

each Apprentice, helping to teach the Apprentice the many tasks required of the Partners.

After three months, the Partners in each business met. They reviewed each Apprentice's work habits, skills and participation in the business. After a discussion, a vote was taken, with each Partner having one vote. The Partners agreed upon one of three things:

1. They would ask the Apprentice to join the Partnership.
2. They would suggest Apprentice be given an extra three months of training and be re-evaluated at the end of that period.
3. The Apprentice would not be invited to join the business.

All sixteen of these Apprentices eventually became Partners. Today, six years later, Mei Yee, Mimi and Karen are still working in the Coffee Sheds. The others have found other work and activities in the community.

Visiting Jewish Vocational Services (JVS)

On June 6th, I went to the Jewish Vocational Services¹ building with Partners Lynn and Bonnie from the Surrey Place Coffee Shed. Lynn's dad and Bonnie's mom also came with us. We spoke to a gathering of over 30 people. Chetan Bahri, a staff person at JVS, had brought them together to learn about Common Ground and the businesses. After our presentation, six people filled out application forms for interviews to become Apprentices!

Difficult Times - Stresses and Strains

So much was happening! There were many new Apprentices. There were new Coffee Shed locations. The Cookery and our offices had moved. All of that put a lot of strain on our Staff, and especially on our interim Coordinator, Sonja. She worked hard to keep up with the demands. The Board Members did what they could to help out. But there was stress on everyone.

Larry Sherman suggested outside mediation for a Board meeting. He found a person who could help. Everyone agreed except Ray who decided to resign on

¹ JVS is a broad-based community organization that helps people of diverse backgrounds to meet their educational and employment goals.

September 10th. We still remember him as a key founding member of our organization who made a generous contribution of his time and talent for nearly four years.

Larry, Chris, Ann and I decided to set up a mediation session with Sonja and that happened the following week. The Board met with Sonja. With the help of the mediator, we sorted out our differences and clarified our plans. By the end, we all felt revitalized and rededicated. We had lots of hard work to do but everyone was ready for it. We learned that disagreements can be healthy. We need to see them as a way to develop and deepen our relationships.

Then Came the Good News! - Volunteers!

What really helped too was having Shelina on Staff. Then suddenly we had two chartered accountants who wanted to volunteer to help us with Common Ground's finances: Allan Smythe and Gordon Kushner. We met with each of them on the same morning and both agreed to give a gift of their time and wisdom to our Coop. Gordon helped Shelina to establish our books on computer. He contributed shelves for the Partners' personal belongings. Allan served our Board as treasurer for a year or two. Their contributions of time and expertise were a great boost for everyone!

Then along came our friend, Rashmi Nathwani again! He offered to help design and build a packaging area at the new Cookery kitchen. That packaging area was there for many years. Brightly coloured rolls of ribbons hung there, ready for tying up the bags of cookies we made and sold. The ribbons added a cheerful note to our kitchen and dining area.

Goodbye to Sonja and Paula's Return

At the end of October, the Partners had a gathering to say goodbye to Sonya. As a farewell gift, Susan, a Partner at the Cookery, presented a dancing pizza man to Sonja as a farewell gift, and we all ate cake. Paula returned from her maternity leave. Partners and Staff were pleased to see her and she was happy to be back.

The Cookery's Fifth Open House and The Third Annual General Meeting of CGC

Right away Paula was involved in the planning for the Cookery's 5th Annual Open House and the 3rd Annual General Meeting of Common Ground Co-op. For the first

time we held the meeting at Jessie Manson Centre AND for the first time we combined the Open House with the AGM. Both events took place on November 6th.

What a magnificent day! The Open House was a huge success and so was the AGM. Representatives from most of our funders were at the Open House. Many of our Business Partners came too. Michael Prue, MPP came and people from Surrey Place and Community Living Toronto. Joan, Tashana and the Cookery Partners served a wonderful supper to forty people! At the AGM, the Co-op Members elected a Board of eight people. And the roster of committees was completely filled with names of Members. Rob Duff from the Staff at Surrey Place made a CD and a videotape of the Open House. This event was a way to celebrate the significant growth that the Co-op and businesses had made over the 2002-3 year.

Listening Committees

At the time the new Business Partnership opened at the Coffee Shed at Surrey Place Centre, John Flannery had become the Chief Executive Officer of the organization. He was very supportive of the Shed. He always bought his coffee and snacks there. He encouraged his staff to become regular customers of the Coffee Shed. So the Partners realized how important it would be to get to know the 200 or more people who worked for Surrey Place. They were the Shed's main customers. It seemed a good time to begin meeting with his staff.

A Listening Committee was formed that included nine people: five staff from Surrey Place, two Partners - Blair and Veronica, Job Coach Christine and Common Ground's Coordinator - Paula. The purpose was to have better communication and share ideas and information. That would help the Shed to best serve the people who worked at the Centre. Listening Committees with the host staff later became a regular part of each Shed's meeting schedule.

Partnership Meetings in Full Swing

As December 2003 began, the Partners at the Coffee Shed at New College had their first Partnership meeting. A week later, the ten Partners at Lemon & Allspice had their regular monthly meeting with Paula and two of the Job Coaches. Partner Stacey chaired the meeting. It was wonderful to see how those Partners who had been with us for a while spoke up with their ideas. The new Partners listened and learned. This kind of meeting was at the heart of what Common Ground was all

about and what it might become! The Job Coaches were having their own meetings together and showing great talent, commitment and promise.

Holiday Event at CBC Radio

Word about the Cookery was getting around! The CBC Radio Metro Morning show called us one December morning. They asked us to be on their show with Andy Barrie the next day. Partner Susan from the Cookery volunteered to go with me. Susan and I met with Andy for a taped interview. It was broadcast at 6:15 the following morning. Of course, Susan took some Lemon & Allspice Christmas cookies to Andy to sample! The interview was all about those wonderful cookies and the Partners who baked them!

The "Extra Mile" Staff Team at Common Ground

On the last day of December, during the holidays, I dropped in to Jessie Manson to find Paula and all the Job Coaches working together on various projects. There was a good feeling shared among them: Alice Bikeeva, Joan Barnett, Gladys Bumanglag, Christine Womilojou, and Tashana Wint. These coaches were preparing for teaching skills and providing support to the Partners in all tasks of the businesses: food prep, taking and filling catering orders, working at cash registers and making bank deposits.

This Staff team was enthusiastic and compassionate. They worked very hard at making the Business Partnerships successful. They also worked to support the needs of the Partners. Paula described her Staff as "always willing to go the extra mile" and help out when things had to be done." Shelina, our office assistant, was there too and she made a curried lunch for everyone.

Chapter Seven

Making New Friends

2004

The New Year and Talk of Another New Shed!

The people at JVS were very interested in the idea of opening a Shed in their headquarters. Chetan Bahri, Kim Coulter, Chris Tolley, Paula Murphy and I met with Karen Goldenberg, ED at JVS, to discuss ways to support a Coffee Shed there. The JVS staff showed us a space in the headquarters building where the Shed could be located. We thought it might work well. Not long after that, Common Ground Board of Directors approved the plan.

Opening a New Coffee Shed at JVS

No sooner had the 2004 fall season begun than Common Ground opened the new Coffee Shed at JVS. Many people came to the opening ceremonies at JVS on September 8th. Partners were there from all the businesses, plus families, Board Members, JVS staff, our Job Coaches and Paula. We had a ribbon cutting and our fourth business was launched! Tashana Wint left the Cookery to become the first JVS Job Coach. Tashana said, "Everyone helped us to settle in nicely and feel comfortable. There has been lots of praise for the Partners." Sales in the early weeks were better than we expected!



LISA AND KAREN OPERATE THEIR NEW CASH REGISTER AT JVS COFFEE SHED

And there we were with FOUR Business Partnerships - the Cookery and three Sheds!

Meeting our new MPP

Early in the year, I attended a gathering at Community Living Toronto at 20 Spadina Road. David Pitt had arranged for Kathleen Wynne to be there. She was the MPP for the riding of Don Valley West. Kathleen listened to people's stories about finding jobs and places to live for their adult children with disabilities. That was my first contact with MPP Wynne. I learned that Common Ground and Lemon & Allspice Cookery are in her riding. I invited her to come to Jessie Manson to see the Cookery and meet the partners there.

An Important Visitor!

In the summer, Kathleen Wynne came to visit the Cookery. It turned out that her office was just around the corner from Jessie Manson. She came to visit because she was very interested in our Business Partnership at the Cookery. By the time she left, she was impressed by what she saw at the Cookery. She wanted to tell other people about our good work. Kathleen Wynne, like Michael Prue in earlier years, was to become a very good friend to all of us.

Partners Take Charge

I always liked to visit Partner meetings at the Sheds and at the Cookery. It was wonderful to see how the Partners were taking responsibility for their Businesses by meeting and discussing things together. One day, just before Angela went to chair a meeting of the Cookery Partners, she told me with great pride, "My parents chair meetings a lot, and now I'm doing it too!"

A Very Special Workshop

On a Sunday in February, we had a six-hour workshop at the Cookery kitchen and dining area. Fifty people came to talk together about the businesses and how they could become even better. The Partners spoke and people listened. Many family members came. They were full of praise and questions. New people came and joined the Co-op. The Partners and all the people there realized we were building something wonderful! We wanted to let others know about us.

Making Plans to Keep Common Ground Growing

On the morning of February 2nd a meeting took place that I had wished for over many months. Who was there? - Kerry Ann Markle from the Ontario government; Bev Bowman and Nancy Green from the Canadian government; three people from JVS (Karen Goldenberg, Chetan Bahri, and Kim Coulter) and two people from CGC (Larry Sherman and myself). The meeting was about Common Ground. We wanted to co-operate to find funding so that we could keep Common Ground going. We wanted Common Ground and the Business Partnerships to be around for a long time. Those who came supported what Common Ground was doing. Kerry Ann and Bev agreed that Common Ground was building something wonderful. They wanted to work together to find the help that we needed from governments.

Kerry Ann Markle Comes Through Again!

We found out that the Canadian government would not be able to grant us funding this year. But, wonder of wonders, Kerry Ann Markle found a way, once again, for the Ontario government to help us meet our budget. She and the Ministry came through!! On March 25th, Kerry Ann agreed to the Common Ground budget for 2004/5.

Finding the Way to Charitable Status

The next step was to begin the application for charitable status for Common Ground. Having charitable status meant that we would be able to ask foundations for funding we would not just rely on governments. Common Ground was receiving a good amount of money from the Ontario government, but we needed more than what the government could give. In order to apply for money from other organizations, Common Ground would need to apply to the government of Canada to become a charity. A charity would give receipts to people who gave money to us. Then people could use the receipts to pay fewer taxes to the government.

On April 2nd, the Finance Committee (Chris Bovaird, Gordon Kushner, Allan Smythe, Jim Lemon and myself) met with Brian Iler in his office to discuss charitable status and how Common Ground would go about getting it - a powerful meeting!

Common Ground Board of Directors decided to ask the government of Canada to give us the papers we needed to become a charity. We began to put together our incorporation papers. We gathered other information that the government would need in order to decide if we could become a charity. Then we went back to Iler,

Campbell law firm with our papers. We spoke there with Kim Holas who would take our application forward to the government. It would take over a year to receive our charitable status.

Marching for a Good Cause

A March of Dignity took place in Ontario that April. It began with some people who have disabilities who live in Sarnia, Ontario. They knew that the ODSP benefits they received from the government were not enough money for them to live on. They wanted to get the attention of the Ontario government to ask for more help. They took several days to march 150 miles to Toronto! They invited many other people with disabilities to join them in front of Queen's Park for a rally on April 29th.

Almost all of our Partners receive ODSP benefits. I told the Partners at the Coffee Sheds at Surrey Place and at New College about the rally. Five Partners walked over to the rally with me: Blair, Roland, Christina, Mei Yee and Petra T. Two of the Partners' moms came too - Ursula Sherman and Marg Symons.

We listened to people make speeches. They spoke about how difficult it is for people with disabilities to earn enough money to be able to buy food and pay rent. Everyone shouted, sang and clapped hands so the Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs) inside Queen's Park would hear them. Some of those MPPs did come out in front of the Queen's Park building to speak to the crowd. Our good friend, Michael Prue, was one of them. Everyone cheered when those MPPs said they would work hard to make life better for people with disabilities.

Another Apprenticeship Workshop

At the end of May, Common Ground Co-op held another workshop for people who wanted to become Apprentices. Twenty people came and were interviewed. The successful Apprentices were: Agnes, Katy, Paul W., Aldene, Nazia and Rachel B. (All but Agnes were still Partners with us at the time this book was written.)

Summer Fun

Paula and her parents put on another pool and BBQ party for Partners, Staff and the Board Members. The weather was sunny and cool and everyone enjoyed a swim, or dancing to music from Partner Jack's boom box. What a marvelous thing that all of us helped to bring people together who liked one another's company

Changes at Surrey Place

In 2001, when the New Group took over the Coffee Shed, they had a sales table on the third floor in the staff lunchroom at Surrey Place Centre. It was a cozy place but there were not a lot of sales. In 2004, Surrey Place moved our Shed to a much better location. It was on the first floor near the front doors... But that was only a temporary move. Surrey Place Centre was planning to renovate the entire first floor. As part of the renovation, they would build a kiosk just for the Coffee Shed! The renovations would take one year. But that wasn't the only change for the Partners at Surrey Place Coffee Shed. Job Coach Christine, had decided to accept a new job in London, England. The Partners chose Peter Ackie to become the new Job Coach in September 2004.

Cathy Lang Helps With Fundraising

About this time, Cathy Lang became interested in our project. She knew a lot about co-ops. She volunteered to help Common Ground Co-op with fundraising. She assisted us to write applications for CEDTAP, Trillium Foundation and Cooperators. She was a valuable member of our Fundraising Committee and of CGC for several years.

A Very Special Guest for our Annual General Meeting!

We learned that the Minister of Community and Social Services, Sandra Pupatello, had accepted our invitation to speak at our Annual General Meeting!!! Larry phoned the news to me at the Cookery kitchen. Doreen Cluett, Partner Jack and I were just putting together the Membership package to mail out for the AGM. It was almost too good to be true! Right away, I delivered a package of information about Common Ground to Minister Pupatello's office in Queen's Park. Later, someone in the Minister's office called me to find out more about Common Ground's AGM for the Minister.

Partners Plan to Participate in the AGM

It was time to get the Partners involved in the planning for the AGM with its wonderful speaker. I met with five of the Partners - Susan, Veronica, Karen, Blair and Joanna, and with David Pitt and Paula. We had a very good discussion about what to say to the Minister Pupatello when she attended our Annual Meeting. The

Partners decided Susan would speak for them. David stayed after with Susan to help her write out her speech.

The Fourth Annual General Meeting

Back in 2001, a dozen people attended Common Ground's first AGM. I called that "a small miracle". I described this fourth AGM as one of the happiest events of my life. There must have been 60 or 70 people, including many Partners, attending both the Open House and the AGM. Even my two-month old grandson was there. I was the happy grandmother, pushing Oliver in his stroller as he laughed and enjoyed all the attention. Cathy was pleased to show off her nephew to all her friends.

Then the Minister, Sandra Pupatello, came with Kathleen Wynne. Susan read her welcome speech very well and introduced Kathleen. She and the Minister spoke very highly of our work. The Minister took my hand and led me to the front and said many kind things about me. All around me were the Partners, their families, my family and many friends I had met over the past six years. It was wonderful! After the Minister spoke, Cathy Lang, Ana Vicente, David Pitt and Larry Sherman met in the kitchen with the Minister to talk about next steps for Common Ground. I chaired the first part of the AGM in the meeting room. Then Larry took over and Common Ground Members elected seven Board Members. Few of us could believe our good fortune in being recognized by the Minister.

At this AGM, I stepped down from the Board of Directors, along with Ann Rowland and John Radford. I trusted that the new Board would carry on the work of the Co-op successfully. But I continued to be active in the organization, especially with fundraising.

A New Place for the Holiday Party

The annual Common Ground Holiday Party took place at the Harry Foster Centre at 40 Birch Ave. on December 17th. There were too many people by then to host it in my home. Partners, Apprentices and their family members came, along with all the Staff and some of the Board Members. I had been working for over a year on a special gift to the organization. It was a knitted afghan with 56 large squares. Each square had a partner name embroidered with the initials of the Business Partnership name and the date s/he had joined. I presented it at the Christmas

party to a big round of applause and many wonderful comments afterward. The next day, Paula hung the afghan on the wall in the office area of Common Ground at the Jessie Manson building.



COORDINATOR PAULA MURPHY HANGS THE AFGHAN

A New Friend and Supporter - Meeting our MP

On December 21st Larry Sherman, Partners Cathy and Stacey and myself met with John Godfrey. He was the Member of Canadian Parliament for Don Valley West where our Cookery is located. Cathy and Stacey took some of their shortbread Christmas cookies to the Minister. We asked him to help us with our application for charitable status and with finding federal funding. We established a good relationship with him. He said he would visit the Cookery soon. We had found another good ally like Kathleen Wynne.

Chapter Eight

Changing Our Lives

2005

Paula Wins a Special Grant for Common Ground

Paula had been attending meetings of Toronto Region Developmental Services in the Ministry of Community and Social Services. This year, the Ministry offered a special grant to organizations in this group. Paula and eight other agencies had applied for this special grant. The applications were "blind" and that meant they had no names on them. Only three were chosen. Paula's application on behalf of Common Ground was one of the three! It meant Common Ground would receive \$95 000 in the coming year! This money was for a special project called the Foundations Programme. If Common Ground did a good job, we would receive this funding every year in the future.

This was a big breakthrough for Common Ground. Before that, others in the group and in the Ministry hardly knew anything about us. Now we had taken a first step toward getting longer-term funding.

Paula's Second Maternity Leave

Paula had told us in mid-January that she would be taking another maternity leave! She was expecting her second child. This time she would take off just six months. Before Paula left, Joan Barnett invited Partners and Staff to her house for a baby shower.

David Pitt and Gladys Bumanglag Take on New Positions

David Pitt became Interim Coordinator in Paula's place in March 2005. David asked Gladys Bumanglag to head up the new Foundations Programme for Common Ground. That Programme became a special course that Gladys taught every year for five years. The Programme was for young people who had finished secondary school and were starting to look for work. Each year, several young people took classes every weekday with Gladys for four months. Then they were placed in our businesses for another four or five months. Classes with Gladys continued one day a week during that time. It is an excellent programme!

Finding Government Money for the Coming Year

Once again, much time was spent on our application to Employment Supports. We would need money again for the next fiscal year starting April 1, 2005. Cathy Lang, Board Member Chetan Bahri, and I worked during January and February to prepare a proposal. Our treasurer, Allan Smythe, helped us with the budget. At the end of February, I took the application for Employment Supports to Kerry Ann Markle's office. This was the fifth year we had applied. The funding was supposed to have ended after three years. We waited anxiously to see if Common Ground would receive this grant in addition to the Foundations Programme money. Everyone was worried.

The Funding Comes!

In April, the Fundraising Committee met for a three-hour blockbuster meeting about where we were and where we would go. Many good ideas were flowing, but we were still waiting to hear from Employment Supports about the funding for this year. And then, the very next day, Employment Supports announced Common Ground would receive a grant. It was enough money to continue our work for another year with all four businesses. What a relief!

Visits from New Friends

Cathy Lang had arranged for John Godfrey, our Member of Parliament (MP) for Don Valley West to come to the Cookery for a visit on March 2nd. She also invited people from the United Way, the City of Toronto and some funding organizations. This site visit was wonderful! The Partners and Staff at the Cookery prepared and served lunch. MP John Godfrey announced that we would hear about charitable status for Common Ground very soon! Mr. Godfrey and the other visitors told us they were committed to seeing our work continue.

Living on ODSP

Members of Common Ground believe it is not enough just to give help to those in need. We must also work for political change. Common Ground is trying to do both. Common Ground is helping people with disabilities to find long-term employment. This is the helping part. It is difficult for them to get jobs that pay enough to meet the costs of rent, food and clothing. This is especially true for those who want to live on their own.

Here is the political part. Our Partners receive benefits of about \$1000 per month. Of course, that is not enough to live on in downtown Toronto. So our Partners try to earn a little extra money by working in their businesses. But the government has set rules that seem unfair to our Business Partners. The rules of ODSP say that half of any money a person earns from a job must be given back to the government. No one understands why the government takes back hard-earned money from people who don't have enough to live on.

Partner Susan said, "I have been on ODSP for as long as I can remember. The money I get from ODSP just pays for my rent and my bills. The money that is left over is for me to live on until the end of the month and that is not enough money." Partner Blair said, "Getting the amount that I get from ODSP does not help because I have to pay rent. It is not enough, because when I pay my rent, I hardly have enough money to pay for my Metropass and food." One month, Partner Blair missed the deadline for submitting his earnings report to ODSP. "I got a letter from ODSP saying that they will suspend my cheque. If I do not pay for my rent, I will get evicted from my apartment. I need more money to keep my apartment."

Working for Change

Some people who have received ODSP benefits have gone for help. They go to free legal clinics and to agencies to try to find out how to change this situation. In 2002, a few people in the legal clinics and in the agencies decided to form a group called the ODSP Action Coalition. Many people with disabilities and their families and workers and other citizens have joined this group. They speak to the people in government about this question: Why do you take back our money? They ask a lot of other questions about ODSP. The government has to listen because there are a lot of people in this group,

The government finally made some small changes. Our Business Partners still have to give back to ODSP half of everything they earn working at the Cookery and in the Coffee Sheds. But the government now gives them \$100 a month as a bonus for working. The big change of keeping all their earnings did NOT happen. Lots more people have learned about the problem, though. Many of them agree that the "claw back" is unfair. All of this is what we call "working for political change". Although many people are working hard for that change, the situation has changed very little.

Katy is a Partner in the Cookery. Before she got married, she saved her paycheques from the Cookery "to put for a new place when I get married". She receives ODSP, but "My parents help me with my money to pay for rent, and to buy food we can eat." Katy is typical of most of our Partners. They cannot get by without help from families, even though they have regular earnings in addition to ODSP. Nancy, a partner who began work at JVS Coffee Shed in 2005, says this: "Working at the Coffee Shed is not like other jobs. I wonder why we can't have a regular wage." This is a very good question.

Our Offices Get Crowded

Common Ground's two offices in the back of the Jessie Manson building were beginning to feel crowded. There was no room for a desk for Gladys. She needed one now that she was heading up the Foundations Programme. One of the first things David Pitt did when he became the Interim Coordinator of Common Ground in March 2005 was to look for more office space. He spoke with the landlord of the Jessie Manson building. The landlord had his office in a separate building just behind Jessie Manson. The landlord agreed to build two more offices between his office and Common Ground's offices. He would ask Common Ground to pay a reasonable rent. Within three months, the new offices were built and Common Ground had four offices instead of two. Staff had much more room!

A Birth and a Death

On March 27th, we heard some very good news, that Paula had a healthy baby girl. Then on the very next day, we heard some very sad news - Kareena, a Partner at Lemon & Allspice, had died suddenly of heart failure. She was 34 years old.

On April 8th, most of the Partners and Staff attended Kareena's funeral and burial. We gathered for lunch at the funeral home after making the trip to the cemetery. We met Kareena's family and told them that Kareena had been a friend to all of us. We loved her smile and her dedication to the Cookery.

Applying for More Funding

In April and May we worked on applications for funding to send to the Catherine Donnelly and Trillium Foundations. We asked for money for two projects:

1) Classes for Partners to increase their learning about Common Ground and the wider community; 2) a business manager to help all the Partnerships to increase sales and improve marketing. We had a spirited and useful discussion at a joint

meeting of the Fundraising and the Business Development Committees. David Pitt, Cathy Lang, Linda Burnside, Chris Tolley, Julie Schwartz and John Symons met together at 20 Spadina Road. The purpose was to discuss the new Trillium grant proposal but we talked about the whole future of Common Ground.

Another Coffee Shed??

During this time, a meeting was held with Marg Whelan, ED of Geneva Centre for Autism.² She decided to survey her Staff to see if they would be interested in having a Coffee Shed at the entrance of Geneva Centre headquarters. This looked like it could be a promising experiment. If Geneva decided to have a Coffee Shed, Common Ground would need to train 4-5 Partners who would be willing and able to start up in a new Business Partnership. There was not enough money to hire another Job Coach.

Funding for Start-up of a New Coffee Shed at Geneva

September 15th was an amazing day! Peter Ackie and Julie Schwartz made a presentation to Anne Jamieson and other funders at the United Way's Toronto Enterprise Fund (TEF). They asked for start-up funding for the Coffee Shed at the Geneva Centre. Chris Tolley attended on behalf of the Board. He reported they did an excellent job. It resulted in \$15 000 awarded to Common Ground. In November, Kathryn Gill was hired as Job Coach. She helped the Partners start up the Geneva Centre Coffee Shed. The original Partners were Joanna, Kirk, Aldene, Blair and Petra T.

Time for Summer Fun

Here is the story of the barbecue picnic the Partners and Staff had in the summer of 2005, as written afterwards by Petra T.

One day we had a BBQ. I went first to the Cookery. Then I was talking to Ve (one of our Job Coaches). After that I got a ride by Cathy to Seton Park where we had the BBQ. We had fun. They (the Job Coaches) were having a great day for us. We saw many friends whom we had known there. All the food made me hungry. Then we got kidding around with lots of laughter. We were playing tricks and jokes and being silly. I talked to my friends Irene, Jack, Mimi, Lynn,

² Geneva Centre for Autism provides services, training and support to families affected by autism. The goal is to empower individuals with autism and other related disorders, and their families, to fully participate in the community.

Rachel, Stacey, Katy, Frank, Karen, Nazia, Petra S., Mei Yee. I talked to our Job Coaches like Ve, Kathy, Peter, Tashana, Tara, Joan, Gladys, Alice. Paula Murphy came to the BBQ with her two cute ones. I was talking to them and playing around with them. One of the ones is her new baby girl. Paula promised that she will come back in the month of October. There was lots of food, drinks and desserts. First I had a hotdog with BBQ sauce, mustard, and some water too. Then I had one burger with a slice of tomato, lettuce and some mayo and potato salad, cabbage salad. My friends and I also had some corn with some very sweet desserts like lemon squares, date squares, lemon cookies, chocolate cookies and oatmeal cookies. There was also watermelon - it was so juicy and very watery. When the meal was done, we were playing games with Gladys. Best of all, there was a water fight with Ve and some other Partners too. Then we played Frisbee and caught water balloons too. It was very bright that day. Ve got so soaked, he didn't know what to do. It was very hot and smoggy too. The BBQ was great and bright and good. This has always been a tradition in our company that we always meet each other in mid-summer. I love this tradition very much. I will always love the breeze there. I will never forget it.



BUSINESS PARTNERS MIKE, JACK AND CORY AT THE PICNIC



JOB COACH VE DUONG WITH PARTNERS SEAN AND SARAH AT THE PICNIC

A Brand New Kiosk for Surrey Place Coffee Shed

Good things were happening at Surrey Place Coffee Shed. After nearly five years of selling our coffee and cookies in the staff room on the third floor, Surrey Place Centre had finished building a kiosk for us. It was on the main floor near the front entrance to the building. Job Coach Peter Ackie said it made a big difference to the Business Partners. It looked and felt like a real coffee bar business! The Partners were happy to move to the new kiosk downstairs. John Flannery, Director of Surrey Place Centre, watched them move. He was very pleased about the new kiosk too.



MEI YEE AT THE CASH REGISTER AT SURREY PLACE

What a long way we had come since the early days at Surrey Place! The Partners loved it - and still do! Here is how four of the Partners describe their work at the Surrey Place Coffee Shed today:

Aldene: "I work in the coffee shop at Surrey Place Centre beside Women's College Hospital on Elizabeth St. It's like Tim Hortons, but we sell organic coffee. We get the coffee from Alternative Grounds. As a Business Partnership, it's important to work as a team."

Rachel G.: "I serve coffee at the Coffee Shed. Four years I have been there in a building called Surrey Place Centre, just across the street from Women's College Hospital. I work on the cash register, serve customers, serve tea, coffee dessert and snacks. Being in a Partnership means we learn to understand each other."

Alison: "I work at the Coffee Shed and I like to take the food and beverage cart to all the offices, visiting all five floors. I have been there five years. I know what I'm doing and I know the Partners I work with."

Andrew: "Working in this business is like family. Other places you feel trapped in a box. But here it is a team, a family. We know one another. We know when one of us is having a hard day. Then we can help each other when we need it. It is ok to make mistakes, learn from our mistakes and each other. The best part is owning my own business. No one else in my family can say they do this."

New Partners Join JVS Coffee Shed

As JVS Coffee Shed began to grow, new Partners were invited to join. Looking back five years later, the Partners who joined in 2005 shared their memories of their first week on the job.

Maryam remembered, "I was nervous. I didn't know how to do the work. In five years, I have progressed. I learned to get along, to speak up. I stayed on the job even though it was very hard for me at times. I stayed because I knew I would lose everything I had learned if I left." Miranda recalled, "The Coffee Shed looked interesting when I first saw it. I liked it and wanted to be part of it. I didn't know what I was doing at first. It took a while to get used to it. But it was a friendly environment. Nancy said, "I found it confusing until I got the hang of it."

Teresa came to JVS Coffee Shed from the Foundations Programme. She reflected on her first days there. "At first, I didn't know anything. Someone introduced me to the work too fast, but I stuck with it. This is the longest I stayed at something. When our Job Coach Peter left, he persuaded me to stay and I'm glad I did."

It's True - Being a Partner Changes Our Lives

Mary Ferguson, from Sustainable Livelihoods, spent several months with our Staff and Partners, helping us to understand the effects of working in the Business Partnerships. She asked the Partners many questions like these. "How do you like working in the businesses?" "How has it changed your life?" At the end of her time with us, Mary concluded that "Working in Common Ground's businesses has had "a profound positive effect on the Partners' lives." It has changed their lives for the better. Mary praised our Job Coaches and our other Staff for helping this to happen.



PARTNER CHRISTINA AND JOB COACH PETER ACKIE WITH MARY FERGUSON

Preparing the Way for Permanent Funding From the Government

We had funding for the year 2005-6. But we could not just sit down and relax. Next year would come soon and we would need money again to keep Common Ground and the Business Partnerships going. So, in the middle of July, David Pitt, Cathy Lang, Larry Sherman and I invited Ellen Waxman to meet with us at Surrey Place. There she saw our new kiosk. Ellen had been a strong supporter of Common Ground for several years. She worked in the Ministry of Community and Social Services and many people respected her. The meeting we had with Ellen that hot day in July was very positive!

That was a good thing for the future. People like Ellen could help us explain to people in the Ministry how social enterprise and social services together could improve employment for people with disabilities! It might mean that Common Ground one day would be able to receive permanent core funding! When the Ontario government saw we were doing an excellent job, they would want us to continue. That would mean that money for Job Coaches and other Staff would come to Common Ground every year without our having to ask for it.

Another Queen's Park Rally - September 29, 2005

Once again, Partners and Staff walked to Queen's Park for a rally for dignity for people on welfare and benefits. About a dozen of our Partners were there - some

from Surrey Place, New College and the Cookery as well. There was lunch, speeches, the Raging Grannies and others. Once again, people were asking the government to make changes in the ODSP.



SEAN, SUSAN, MEI YEE, KENNY, PAUL, AMANDA AND VERONICA
AT QUEEN'S PARK RALLY

Queen's Park MPPs Hear about Common Ground

Our MPP, Kathleen Wynne, stood up in the Ontario Legislature at Queen's Park on November 2nd to talk about Common Ground Co-op! Sandra Papatello, MPP and Minister of Community and Social Services at that time spoke up too. She said, "That's a good programme". (She knew this because she had visited us at our AGM.) Amazing! Would the Minister act to help us? All the words spoken about Common Ground by Ms. Wynne and Ms. Papatello were written down in Hansard. Hansard is the name of the book of records where all the happenings in the Legislature are written down. (A copy of the speech MPP Wynne made is in the Appendix at the back of this book on page 155.)

Staff Changes

Our Job Coach, Tashana, was leaving after two years with us as a Job Coach.

She worked at both Lemon & Allspice and at JVS. She had great praise for Mike, a Partner at JVS, who she said had benefited from the course in Financial Management. We wished Tashana well. Partners and Staff welcomed Paula back on October 11th as her maternity leave was over. We thanked David Pitt for the work he did while Paula was away.

Three-year Grant from Trillium for Business Development

In early November, we got word that we had been successful in our application for another Trillium grant! Our Fundraising Committee met for three hours that morning. We talked about how this money would be used for developing the businesses.

The Fifth Annual General Meeting

We held another successful Annual General Meeting on November 8, 2005. We had lots of good news to share about the funding grants we had received. Sixty people attended the CGC Open House and AGM, in addition to many Partners and Staff. Partners gave speeches at both events. Many people attended both events. David Pretlove was there on behalf of our MP John Godfrey. Kathleen Wynne came too. The Members approved the changes in the Articles of Incorporation so that Common Ground could get a charitable number.

Becoming a Charity

In the month of July, the government of Canada decided to help us by approving our application for charitable status. They told Common Ground that we had met all the requirements. We would have final approval in September! That approval came on September 23rd.

Partners Learning

In 2005, Common Ground received government funding to offer Advanced Training courses for the first time to Partners who were interested. Each course was given weekly over eight weeks. I volunteered to do the planning and teaching. I asked various Board and Staff people to assist me for each lesson. This was the beginning of a growing emphasis by Common Ground on continuing adult education together with working in the Business Partnerships. Educational programmes became a big part of what we do!

These are the courses:

June - August, 2005: Financial Management: Robin C., Mike, Diana, Rachel G., Aldene, Cathy, Christina. The Partners learned about the history of money. Aldene described the course this way: "In the financial management course, I learned where money is made; the difference between wholesale and retail; how to use tools like a calculator and how to balance out a cash register; retail operations like inventory, ordering, pricing, deposit, payments, etc. We took a trip to our Credit Union." The final meeting was held at Alterna Credit Union on July 12th... We learned more about banking from the Credit Union staff. They joined our Business Partners for a visit to Surrey Place Coffee Shed. It is just around the corner from the Bay branch of the Credit Union.

August - September: Public Speaking and Communications. Petra T., Joanna, Susan, Nancy and Rachel B. - a very enthusiastic group! They wrote articles for the Common Ground Newsletter, did role plays, learned the proper way to make introductions and gave short speeches on various topics. David Pitt helped with this course. Each Partner received a certificate for course completion.

October - November: Democratic Processes. At the first session, Board Member Allan Smythe came. He answered questions about Common Ground and what the difference is between a co-op, a corporation and a small business. Job Coach Joan Barnett came to the second meeting to talk about ways to conduct Partnership Meetings. We discussed how Partners could participate in Common Ground's Annual General Meeting. Some Partners offered to speak at the AGM in November. I gave them copies of the agenda for the upcoming AGM so they would understand what would be happening. After the AGM, we talked about it.

The Partners also learned how to put together a puzzle on the bulletin board. It showed a model of our organization. The Partners began to see their individual histories in the overall history. Job Coach Ve Duong helped as we played a new vocabulary game. At one session, we had three guests: Board Members Larry Sherman and Chris Bovaird, and Job Coach Peter Ackie. The course included a good discussion about the Services Agreement that Partners sign with Common Ground. I explained the fees the Partnerships pay to Common Ground for the services they give the Partners. The final class session was a trip to Karma Coop on December 1st. We saw how a co-op food business operates. We chose to visit Karma Co-op because it was (and still is) a long-time buyer of Cookery baked goods.

February - April 2006: Marketing & Promotion;

Partners learned about 1) different ways to promote their businesses, and; 2) about pricing their goods competitively. The final class on April 21st was a trip to the local Tim Horton's. There we observed the many ways Tim Horton's promotes itself to customers. We enjoyed a snack too!

Veronica Receives Award from Toronto's Mayor

Every year in the first week of December, there was an International Day of Disability. Mayor David Miller declared the Day for the City of Toronto. The ceremony was held in 2005 at the rotunda in Metro Hall. Mayor Miller presented an award to our very own Veronica, Partner at the Surrey Place Coffee Shed. The award was for her work with Common Ground and with other organizations in the community. Five of our Staff were there: Paula, Shelina, Gladys, Kathy Young, Peter, and myself. Veronica's parents and other family members were there too. It was wonderful to see one of our Partners honoured by the Mayor!

Holiday Party

The Partners' Holiday Party took place for the first time at Jessie Manson dining room. Gladys and the Job Coaches organized it. Our new kitchen manager, Tara MacDonald, made salad and pizzas. Santa Claus came. (Some people thought Santa looked a lot like Bob, the Cookery's delivery driver.) The Partners had their pictures taken with him. There were lots of gifts. And the sense of happiness and fun was great. Many brought family and guests. There was music and dancing. We all just reveled in being part of what this little cookie project had become!



Chapter Nine

Overcoming Obstacles

2006

Starting the New Year on the Right Foot

Our MPP Kathleen Wynne met with Larry Sherman, David Pitt, Allan Smythe, Paula Murphy and myself at her office in January. She told us she would help us to source government funding. She would wait with us for the outcome of Common Ground's meeting with the people in Developmental Services on January 24th. It seemed that staff in the Ministry of Community and Social Services, Karen Meighan, Colleen Hua and Kerry Ann Markle were considering ways to bring our Co-op and its Business Partnerships into their policy discussions.

Permanent Core Funding!

On January 26th, the Ontario Government made an offer of permanent core funding to Common Ground Co-op! This was a big deal!! The Ministry of Community and Social Services, through their Developmental Services, was offering us each year up to \$200 000 plus the \$95 000 we already had for the Foundations Programme. These would become one grant we could use for our programmes and our Staff salaries. It was a big step forward!

But there was a "catch". They were willing to fund us, but we had to agree to cut our budget drastically. Common Ground had to cut Staff salaries and show a reduced budget in order to get this core funding.

The Board Response to the Government

The Board of Directors of Common Ground met all day on Sunday, January 29th. The meeting was about ways to reduce the CGC budget in order to receive the government funding.

They decided how Common Ground would balance its budget: 1) our full-time Coordinator position (Paula's position) would be replaced by a new position of part-time Director. This meant Paula would be let go. 2) We would find more volunteers. 3) We would apply for and receive more non-government grants. 4) We would have Partners operate a Coffee Shed without a Job Coach.

1 David Pitt Becomes Interim Director

The Board asked David to take over as a part-time Interim Director. Changing the full-time Coordinator position to a part-time Director position would save money in our budget.

2 Plan to Increase Volunteers

The second action to reduce spending was to find more volunteers to help Partners in the businesses. Karen Goldenberg and I made a visit to the Service Canada (formerly HRDC) office. We talked about a plan for Common Ground to hire a Volunteer Coordinator. Bev Bowman and Ralph Altobello told us Service Canada could give Common Ground most of the money to hire someone who did not have a job and was currently receiving Employment Insurance (EI). We did find Sabina Krumins to be our Volunteer Coordinator for one year on this plan.

3 More Fundraising

The Fundraising Committee Members, Chris Tolley, Cathy Lang, David Pitt and myself, decided to continue making grant applications. We submitted a large number of them. Over the next few months, several applications were successful, including grants from Cooperators, Toronto Enterprise Fund (TEF) Trillium Foundation and Carrot Cache. We also received our first corporate grant from Scotiabank. My neighbour, Gillian Amber, works at head office for Scotiabank. She visited our kitchen and took our application forward for us. These grants helped make it possible to keep most of our Job Coaches.

4 Geneva Centre Coffee Shed

The TEF grant allowed us to hire Kathryn Gill as a Job Coach at Geneva Coffee Shed from November '05 to April '06. Tamara Dachuk replaced her as the Geneva Coffee Shed Job Coach for six-months, from April to November '06. But the money would run out in November. Tamara was asked to train the Partners at Geneva to run the Coffee Shed independently without a Job Coach after she left.

Partners Take Leadership in the Community in Six Ways

Even though we had to cut back the budget, the Business Partnerships and Common Ground continued to grow. This growth continued, in part, because the Partners and Job Coaches improved their businesses in six ways.

1) Two Partners represented their Business Partnerships at a Conference in Vancouver. A Community Economic Development Conference took place in Vancouver March 15 -18. Peter Ackie and Cathy Lang wrote a proposal for Common Ground's participation and it was accepted! Peter and two Partners were chosen to attend to speak about their own Partnerships as social enterprises. Several Partners applied. Joanna and Petra T. were selected. They set off by plane to Vancouver with Peter on March 14th. (A private donation paid for this trip.) They participated in a "cracker barrel" session where CGC and other social entrepreneurs had set up tables. Joanna talked about her work in the Cookery and Petra T. described the Coffee Sheds. Petra called it a "cool" experience where many people came by their table, asked questions, and exchanged business cards. Throughout the three days, our three CGC reps were shown a lot of respect for being part of four successful business enterprises.

2) Six Partners catered food to nurses on a weekend in August: Kirk, Petra T. Aldene, Blair, Rachel G. and Rachel B., accompanied by Job Coaches, Alice, Kathy and Peter. They catered meals to the 250 nurses attending the International Aids Conference in Toronto. The nurses described the Partners as "a great team".

3) Three Partners educated medical students about Developmental Disabilities. Veronica, Rachel G. and Andrew, with Job Coaches Kathy Young, and Peter Ackie, met with medical students. The students attended a three-day workshop at Surrey Place Centre in September. The medical students were in training to become doctors. The three Partners shared their experiences about working at their Coffee Shed. They described their day-to-day experiences. They patiently answered the medical students' questions. The students were impressed by the courage, confidence, openness and honesty shown by the Partners. They found listening to the Partners refreshing and educational. Some said they learned more than they did listening to lectures. For many of the students, our Business Partners were the highlight of the three-day conference!

4) One Partner spoke on work and ODSP benefits. Natalie explained her work as a Business Partner at JVS Coffee Shed to a Common Ground special meeting held for JVS staff on September 28th.

5) Two Partners helped train 14 post-secondary interns who were learning about Cooperatives. Training Coordinator, Gladys Bumanglag, and Job Coach,

Tamara Dachuk, accompanied Partners Kirk and Aldene to Guelph on October 25th. They told the interns about their businesses and how Common Ground Co-operative helped them to succeed. The interns were very interested in our Business Partnership model. They saw, through Kirk and Aldene's eyes, the importance of being a Business Partner and how their lives had changed since joining the Partnerships.

6) One Partner brought a new recipe to the Cookery. Diana met a woman called "Sugar" who had her own TV show. Sugar told Diana about how she had been interested in cooking since she was a child. She gave out free copies of a recipe she had developed for cookies. Diana brought the recipe to Lemon & Allspice. The Job Coaches helped her to convert the recipe into bulk baking and a new product for the Cookery - oatmeal molasses cookies.

Spring Gatherings - Getting to Know Everyone Better

In mid-March 2006, I sent out invitations to Partners, Staff, Board and Co-op Members and others who were making a difference to our organization. My husband Jim and I hosted four small gatherings at our home for people in our Common Ground community - one in each of the months March, April, May and June.

On March 31, Jim and I hosted the first of the four gatherings. Eight Partners and Apprentices came, along with Brian Iler, Linda Burnside, Marg Murray, Chris and Viki Tolley and Graham Baldwin. David, Shelina and Gladys were the Staff people who came. I acknowledged and thanked them for all they were doing to help Common Ground grow. I gave each of the special visitors a Coffee Shed tshirt. Brian, Graham and I had a conversation about Community Living's commitment to continue to provide a kitchen for the Cookery, even if Community Living decided to move away from Jessie Manson.

At the second gathering on April 22, five Partners and one Staff person came from the Cookery, plus Kathleen Wynne, Kerry Ann Markle, Anne Jamieson, Cathy Lang, Julie Schwartz, Jim and Marion Kirkwood and Helen Stratigos Williams. It was exciting to watch Kathleen and Kerry Ann discussing together the future of social enterprise! The Partners who came wanted to come again.

More Gatherings

Toward the end of May, another gathering took place at our house. This time, we welcomed our good friends, Executive Director of Surrey Place, John Flannery, and Karen Goldenberg, Executive Director of JVS and chair of the CGC Board. We were also pleased to see other past and present Board and Committee Members Allan Smythe, Chetan Bahri, Marty Williams, Ursula Sherman, Doreen Cluett and Ann Rowland. Nancy Vanderplaats came too from the ODSP Action Coalition.

On June 17, 2006, the fourth and last gathering took place in our garden. We had David Clandfield, principal of New College, and his wife Sandra, Colleen Hua from Developmental Services, Board Secretary Cathy Gareau, Paul Van Del Laar from Geneva Centre, five Partners and three Job Coaches - Joan, Tamara and Alice. Alice and her husband Vladimir came with a guitar. They sang "Blowing in the Wind" for me and gave me a gift. David Chivers, the first Job Coach at the Cookery, came too. Altogether, 24 Partners came to the four gatherings and 40 present and past Staff and Board, government officials, and community partners. It was great fun and a big boost to bring our many friends together!

David Pitt Becomes Executive Director for Common Ground Co-op

David Pitt's job was interim, or temporary, so the Board of Directors had to find someone for a permanent part-time position as Executive Director (ED). The Board placed an ad for an ED. Forty-one people sent in applications, including David. He decided he would like the new position with Common Ground. Members of the Board met after they read all the applications and decided to interview five people. After the interviews on May 18th the Board approved David Pitt as our new Executive Director. The position was to be part-time from June 1, 2006 to March 31, 2008. We all knew David well, so we were happy to have him continue with us.

CGC Board Meets Families, Partners and Staff

This Board accomplished a lot in 2005-6 - charitable status, permanent core funding, a balanced budget, and a major Staff change. Five of these Board Members came to an open meeting of the Co-op on a hot night in July at Jessie Manson. Partners and Staff came too and they spoke up about their ideas and concerns. Families from Mississauga were there who wanted to start their own Coffee Shed. Several other parents and a few Co-op Members came too. Good

ideas emerged for making things better for everyone who worked for CGC and the Business Partnerships.

The Government Forum

The provincial government Forum on Social Enterprise took place on October 11, 2006 at the Holiday Inn on King Street. About one hundred people attended. Many friends were there - Cathy Lang, Toby Goldberg, Denyse Guy and Kerry Ann Markle. David Pitt, Peter Ackie and Partner Aldene came from Common Ground. Anne Jamieson from United Way and I spoke on a panel about social enterprise. I highlighted our Business Partnerships as good examples.

The Ministry saw Common Ground as one of the leaders in the social enterprise movement. They saw that we were offering a unique alternative to employment for people with intellectual challenges. Other people were asking about our model. They wanted to start enterprises themselves. We had active groups in Ottawa and in Mississauga who wanted to form Co-ops and use our model to start a business enterprise.

Anti-Poverty Rally at Queen's Park

I went with four Partners to a Queen's Park anti-poverty rally in pouring rain that lasted all day. Holding on to our umbrellas, we marched with the crowd along College Street to the Steelworkers Hall. The questions in our minds were these: Why should people with disabilities have to live with so little money? Why should our Business Partners have to give half of their earnings back to the government?"

We believe that Queen's Park should raise the monthly amount that our Partners receive from ODSP. And they should let the Partners keep all of their earnings from the Business Partnerships. Some of our Partners want to be involved in marches like this to stick up for their own rights.

Sixth Annual General Meeting - Kathleen Wynne

There was heavy rain on the AGM night on November 7th but many people came. Kathleen Wynne, our MPP, gave a good speech about wanting empty schools to meet community needs - like providing a new kitchen for the Cookery. The Members of Common Ground voted yes to a by-law to change the number of Common Ground Board Members from nine to eleven. I was one of the eleven people elected to the

Board at that meeting. I had been off the Board for two years, but I was eager to join again. The Board was growing bigger, just like the Business Partnerships.

Business Development

Trillium Foundation finalized our three-year grant for business development. At the beginning of September 2006, the Board offered two new half-time positions to Peter Ackie: Business Developer and JVS Job Coach. Peter left his job coach position at Surrey Place to take on these two jobs. Katherine Facini shared the Job Coaching at JVS with Peter.

Finding a New Job Coach for the Surrey Place Coffee Shed

The Surrey Place Partners chose Deanna Djos to be their new Job Coach. On November 10th, I went to lunch at Surrey Place to meet Deanna. We joined Partners Paul and Mei Yee for soup and a sandwich from the Coffee Shed. Deanna had worked before as an Operations Analyst. The Partners liked her a lot so she was just the person Common Ground needed for Surrey Place Coffee Shed!

The Board Makes Two Decisions

The news from the Board meeting on December 9th was both good and sad. The Board gave their consent to set up a Joint Advisory Committee with two Board Members, two Staff and four Partners, one from each business. Michel Klamph and I agreed to serve as the two Board reps.

On the sad side, the Board voted to close Geneva Coffee Shed on a recommendation of the Business Development Committee. The Partners had attempted to operate this Shed on their own after Job Coach Tamara left. The Business Development Committee had consulted with the Partners at Geneva Coffee Shed before making this recommendation. Frank Pickersgill, chair of the committee, said that he was very impressed by the Partners' participation in the decision on whether to close the Geneva Coffee Shed. Here is one candid comment from a Partner: "We have to look like a business. We are not respected by people in the Geneva Centre building because we don't look like a business."

The Holiday Party

On December 19th, I once again took my grandson, Oliver, to the Partner/Staff Christmas party at Jessie Manson. There were fifty or so people there. Oliver played his toy guitar and danced to great applause. Santa came and everyone had a picture taken with him. It was a good time!



COFFEE SHED PARTNERS POSE AT THE HOLIDAY PARTY
BACK: ROLAND, CHRISTINA, BLAIR, KAREN M., and JULIE
FRONT: KAREN N., PAUL, PETRA S., CORY

Spirit of Giving

On the last day of 2006, after the church service at Trinity St. Paul's United Church, nine people purchased \$500 worth of bag lunches from Lemon & Allspice for the Out of the Cold programme in January and February. It was amazing how the congregation had kept making these purchases in the winter months every year since 1999! It was the Christmas spirit of giving operating all winter.

Chapter Ten
Partners Raise Their Voices and are heard!
2007

Setting Up the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) Questions at the Board Meeting
about a Joint Advisory Committee

At its December meeting, the Board had accepted a proposal for setting up a Joint Advisory Committee. It would have representatives from Partners, Staff and Board. But some of the Board Members had thought of some questions over the holidays. They wanted to talk some more about the JAC at the January Board meeting.

Some Board Members thought that the plan to have Partners meet in a committee with Staff and Board people should be considered very carefully. One Board member said that it's important to have competent people to make decisions about our organization. The question was whether our Partners were able to make decisions about their businesses. Board Members raised another question about whether our Partners were competent to sign the Business Partnership Agreements and Services Agreements that we had established.

Several people thought it might not be wise to bring Partners onto a Joint Advisory Committee. The Staff and Board reps for the Committee should meet first, without the Partners, to decide how much influence the Partners would be given. Another member of the Board stated that the Partners were too easily influenced by Staff and could not always speak their own minds.

But there were two sides to this discussion. Another Board member disagreed with the idea of Staff and Board meeting first without the Partners. She said the Board and Staff should only meet if the Partners were present. The Partners should be there! I explained that Staff and volunteers at Common Ground had been presenting courses to the Partners over the past two years. These courses had helped the Partners to learn more about the democratic process. They had learned a lot about managing their Business Partnerships. They had learned about Common Ground Co-op. They were being encouraged to think

for themselves and to express their own ideas. So they should be able to serve on the Joint Advisory Committee.

Someone suggested that the Board invite one of the Staff people to a Board meeting. This person could describe the courses being taught to the Partners. Some thought this was a good idea. There was a need for education of the Board, in addition to the education we had been giving the Partners. There was a need to communicate better with Board Members about the competencies of the Partners.

This discussion indicated that perhaps some Board Members should have been given more opportunities to get to know the Business Partners. Better explanation of our mission and accomplishments should have been given. Board Members would then understand how the Business Partners had become meaningfully employed and engaged in the community. This was the most exciting part of our work as Board Members. Board Members would come to a better understanding of the rewards of being part of Common Ground Co-op.

Giving Partners a Voice

March 6, 2007 was an important day. It was the first meeting of our Joint Advisory Committee. Although the Board Members had questions about setting up this committee, they had not said no to the committee. So those who liked the idea decided to go ahead with it. The founding members of the committee were Aaron from the Cookery, Mike from the JVS Coffee Shed, Veronica from the Surrey Place Coffee Shed and Nazia from the New College Coffee Shed. They had been elected by their Partnerships to represent their businesses on this new committee. The two people representing the Staff were Joan Barnett and Peter Ackie. Michel Klamph and I were there to represent Common Ground Board of Directors.

Each member of the JAC explained why they were there.

- Aaron: "I want us to talk about how to improve the Sheds and the Cookery." •
- Veronica: "I want to communicate about the issues, and the changes, and how they may affect the Partners."
- Mike: "I want to talk about financial issues, like why the pay cheques are so low at JVS, and why Surrey Place's are so high."
- Nazia: "I want to discuss all these important things."
- Joan would like to find creative ways to solve problems together.

- Peter wanted to have the committee be a place where we all talked together. He wanted the committee to provide a voice for the Partners. He hoped that each member of the committee, especially the Partners, would go back, and discuss at their Partnership meetings, what the committee was all about.
- I wanted to know what the Partners were thinking about their work in the businesses.
- Michel wanted to make sure, that the Partners' issues would be heard at the Board level.

The answers given by the Partners showed a high level of maturity. The Partners themselves were about to launch some major changes at Common Ground Co-op - not all by themselves, but in cooperation with the Board and the Staff.

That was the beginning of growing communication among the many people who were part of the whole Common Ground project. I said to the Partners, "In the early days when the Cookery had just started up, there were no Coffee Sheds yet and no Board of Directors. It was easy to communicate among the eight or nine Partners and one or two Job Coaches who were at Sibley House then. Now there are so many more of us. This Joint Advisory Committee will help us to communicate more easily now the way we did back then."

Organizing the JAC Committee; Charging Fees to Businesses

The Board voted to charge fees to the Business Partnerships. The Services Agreement already stated that Common Ground could charge fees to the Partnerships. But, up until this time, Common Ground had not done that. Because the fees were not collected in the early years, the Business Partners should have been consulted about this change, but that did not happen. We had a Joint Advisory Committee meeting in early April to talk about this. The Partners at the meeting struggled to understand why the Board wanted to take their money. I explained that, like all businesses, the Partnerships needed certain services. It was a normal practice for any business to pay for those services. Some of the services Common Ground offered to the Partnerships were these: keeping track of business finances, writing the Partners' paycheques, purchasing equipment, and paying Job Coaches.

Setting up the JAC committee was a very positive move for our organization. It had been needed for a long time. It helped to close a gap in understanding among

some Members of the Board. Perhaps the Board Members did not realize that the Partners would know what was happening with the fees and wonder why they had not been consulted. But the people on the Joint Advisory Committee did learn about the new fees and heard the explanation for them. The reps from each Business then explained about the change and the reasons for it at their Business Partnership meetings.

Changing the Services Agreement

At the June meeting of the Joint Advisory Committee, we chose officers: Veronica was made chair of the committee, I was vice chair and Joan became the "minute taker". The topic for discussion was the Services Agreements that the Business Partners had signed with Common Ground a few years ago in 2001 and 2003. Joan, Peter and I reminded the Partners what the Services Agreements were about. We went over Schedule A of the Services Agreement. It listed the services CGC offers the enterprises.

I told the committee about Brian Iler: that he was the lawyer who had helped us to set up the **Business Partnerships** and the **Co-op** in 1999 and 2000. He had helped us to write the first Partnership Agreements and Services Agreements that were signed by the Partners earlier. Peter and I said we were planning to meet with Brian in August to discuss some changes that needed to be made in the Services Agreement. And we wanted to re-write the Agreement in language that was easier for everyone to understand. Then our Joint Advisory Committee would discuss those changes with one another and with the Partnerships, Staff and the Board. The Partners would decide whether or not they wanted to accept the changes. Representatives of the Partners who were working in the businesses at that time would then sign copies of the new Services Agreement.

Peter Ackie and I met with Brian Iler on July 27th to revise the Services Agreement. Brian simplified the words in the Agreement, to make them easier to understand. But he made sure that the changes would not affect the Partners' control over their own Businesses. I said to Brian that I believed the original agreement had it right. We changed some words and the format but did not change the meaning!

A Good Productive Meeting of JAC - August 27, 2007

Our Joint Advisory Committee met again at Surrey Place at the end of August: Veronica, Mike, Aaron and Nazia were there with Peter, Joan and myself. Our four partner reps talked through the importance of regular monthly partner meetings at each of the businesses. We talked about how to organize them better. We read through the new version of the Services Agreement. The Partners liked the new format. They began to understand how much authority they have to make decisions.

Partners Show Their Strength

Being a Partner in a business was a big responsibility and that included having to make some difficult decisions. But the Partners showed themselves to be capable of doing this and doing it in a responsible way.

On October 1, the Partner Reps reported to the JAC meeting that they were pleased with their accomplishments. They were ready to keep moving forward. Mike reported that JVS Coffee Shed was going to get more space because there would be some renovations at their business site. Veronica told the group that Surrey Place Coffee Shed was starting a composting programme for everyone in their building. Nazia reported that New College Coffee Shed had started selling used books and New College had given them an office. Aaron announced that he had signed up 13 new Members for Common Ground Co-op! Hearing all this good news from the Partner Reps gave the Staff and Board reps a real lift. Despite all the difficulties, the Partners were carrying on. The Partners were keeping the whole project going with their enthusiasm!

Fundraising Help Needed for Fundraising

Meanwhile, the members of the Fundraising Committee were trying to keep the organization afloat by finding large amounts of funding, at least \$100 000 or more each year. Cathy Lang had recently left the Fundraising Committee. I wasn't sure if the Committee would be capable of raising that money without Cathy Lang's help. No one else on the current Board had offered to assist with fundraising. Fortunately, Frances Frisken joined the Committee soon after, taking on the position of secretary and helping with research on foundations.

John Flannery Invites CGC to Join Get-in-Line Fundraising Event

I paid a visit to John Flannery, head of Surrey Place Centre. I asked him about how Common Ground could raise more funds. John told me about Surrey Place's Get-in-Line roller blade and walking event, held the previous summer. Staff and families of Surrey Place had raised a good deal of money through sponsorships. Some of the Partners from the Coffee Shed at Surrey Place had helped out as volunteers. John invited Common Ground as an organization to participate the next summer. The Partners, Staff and Members of Common Ground could organize a team for the skating and walking fundraiser. I said yes because I could see how much good it might do for Common Ground.

Cooperators Comes Through With Three-year Grant!

In April, Cooperators came through again - only big time -\$20 000 each year for three years!! It was a great relief! Cooperators had already funded Common Ground for three years, but we had to apply each year. This three-year grant (totally unexpected) would make a huge difference to our bottom line. Several messages of congratulations came from the Board Members, regarding this grant.

A Partner Raises \$6 000!

And there was more good news - we received \$6 000 from the Tippet Foundation! It was NOT a Staff member or a committee member or a Board member who got that grant for us. It was Joanna, a Business Partner in the Cookery!! Here is how it happened. David Pitt invited Joanna to go to the Tippet Foundation with him on May 31st. He asked her to speak to the people there about her work in the Cookery. When they arrived at the office, they spoke to the receptionist. Walter Thompson, the head of Tippet Foundation, could hear the conversation from his nearby office. He invited David and Joanna to come into his office. David sat very quietly while Joanna had a long conversation with Mr. Thompson.



PARTNER JOANNA WORKING IN THE LEMON & ALLSPICE KITCHEN

Joanna told Mr. Thompson all about her work and about the other Business Partnerships and how they needed money for their Job Coaches. At the end of the conversation, Mr. Thompson said that he would give \$6 000 to Common Ground to help the businesses! When the cheque arrived in the mail, it included a note from Mr. Thompson, saying, "A special thank you to Joanna - she is a terrific representative for your organization." Joanna sent him some lemon and date squares along with a note, saying, "Dear Mr. Thompson, we the Partners and Staff at Common Ground Cooperative are extremely happy with your generous \$6 000. This is a huge benefit for CGC. The money will help the Staff to help us Partners run the businesses." It was true that our Business Partners were Our best ambassadors!

Get-in-Line at Woodbine Beach!

Many of us went to Woodbine Park for the big fundraising Get-in-Line event with Surrey Place Centre. Our Partners and their families and friends, along with Staff and Board Members had formed Team Common Ground and had raised money by finding many sponsors. This was the day to walk on the Boardwalk or skate along Ashbridges Bay. We were hoping to raise \$5 000.



STAFF AND PARTNERS WALK THE BOARDWALK IN THE ANNUAL GET-IN-LINE FUNDRAISING EVENT

It was a glorious day, especially because Common Ground came in first by raising pledges of \$9900! We had surpassed our original goal! With the tremendous organizational support of Deanna and Gladys, Team Common Ground proved that persons with intellectual challenges are more than capable and able to fundraise for their own cause. We were able to keep about \$7000 when all was accounted for. Some of Common Ground's earnings went to Surrey Place to help pay for organizing the event. John Flannery and I were both happy with the results in this new venue at the Beaches. John invited Deanna and Gladys to join the Surrey Place committee to help plan the Get-in-Line event for the next year.

Summer Events Summer Picnic at Woodbine Beach

We didn't get enough of the beach at the Get-in-Line event. So on August 10th, we had our Partner and Staff annual summer gathering at Woodbine Beach Park. Gladys and Tara did a lot of work to prepare food for the picnic. Cathy and I and some of the other Partners had a great swim in the Olympic pool on a lovely sunny day. We all munched on lunch and enjoyed the beach.

A Good Productive Board Meeting - August 20, 2007

Soon after the Woodbine Beach events, CGC had a Board meeting. Ten of the eleven Board Members were there. The meeting lasted three hours as people finally came face to face with the radical nature of what we were doing. When they first came on to the Board, they had based their understanding of our organization on what was familiar to them. But now they realized that Common Ground had been taking a new and different approach to employment for people with disabilities. Our treasurer, Christine Pearce, presented full financial statements to the Board, one for each business. That helped Board Members to be more aware of just how busy the business's sales had become. I presented the newly formatted Services Agreement that the Joint Advisory Committee had accepted. At this meeting, we made an effort to understand one another better. And all went away feeling we had a very productive meeting!!

Publicity Common Ground Co-op Newsletters

In 2007-8, several beautiful full-colour eight-page issues of the Common Ground News were published. They were designed and edited by a dedicated team of volunteers on the Communications Committee: Yone Simidzu (editor), Michael Swan, Helen Williams, Robert Boardman, Angela Chan, and Dylis Chow. They were assisted by Sabina Krumins (staff volunteer coordinator). The Newsletter featured articles and stories by and about the Partners and Staff, and included Membership and Board activities. Partners enjoyed reading them and seeing themselves in print. Many Common Ground Members, activists and followers received copies to share with friends. Intern Natalie Roach edited the final newsletter in this series, published in June 2008. Since then, newsletters have appeared regularly on the CGC website and are produced by Staff.

Rogers TV Interviews Angela and Me

Angela, a partner in the Cookery, went with me to be interviewed at the Rogers TV studio. Angela loved doing this, especially having her face made up before the interview. She spoke very well in answer to the questions the interviewer asked her about the Cookery. I had trouble answering one of the questions. Angela and I appeared on TV the next evening. It was clear who the star of the performance was - it was Angela! The Job Coaches at Common Ground were not surprised to see how well Angela did. They knew that the Partners were the best people to speak up about their Business Partnerships. They knew that the Partners

understood their work and were well able to talk about it! They hoped the Board Members had seen Angela's performance.



More Good Publicity - Angela & Cathy

Meanwhile, another film shoot was going to take place at the kitchen. This film was a project of the Ontario government. Our good friend, Toby Goldberg, had arranged for two of our Cookery Partners to be filmed. The topic was about what shopping was like for people who have a disability. The title was "Talk to Me!" The film included several people with different kinds of disabilities. It would be shown to clerks who work in stores and banks. They would become confident about speaking with shoppers who have a disability. Cathy and Angela were filmed and a few months later, we received a copy of the film. Cathy and Angela did very well! We hoped the film would help clerks and others to relate well to all of our Business Partners when they were out shopping and banking.

Forging Ahead!

Feeling Good

With these events, we began to feel even more positive and optimistic. It seemed that when sometimes the future looked bleak, good things would happen to give us the courage to go on. The Partners were showing more and more determination too - with great results.

For example, Lemon & Allspice Cookery was busy in the days leading up to the Easter holidays. Easter cookies were the order of the day! The Partners prepared, baked and decorated shortbread cookies in Easter shapes. In all, they made and sold 100 dozen Easter cookies! That was something to shout about!

Many Good Friends

It helped us to know that Common Ground, the Cookery and the Sheds had found many friends in the community. We had very good relations with the Ministry, with the Ontario Co-op Association, with Trinity St. Paul's United Church, Surrey Place Centre, the University of Toronto, JVS Toronto and Community Living. We had good relations with the Members and the Staff of Common Ground Co-op. These people had seen the capabilities of our Partners. They understood our mission and were already amazed by the accomplishments of our Partners.

More Hard Decisions Changes in the Coffee Shed Partnerships

Partners at the Surrey Place Coffee Shed decided to ask some of their Partners to leave. The reason the Partners gave for asking these Partners to leave was this: they were not working to promote the business. They did not do the jobs they were expected to do and that meant the other Partners had to work harder.

Before they asked them to leave, they followed the rules in the Partnership Agreement they had signed. The Partnership Agreement stated that the Partners could remove a Partner from the Partnership by a majority vote. But they must first arrange a meeting with the Partner and a family member or worker to discuss why they were being asked to leave the business.

At the meetings, the Business Partners explained the reasons why they were asking the Partner to leave. After the Partner had a chance to speak and to ask questions, then the other Partners voted. The Surrey Place Partners had met with each one of the Partners who were being asked to leave. They had given them several chances to change their work habits. But there was not enough improvement. So, after the Partnership meetings, those Partners were asked to leave. The Job Coach at Surrey Place helped these Partners to find other placements where they were much happier.

Persuading People to Join the Board

The CGC Board Members invited new people to consider becoming candidates for election to the Board. The Board Members did this every year in October. This year, four Partners were invited to meet with the Board candidates to explain to them the work they do. Nazia, Aaron, Rachel G. and Rachel B. spoke to the candidates at a special meeting held in the Cookery dining area. The candidates

were impressed with how well they spoke. The Partners made it easier for interested people to decide they would like to serve on the Board.

New Projects, Travel and Work for Partners a Compost Box Full of Red Wrigglers

The Surrey Place Partners and their Job Coach, Deanna, invited a number of people to gather at their new compost box at the edge of the parking lot behind the Surrey Place Centre building. This wonderful project was called "vermiculture"! The Partners collected organic matter and paper from the Shed and from the offices on all five floors of the Centre. They gathered it together every day and took it outside to put in the compost box. They stirred the organic matter into the materials in the box. They also put red wriggler worms into the box and closed the cover tightly. The worms ate the organic matter. Once each year, the Partners emptied the box of all the lovely clean soil that the worms made by eating the organic matter. Then they sold the compost to gardeners or made small balls of it to put in egg cartons and sell to people who could use it to fertilize houseplants. The money they raised helped to pay for the large vermi-composting boxes. It has been a great project. Deanna and the Partners were doing good things to reduce waste and improve the environment!



PARTNER ALDENE AND JOB COACH DEANNA DJOS TEND TO THE COMPOSTING -
AN ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECT OF THE SURREY PLACE COFFEE SHED



PARTNERS CATHY, FRANK AND ALDENE WITH JOB COACH DEANNA AFTER FEEDING WORMS

The Book Sale Project

Nazia wrote about the Book Sale Project in the fall 2007 Common Ground Newsletter: Last summer our business at New College expanded by selling used books for \$1 each. Some of the books are interesting enough for me to read. I really like this book-selling idea. It should help bring more customers to the Coffee Shed.

A Trip to Ottawa by Train

Partners Aaron and Veronica with Job Coach Joan Barnett and I took the train to Ottawa on October 21st. We had been invited to present a workshop there about the Business Partnerships. Our friends, Marge McCabe and her husband, Rick, picked us up in their van at the station and took us to the Canadian Parliament Buildings. We walked around Parliament Hill on a beautiful warm sunny afternoon. Veronica especially enjoyed watching a colony of stray cats we discovered on the Hill. McCabe's took us on a drive up along the Rideau Canal. We saw the Ottawa River, Quebec, and the bridges crossing over from Ontario to Quebec. We had dinner together at the Heart and Crown pub in the market. Joan and I stayed with friends that night. Veronica and Aaron stayed with Marge and Rick.

The next morning, we got together again at the Hintonberg Community Centre for a meeting about Social Enterprise. Don Palmer gave a presentation about Krackers Katering in Ottawa. It's a catering company a lot like Lemon & Allspice Cookery. After that, the four of us made our presentation about the Cookery and the Coffee Sheds in Toronto. After lunch and another presentation in the afternoon, Marge drove us back to the train station where we waited for the train that whisked us back to Toronto. It was a good trip!

Working at the Cookery

The Cookery Partners often speak for themselves about their businesses and the variety of work they do there. Here is how some Partners describe the jobs they perform. Joanna says, "I help in a catering business with people with disabilities. I sign the cheques and make deposits." Sean, Diana and Alex describe themselves as bakers. Cathy says, "I do sandwiches as well as baking. It's a catering business that delivers food around the city. We are all bosses". Katy describes herself as a baker, but she adds, "I do deliveries. I do some dishes and help the Job Coaches get food trays ready. I sweep and wash the floor." Doug says, "I make deliveries and I operate the cash register." Aaron says, "I wash dishes and set up the kitchen. And I also bring in new Members to the Co-op, do public speaking and promote the businesses." They interact with the catering customers too. Joanna likes to make deliveries to the National Film Board of Canada downtown. "They asked me to lunch once", she says. "They were nice." Aaron likes to make deliveries to the several law firms that order food from the Cookery. Sean enjoys delivering orders to JVS Coffee Shed, because of the friendly Staff there.

A Waiting List

Members of Common Ground Co-op were beginning to ask about the waiting list of people who wanted to become Partners in the businesses. Some were people who had finished the Foundations course with Gladys. They had done some work in the businesses as part of their training. They wanted to stay. Other people heard about our businesses and asked to be put on the waiting list. There were 53 people working in the four businesses. Many of them had been Business Partners for several years. They liked their work and didn't want to leave. There was a limit to how many Partners there could be in each business too. So people on the waiting list sometimes had to wait a very long time to start an Apprenticeship. After a few months, some would find another programme or job and take their names off the list.

This raised a big question. How could more people become Business Partners? Should Common Ground open more snack bars? That was a hard question to answer. It cost a lot of money to open a new business. CGC had barely enough money to help the four Business Partnerships we had. We had tried to open a business at Geneva Centre but we had to close it because we couldn't pay another Job Coach. The Partners there had been doing a good job, but it was difficult to run a business successfully on their own. We needed to think of new ways to help more people to join or start new businesses. It would take almost two years for us to find those new ways. (See pages 123-4 in Chapter 12.)

Shelina Moves On

Shelina Akter had been working for Common Ground and the Partnerships as our Financial Manager ever since September 2003 - four years! Everyone knew and liked Shelina. But she was offered another job in July and decided to accept it. We were very sorry to see her leave us. Fortunately, the Board approved the hiring of Shelina's brother, Nazrul Islam.

The Seventh Annual General Meeting

The Open House and AGM took place once again at the Jessie Manson building in November. Many Partners, Staff and Co-op Members attended. It was well organized. Peter Frampton, from the Toronto Learning Enrichment Foundation, was our special guest that year. He spoke to the crowd about Common Ground's important place in Canada's social economy.

International Day for Disabled Persons

I gave a short speech to Health Canada folks on Queen Street West. Alice, Deanna and three Partners attended. Rachel B. and I stayed for the Lemon & Allspice lunch. We made some good contacts. A copy of my speech is in the Appendix at the back of this book, page 156.

Community Living Plans to Move from Jessie Manson

One day, the people at Community Living told Common Ground that they were planning to move. They wanted to move out of the Jessie Manson building at 4 Overlea Blvd. to another building. They hadn't found the building they wanted yet, but they let us know so we could be prepared. This meant that our Cookery kitchen

might have to move too, because Common Ground was sub-leasing the kitchen from Community Living,

So Members of the Common Ground Board of Directors set up a Property Search Committee. We began looking for a kitchen - Tara, Larry, David and myself. We went to Neill Wycik Housing Co-op on the campus of Ryerson University to meet Melissa Wilkes. She gave us a tour of their vacant kitchen and we discussed all the angles. It seemed like a good possibility and Neill Wycik might not charge a lot of rent. We discovered no serious drawbacks. It was a good meeting but no decision was made. We would wait to see if Community Living gave official notice that they would move.

And the Holiday Party

The Partners, Staff and many family members came to the Holiday party that took place at the Mandarin Restaurant this year, on December 3rd. Eighty people were there. Aaron said, "It was packed like sardines. Everyone came!" We learned that night that the Cookery did \$8 000 worth of business just over the weekend. Who could have imagined we would ever bring in so much money in such a short time?

Chapter Eleven

A New Leader for Common Ground

2008

Finding a New Executive Director Search for Permanent ED for CGC

The contract with David Pitt as Executive Director (ED) was going to end on March 31st. At its January meeting, David told the Board he must leave Common Ground on that date because his son was very ill with cancer. So the Board set up a Search Committee to look for a new ED. Common Ground now had the money to hire an ED to work full-time. The Committee wrote a job description. They agreed on how to conduct the search. The job posting would be sent out to many organizations so we could find the right person to lead us.

Choosing a New Executive Director

At the end of February, the Search Committee interviewed six candidates for Executive Director. When the interviews were finished, the committee met and decided to offer the position to Jeannette Campbell. We all agreed that Jeannette would be excellent as our full-time ED. She very much wanted to work with people with intellectual challenges and she said she thought the Business Partnerships were a wonderful idea! She also had a lot of previous experience as an ED for people with disabilities and with homeless youth.

Job Offer to Jeannette Campbell

In May, the Board voted unanimously (everyone agreed!) to offer the position of Executive Director of Common Ground Co-op to Jeannette Campbell. The plan was to ask Jeannette to begin work with Common Ground on the second day of July. David said he would continue working as our ED until that time, as his son's cancer was in remission.

Partner, Rachel G. and Job Coach Deanna Djos made a presentation at that Board meeting, they told the Board Members about the Surrey Place Get-in-Line fundraising event coming up in August. They encouraged the Board Members to get involved. This was one way to help the Partners and Board get to know each other better.

Joint Advisory Committee JAC Partners Take On New Responsibilities

At the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) meeting, it was reported that the Business Partnerships were starting to have regular meetings again. A few of the Partners had joined the Co-op. It was good to see that Veronica and Nazia were asking questions about why they should join before they did so. Aaron and Mike were willing to take the updated Services Agreement to the Board for signing. Joanna, an alternate rep to the JAC, asked if she could become a member of the Property Search Committee for a new kitchen. Our Partners could be strong! They were feeling empowered by joining the Co-op.

A Partner Takes Action

Partner Aaron met with the chair of the Board, Karen Goldenberg. Aaron did this as a first step toward the final signing of the updated Services Agreement. Karen told Aaron that she had a concern about the indemnity or "fault" clause in the Agreement. That clause stated that the Co-op was responsible or liable for any damages or wrongful acts made by the Partnerships. It was a good thing Aaron had checked with the chair. It seemed there was a need for the Business Partnerships to carry their own insurance. Aaron reported back to the JAC. The Board asked Christine Pearce, our treasurer, to write to Lily Ng, Common Ground's insurance agent at Cooperators. She sent Lily a list of questions about coverage for Partners. I wrote to Brian Iler and he said he would contact Lily too. Together they would see whether insurance could be arranged for the Partnerships.

All four Partner reps were there again at the February JAC meeting. We discussed the Board's concern about insurance for the Partners. As always, the Partner reps asked good questions. We would have to wait to see what Lily Ng at Cooperators would offer the Partnerships. The Cooperators were interested in working out a good insurance policy that the Partnerships could afford. After all, Cooperators is one of our major funders and they are a Co-op too.

Businesses Take Out Insurance

Cooperators, did offer insurance policies to the Partnerships. It would cost each Partnership \$300 per year. Each Partnership discussed and voted on acceptance of the general liability insurance policy. Now the insurance was in place, the Board would agree to sign the updated version of the Services Agreement.

Ontario Disability Support Programme (ODSP) Living on ODSP

Our Partners' earnings give them a little more money to add to what they receive from ODSP. Partners can earn up to \$200 or more per month in their businesses. But they get to keep only half of these earnings. (The money the government takes back is called a "claw back".) These two kinds of income together barely cover rent. They leave nothing left over for food, clothing and transportation. Many of the Partners get help from their families or else they could not live and work independently.

ODSP Action Coalition

The ODSP Action Coalition asked the provincial government to make two changes to ODSP: 1) Raise the monthly rate by a few hundred dollars. 2) Let people on ODSP who work keep all of their earnings. Members of the ODSP Action Coalition had been meeting every month or two over several years. In between meetings they often spoke to individual members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs) about their needs and asked for changes.

On Leap Year Day (February 29, 2008) Aaron and I joined Nancy Vanderplaats and Sharon Devers from the ODSP Action Coalition to meet with Common Ground's good friend, Kathleen Wynne, our MPP for Don Valley West. It was a good meeting where we spoke about the hidden poverty of disability. We said that must not be overlooked in the provincial government's new anti-poverty strategy. Aaron spoke about the earnings clawback he was facing. And he said that all the other Partners in our Businesses faced it too. He asked her to use her influence to let people with disabilities who do work to keep their earnings.

Lemon and Allspice Cookery

The Cookery's Tenth Anniversary!

Lemon & Allspice Cookery began on July 2, 1998 with three workers, a part-time Job Coach, a small kitchen and a great cookie recipe. Here we were on July 2, 2008, TEN YEARS LATER! The Cookery had sixteen Partners, three full-time Job Coaches, a big well-equipped kitchen and a complete catering menu that featured many foods, including the original chocolate chip cookies. These were Cathy's thoughts after ten years: "I really like the friendly people I work with, earning money from selling to customers, thinking up new ideas and recipes, and seeing

people smile." On that very same date of the Cookery's Tenth Anniversary, we welcomed Jeannette Campbell as our new leader.

The Search for a New Kitchen Continues

Our Property Search Committee met again at Neill Wycik Housing Co-op. Job Coaches Joan, Jenny, and Tara, and Board Members Larry, Rae and I were there. Melissa Wilkes proposed \$1 000 a month for rent and utilities. The rent seemed high and the Staff was feeling uneasy about a move to this location. It was still uncertain what Community Living would do regarding our present kitchen location. They had not yet made a decision about moving out of Jessie Manson. So the committee decided to let Melissa know that the Cookery would not be moving to the Neill Wycik kitchen at that time.

Community Living and the Kitchen

The CGC Property Committee met again in April. But, by then, CLT had changed its plans. They were proposing to build a new headquarters that would include programme space for the people who were now in the sheltered workshop at Jessie Manson. The building would take a long time to construct. This meant probably Common Ground and the kitchen would have 3-5 more years in Jessie Manson!

Cooperators Visits the Cookery - April 14th

Our good long-time friend, Cathy Lang, brought a group of ten people from Cooperators insurance to see the Cookery kitchen. They came together on a bus to see the work we were doing. Lemon and Allspice Partners served a tasty lunch in the Jessie Manson meeting room. David Pitt and Partners Joanna, Angela and Rachel G., spoke to the group about their work. I thanked the Cooperators for the funding they had promised Common Ground over the next three years. We did all this in exactly one hour!

The Last Bag Lunches for the Out of the Cold Programme

People in the congregation of TSP United Church had been purchasing bag lunches from the Cookery for their Out of the Cold Programme for homeless people since 1999. Now the OOTC programme was closing for good in March. This project, over nine years, had given thousands of dollars of business to the Cookery. Homeless people had received hundreds and hundreds of bag lunches to eat when they had no money to buy food. It was a wonderful coming together of people to help those who needed it.

New College Coffee Shed

New College Shed Hits the News!

The New College student newspaper in March featured a story and photo about the Coffee Shed on the front page! The Partners were working hard to let more and more people know about the work of the Business Partnerships. They wanted people to know how much their work was changing the lives of people with disabilities.



NAZIA AT THE CASH REGISTER
AT NEW COLLEGE COFFEE SHED

Coffee Shed Reaches Out at New College

Alice Bikeeva is the Job Coach at New College Coffee Shed. She was getting to know faculty people at the College. One day in early April, I went with Alice and Partners Ernest and Petra T., to meet June Larkin, Professor of Disability Studies, at New College. June had been a very good catering customer. But she knew very little about Common Ground and the Business Partnerships. So we talked about our Co-op and the social economy. June said she believed many more students would patronize the NCCS if they understood it was a social enterprise. She talked about the possibility of having a student intern work with the Coffee Shed to develop promotion and marketing.

The week before this, David Clandfield, now the retired principal of New College, had written to Common Ground. He offered to volunteer and to help NCCS and Common Ground in any way he could. This was good news!!

Jeannette Takes the Lead

One of the first meetings Jeannette had when she began with Common Ground was with David Clandfield, June Larkin and myself. We discussed the future of the New College Coffee Shed and how students at New College might become interns and "work-study students" in the Shed. This was a good idea! Since that meeting, several students have worked with the Partners at New College Coffee Shed.

A Big Opportunity at New College Coffee Shed

The Grad Room - Is it For NCCS?

Back in May, the University of Toronto had asked Common Ground to make a proposal for operating a coffee and snack bar at the Grad House. That is a large building where graduate students live on campus. The Grad Room is the name of the snack bar. It is at the corner of Spadina Avenue and Harbord Street. We thought of many questions as we talked about this idea. Could we close the Coffee Shed at Wetmore Hall and move it to the Grad House location? Or could we operate snack bars at both locations? Could we keep our catering business going with OISE if we made a change?

We decided to organize a meeting at the Grad Room. We invited the interested people at the University to talk about these questions. The meeting took place on May 27th in the Grad Room. Lemon and Allspice provided the lunch. Common Ground decided to make a proposal. We knew we might not be chosen because other food services would also be making proposals. But we would try anyway. We would know in two or three weeks' time.

So one of Jeannette's first jobs was to help New College Coffee Shed make the proposal for the space at the Grad Room. We knew the big food outfits like Sodexo and Avarak were also making proposals. But we thought we might still have a chance of getting the place

Making Our Proposal for the Grad Room Snack Bar

We met at New College at 10am on July 31st. Nazia, Petra T. and Rachel B. went over their speeches. The Partners, Job Coach Alice Bikeeva, Jeannette and I walked over to the School of Grad Studies. After we climbed the stairs to the third floor, we met Barry Smith, Heather Kelly, Ann MacDonald and a man from Ancillary Services. We made our presentation in the half hour time slot. Nazia, Petra and Rachel spoke very well. Jeannette fielded questions regarding how catering orders would be handled and whether we had enough Partners and Job Coaches. David Clandfield knocked on the door in the middle of the proceedings. He dropped off copies of his letter of support for us. His arrival was well timed! The people there said they would let us know soon.

Grad Room Proposal Turned Down

As it turned out, on August 5th, Jeannette told us we had lost our bid for the Grad Room - what a great disappointment! But we knew we must move on. We would make a greater effort at New College.

Improving New College Coffee Shed

Already in the previous spring, the Partners had given the New College Shed a facelift with the addition of new Partner-made signs! One of our staff people, Natalie Roach worked with Nazia, Rita, Frank, Mimi and Petra S. on the signs. This was a project to help make the Coffee Shed more visible. One sign, made by Mimi and Frank, advertised the fair trade and organic coffee they were selling there. Another sign, by Petra S. explained how the Coffee Shed created employment for adults with intellectual disabilities. Petra S. added the note, "I myself work here!"

Working at New College Coffee Shed

The jobs for Partners at the Coffee Sheds are different from those at the Cookery. The NCCS Partners enjoy their work. Rashida likes making coffee. She is good at making change at the sales counter and cleaning the coffee carafe at the end of the day. Nazia is there when someone needs to take charge of the Shed when others are off making catering deliveries. Nazia especially likes working at the Farmers' Market booth where Lemon & Allspice sells coffee and baked goods one day a week all summer. When it's time to open up the New College Coffee Shed in the morning, either Lynn or Rachel B. is usually there. They like counting the cash and so does Katie. Amy doesn't mind taking the catering

deliveries from New College across campus to OISE. The person who is often ringing up the cash register is probably Rita. Amy likes to take her turn at the cash register too and make deposits of the sales money at the Scotiabank branch at Bloor and Spadina.

SP Coffee Shed Partners are a Smash Hit at the OADD Conference

The Ontario Association on Developmental Disabilities⁶ invited three Partners from the Surrey Place Coffee Shed and one rep from Surrey Place Centre to present at their 2008 Conference. It took place in Barrie, Ontario on April 3rd & 4th. Their Job Coach, Deanna, was invited too. This conference was an opportunity for professionals serving people with disabilities to come together.

The title of the Coffee Shed presentation was "The Coffee Shed - an innovation in business - empowering the lives of people with developmental disabilities." There were so many people wanting to hear the presentation that there weren't enough seats. But people stood in the back of the room to watch the team. Partners Andrew and Aldene warmed up the crowd by telling a few jokes. That brought more people into the room who wondered what all the laughter was about! Getting serious, Deanna, Aldene, Andrew and Rachel G. explained about Common Ground's non-profit, co-op model. They told the audience how the model allows adults with disabilities to have the dignity of long-term self-employment. They told stories and used videos to show the Partners in action. They told the crowd how their business had changed their lives.



ANDREW, ALDENE, RACHEL G. AND PATRICK

¹⁷ OADD is a professional organization of people working and studying in the field of developmental disabilities, throughout Ontario.

The Partners spoke proudly about their organization. They were loud and clear with answering all the questions from the crowd. The questions continued after the session was over. The hour and a half presentation was a huge success! The Coffee Shed Partners were the smash hit of the conference!

Harvest Time at Surrey Place

At the April JAC meeting, Veronica announced the first "Worm Harvest Party". The party was planned by the Surrey Place Coffee Shed to take place on May 31st. "This means we will be harvesting the compost made by the worms," she explained.

The vermi-composting project had been working very well. Every working day that year, the Partners collected organic waste from the Coffee Shed and from the offices and meeting rooms at Surrey Place. They had collected coffee filters, orange peels, and other food waste. They placed these items in the vermi-compost bin outside in a corner of the parking lot. The worms ate it all. Now the worm compost could be removed from the large box and sold to people who wanted compost for their home gardens. Small balls of compost could be sold in egg cartons for people to use for their houseplants.

When the day of the harvest arrived, a producer at CBC news arrived to film the event. The film crew caught on camera the Partners, Aldene and Andrew, digging up the compost and sifting through it to extract the rich fertilizer. The magic black worm castings gave organic mega- growth power to plants. The Partners sold out of the castings on the day of the event. The Partners had Cathy Nesbitt of "Cathy's Crawly Composters" to thank for helping to start this successful programme.

Brock University Comes Back to Surrey Place Centre

Brock University was back to school for the second year and resumed holding their classes on weekends at Surrey Place Centre. The classes were for a Master's Degree program in Applied Disability Studies and would start on Saturday and Sunday Sept 13th and 14th. In this year there would be two classes a month at Surrey

Place Centre, taught by Dr. Rose Mary Condillac and Dr. Ivan Brown from Brock University. The Team Leaders at SPC Coffee Shed would be catering snacks and lunches to the students and faculty, from 8am to 3pm. They would be doing this

on all the weekends that the Brock programme was in session for that academic year. The catering was very successful. Brock University continued to use the Coffee Shed's catering service for the next several years.



SURREY PLACE PARTNER RACHEL G. WITH VOLUNTEER CAROL PETRENKO
AT "CITY MIX" AT TORONTO CITY HALL

City Mix 2008 is a celebration of all people ~ One People. One Celebration. One Voice. It's an inclusion awareness event - a Celebration of social inclusion, diversity & empowerment for people of all ages & abilities. City Mix brings all people together to celebrate social inclusion, diversity and empowerment. And Common Ground was there in Nathan Philips Square in August 2008!

Surrey Place Partners - Conference Presenters in Ottawa

Job Coach Deanna Djos and two Partner/Team Leaders, Aldene and Rachel G. were the guest presenters at a Conference in Ottawa on October 15 & 16, 2008. The theme was "Employment Solutions: The Untapped Workforce". They presented two full sessions about their business and their personal experiences as Business Partners in The Coffee Shed. They also gave out informal information to

attendees. The Coffee Shed presenters were among other speakers from across Canada and the International community.

The June Callwood Award

Surrey Place Centre makes awards each year. One of those awards is made in honour of June Callwood. She did many good works in the City of Toronto. Before she died, she helped Surrey Place Centre in its work with people with disabilities. Cathy and I received June Callwood awards at a big gathering of Surrey Place people at Currie Hall in the National Ballet School on June 26th.

Many people from Surrey Place came to the event. Others from Common Ground were David Pitt, Angela Chan, Deanna Djos, Jodine Labor, Doreen Cluett, Christine Pearce and Marg Murray, our first Board chairperson. Partners from Surrey Place and New College Coffee Sheds were there too. Rachel G. from SPCS gave an excellent speech about her life with a disability. A mother spoke about her Down syndrome child and all the beautiful Down syndrome children who have been born.

Cathy and I received the awards because of our work to set up Business Partnerships that have become a new model of employment in the community. Partner Aldene was at this event as an official member of the Board at Surrey Place. She helped hand out the awards. Cathy and I each made a speech when we received our awards. Cathy told about her dream to have the Cookery. I paid tribute to David Pitt for his long-standing dedication to Lemon & Allspice Cookery, the Coffee Sheds and Common Ground Co-op. I said I would always remember him as one who understood fully the ups and downs of our many years of working together to build Common Ground and the Business Partnerships.

JAC Deals with Discounts and Partnership Agreements Cookery Discount to Sheds

Some Members of the Co-op and some Partners in the Coffee Sheds had a concern. Partners in the Cookery were making more money than Partners in the Sheds. They thought the Cookery might be charging too much for the orders from the Sheds. The Sheds could not raise their prices high enough to cover the cost of the food and also give them enough income. Some people suggested that the 25% discount that the Cookery gave to the Sheds was too small. Our Board treasurer, Christine

Pearce, believed that some of the inequities among the businesses could be resolved by changing the discount structure.

Here is what was happening: a Shed would place a \$100 catering order. The Cookery would give the Shed a discount of \$25 and charge the Shed \$75. The Shed could sell the catering order for \$100. So the income to the Shed was \$25. The income to the Cookery was \$75, but some of that \$75 was used to purchase the food from the wholesalers. If the Sheds got a bigger discount, here is what would happen: On the \$100 order, the Cookery would give the Shed a 35% discount of \$35. The Shed could sell the catering order for \$100. But they would keep \$35 instead of \$25. The Cookery income would be \$65 less the cost. The Partners at the JAC meeting discussed whether the Sheds could negotiate with the Cookery for a bigger discount. The discount was finally changed in the summer of 2009. (See Chapter 12, page 130.)

Improving the Partnership Agreements

Another item on the JAC agenda was about the Partnership Agreements. The Partners in each business had signed these Agreements a few years ago. (See Chapter Two, page 11.) The Agreements explain the duties and the rights of the Partners and how they agree to manage themselves. It was time for the Partnership Agreements to be reviewed. Peter and I said we would suggest some changes to make the Agreement easier to understand. We would bring it to the JAC for more discussion with the Partners. Peter would also discuss the changes at a Staff meeting with the Job Coaches.

Woodbine Beach Again

Beach Time - Get in Line!

It was Get-in-Line Day again for Surrey Place Centre and Common Ground Co-op. Many people participated in the walk-a-thon and skate-a-thon on a beautiful sunny and very warm day. Many of our Partners were there and family members too. Team Common Ground raised the most money - over \$12 000 this year. The total raised by all groups was over \$100 000. It's a lot of work raising money this way - but the day was very good.

Summer Fun!

Five days later the Partner/Staff picnic took place at Woodbine Beach Park again. It was good to see how the Partners have formed friendships. They swam in the Olympic pool, brought their own lunches. Tessa swam too - what a trooper! Five days after that event, Deanna, Gladys and Jeannette took ten Partners to Wonderland. They were the top Partner fundraisers for Get-in-Line!

Historic Moments!

Signing the Updated Services Agreement

Eight Partners went to the September Board meeting. They were there to sign the revised and updated Services Agreements between each business and Common Ground Co-op. Aaron and Cathy signed for the Cookery, Nazia and Petra T. signed for the New College Coffee Shed, Rachel G. and Andrew signed for the Surrey Place Coffee Shed, Kirk and Mike signed for the JVS Coffee Shed, Karen Goldenberg and Frank Pickersgill signed all four Agreements for the Board of Directors. It was an historic moment!

There was another historic moment in September. Jim and I had our 50th wedding anniversary celebration. It was held at Trinity St. Paul's church. Four of the Cookery Partners did a very professional job of serving the food and beverages to 150 people: Doug, Mohammed, Aaron, and Susan. Joan and Jodine helped organize in the church kitchen. It was a grand occasion and great to have the Cookery Partners and Staff there!

A Business Partner on the Board of Common Ground Co-op?

At the October Board meeting, there was a discussion about the candidates for the Board at the Annual General Meeting in November. There were five people who had agreed to be candidates. There were four vacant positions on the Board. One of the five candidates was a Partner in the Cookery who was a member of Common Ground. He had put his name forward at a nomination meeting earlier in the month. The Board had voted at the last AGM for a change in the by-law that would allow Partners to stand for the Board. But not all Board Members were sure they wanted to encourage a Partner to be on the Board. They needed more opportunities to get to know the Partners and to hear about their thoughts and

perceptions of the world. The Board decided not to recommend the Partner for a position on the Board.

It was true that a Partner who came on the Board would have a great deal to learn, just as any new Board Member would. Someone would need to help with that. The Board Members needed more time to think about having a Partner on the Board.

Another Great Annual General Meeting! - November 13, 2008

The eighth annual Open House and AGM was wonderful! Many Partners, families, and Co-op Members intermingled. The Honourable David Onley, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario came, as our very special guest, and he wanted to do the same - intermingle! He gave a short talk in which he called our work at Common Ground "revolutionary". He had spoken with some of our Partners at the City Mix in Nathan Phillips Square in September and he could see how much they were learning. David Onley is a physically handicapped person who had polio as a child. He understands what it's like to have a disability.

The Issue of Poverty Partners Attend a Network Meeting

Marvyn Novick and Peter Clutterbuck are part of the "25 in 5 Network". The Network aims to reduce poverty in Ontario by 25 percent in 5 years. I spoke with them about having some of our Business Partners attend a meeting of the 25 in 5 groups at the Y on November 17th. They were happy to invite us. So Cathy, Veronica and Kenny met me at the Y. There we attended a full day meeting with people from all over Ontario. They were concerned about people living in poverty. The people there didn't think it was fair that people had to live in poverty in a rich province like Ontario.

Peter and Marvyn met us and we found a table near the front. People at the tables represented other cities or regions across Ontario. Marvyn spoke on the 25 in 5 blueprint for the government. Our Partners followed the hour-long talk and power-point presentation and made notes. They were fully engaged throughout the day. The Partners talked with me about ODSP and the claw back of their earnings from their businesses. Then they reported to the whole group about having half of their earned income taken back by the government. We also said that poverty among people with developmental disabilities can sometimes be hidden because some of them have families who can support them. Pat Capponi

spoke to our Partners, saying that they had made an important point, especially because sometimes families grow old or move away. I asked Cathy, Kenny, and Veronica to help write a Declaration about bringing people with disabilities out of poverty. We wanted to share our ideas from the meeting. We said we might share with other Partners what we were learning about incomes and poverty.

Peter Clutterbuck wrote about the participation of Veronica, Kenny and Cathy in the meeting. He posted their Declaration in the Poverty Watch on-line newsletter. You can read the Declaration in the Appendix at the end of this book on page 154.

Joint Advisory Committee and the Poverty Issue

When the Joint Advisory Committee met in November, we talked about the Declaration of Young People with Developmental Challenges made on Nov. 17th. I had sent this Declaration to the Job Coaches. There was concern among the JAC Staff and Partner reps. and they wondered whether the Partners wanted to talk about themselves living in poverty. Perhaps we were going to need to use different language. It was good that JAC could serve as a place to come together to discuss these serious concerns.

Poverty - Further Discussion

The next day, I met with Veronica and Deanna to discuss their concerns. Veronica had told Deanna she was uncomfortable about the issue of poverty. She did not want to be identified with poor people. She had an important point. I realized I had to be more sensitive to this issue with respect to some of the Partners. We would need to have more discussion about poverty.

Good News, Good Ideas!

Another Wonderful Holiday Party!

But none of this discussion interfered with the enjoyment of our CGC Christmas party later that evening. For the first time since the early years, the Board Members came and they brought the food. As always, the Partners were wonderful. They seemed always to be so caring toward one another - it was something to see!

\$10 000!!!

To make our holiday joy complete, the cheque arrived from Get-in-Line. It was for Common Ground's share of the proceeds of that day last August. The cheque

was for nearly \$10 000! The Business Partners had once again raised a great deal of the money. This time it was by gathering pledges!

The Future of Common Ground and the Businesses - Planning Ahead for 2009

As the year 2008 came to an end, our thinking turned to the future of Common Ground. We talked about having a Staff retreat to give our Job Coaches a time and place to discuss the philosophy and future of the project. We also thought about a plan for a retreat where Partners, their parents and other family members could participate. It seemed there needed to be an evaluation, new ideas and planning. We were becoming a stronger organization. We could begin to think together about what we had created and how it could improve. We wanted to communicate our work to others. Many Partners depended on their Businesses for paycheques. They wanted to continue to work there. This made future planning even more important.

Chapter Twelve

Taking Charge

2009

Partners Learning and Educating Partners Make a Presentation to the Common Ground Board of Directors

Two Partners, Rachel G. and Aldene, made a presentation to the January meeting of Common Ground Board of Directors. With Job Coach Deanna Djos, they presented a slide show about Common Ground and the Coffee Sheds. Both our new and continuing Board Members were impressed. This was part of our effort to help Board Members learn more about the Partners and their Businesses.

A New Course for Partners

The Catherine Donnelly Foundation donated funds to Common Ground for a course called Communication Skills Enhancement Program. This course was for some of our Partners. It was about 1) developing more Partner leadership and participation in the Partnership meetings and 2) Partners taking action in the community. Gladys started the educational programming right away and invited sixteen Partners to take the course over a nine-month period. The Partners learned together in a large group for classes and field trips.



STUDENTS IN DISCUSSION IN THE COURSE

They also worked in four groups on specific topics they had chosen:

- 1) Greening the Businesses, with Aldene, Cathy, Frank, and Miranda
- 2) ODSP, with Angela, Teresa, Andrew and Amy
- 3) Our Products, such as fair-trade coffee, with Mohammed, Rachel G. Petra T. and Natalie
- 4) Common Ground Co-op with Aaron, Nazia, Kirk and Veronica



STUDENTS ON A FIELD TRIP TO ALTERNATIVE GROUNDS FAIR TRADE COFFEE WAREHOUSE.
ALTERNATIVE GROUNDS IS THE MAJOR SUPPLIER OF COFFEE TO THE COFFEE SHEDS.
LINDA BURNSIDE, PROPRIETOR, EXPLAINS THE WORKINGS OF THE COFFEE ROASTING MACHINE.

Graduation!

The course we set up through the Catherine Donnelly grant came to an end on the last day of August 2009. At JVS, there was a graduation event for the Partners who had completed the course with Gladys. There were four PowerPoint presentations on the four topics.

The Partners impressed everyone who attended the graduation presentations. They shared a great deal of knowledge! Common Ground and the Partnerships could look forward to these graduates taking more leadership in the Partnerships and in the community.



GRADUATES: L-R ALDENE, ANDREW, PETRA T., AMY, CATHY
RACHEL G., ANGELA, AARON

Partners Speaking in the Community

The Partners did take their presentations into the community. For example, on September 23rd, Gladys and Aaron had a great time speaking with people about Common Ground Co-op and the four Business Partnerships. This was at "Careers that Change the World", a conference held at the University of Toronto. It was about corporate, social and environmental responsibility (CSER).

On September 24th, Aldene and Cathy made a presentation to 12 business students at George Brown College. They spoke about the many ways Common Ground Cooperative was involved in helping the environment, including the vermicomposting project. Other Business Partners who graduated from the Communication Skills

Enhancement Program made their presentations to third year medical students. These students attend a day of interdisciplinary educational, clinical and community activities organized by Surrey Place Centre every year.

College Students Help Out in Our Business Partnerships

Common Ground was proud to be a part of several student and volunteer projects in 2009. George Brown College Business and Finance students signed on to help create new and improved business plans for our businesses. The students suggested new ideas for making the businesses better. Disability Studies students at the University of Toronto became interns with Common Ground and the Businesses. The student interns explored social issues that affected people with disabilities. They learned from the experts - our Business Partners!

Partners Attend Action Coalition Meeting on Human Rights

Petra T. and Amy went with me to a meeting of the ODSP Action Coalition on September 10th. Nancy Vanderplaats, founder of the Coalition, met with us ahead of time so we could review the new Disabilities Declaration proposed by the United Nations. When the meeting began, there was a full table of more than 20 people along with several more on the phone. There was general acceptance of the Declaration. I suggested a "plain language" additional sheet. Petra and Amy said they liked the meeting and wanted to go again. It boosted their self-image when they were included in that kind of discussion, even if they only listened.

Human Rights in Plain Language

That evening, I wrote a plain language version of the human rights part of the document. I sent my version of disability rights and demands to Nancy V. who passed it on to others who liked it. I sent it to Jeannette, Gladys and Alice and asked them to get feedback from the Partners. I introduced it to the JAC Committee. But further discussion was postponed to a later time. A copy of the plain language document can be found in the Appendix on pages 152-3.

More People Want to Join Our Growing Business Partnerships - The Partners Working in our Businesses

In 2009, there were four Business Partnerships - Lemon & Allspice Cookery and three Coffee Sheds. There were 53 Partners, or between 11 and 16 Partners in each Business. The businesses were open for about seven to nine hours every

weekday. Each partner worked three-hour shifts and most Partners worked two, three or four shifts every week. The number of Partners was just right to cover all the shifts for each week. The Partners liked working this way and many had been working in the Business Partnerships for several years. They wanted to stay - this work had become their career.

The Students in the Foundations Program

Gladys Bumanglag had been teaching the Foundations course every year for five years for Common Ground. The Foundations Programme was for individuals over 18 years of age, with intellectual challenges. Each year, six to ten students took her course. Most of them had just finished high school. They wanted to learn what they needed to prepare for a job. One part of the programme was classes and workshops together. They had classes five times a week for four months. Then they each had an opportunity to work shifts in a Business Partnership for up to five months. They continued to meet together as a group with Gladys on Fridays.



DAVID PITT ENJOYS A SPRING FLING ACTIVITY WITH THE FOUNDATIONS STUDENTS.

A few of these students later became Apprentices in the businesses where they had been working. If they were good workers and the businesses needed more Partners, the Partners would vote them into one of the Business Partnerships.

People Who Wanted to Work in the Business Partnerships

But many of the students were not able to join a Partnership, even when they wanted to. This was because there were enough Partners in the Businesses already and few Partners wanted to leave. So these students put their names on a waiting list after they completed the Foundations course.

Many other people besides the Foundations students had heard about our Business Partnerships. They had been putting their names on the waiting list too. But there were not enough openings to make them all Apprentices and Partners. The people on the waiting list and their families were discouraged. They were asking what they could do to solve this problem.

Working to Solve the Waiting List Problem

(See Chapter Ten, pages 100-101)

Finding Another Grant

Common Ground Co-op is a small organization. Members of our Co-op knew that they would not be able to raise enough money to start more Business Partnerships. We began to encourage other groups of families and agencies to start their own co-ops. Our Co-op was willing to help other groups to get started. So we decided to seek a special grant of money.

Common Ground was invited to apply for the Vital Ideas grant from the Toronto Community Foundation (TCF). It would be \$30 000 to hire someone to help Common Ground prepare to start a replication process. Replication means that families, agencies, and other people in the community could copy Common Ground. They could start their own Business Partnerships, with help from Common Ground. As more new Business Partnerships were started, there would be opportunities for the students and other people who were on the waiting list.

\$30 000!

Common Ground was successful in its application for the Vital Ideas grant from the Toronto Community Foundation! This award recognizes organizations that have made outstanding contributions towards improving the quality of life in Toronto. It would provide funding to help us grow and replicate our businesses. They really liked our project of developing Business Partnerships across the province. And this might help people on our waiting list in the future.

Award Ceremony for People with Vital Ideas!

The day arrived for the awards ceremony for the several recipients of the Toronto Community Foundation Vital Ideas grants. The ceremony was held at the Glenn Gould Theatre in the CBC building. The food spread out on tables in the foyer was from Lemon & Allspice Cookery. Cathy's photo was featured in the materials displayed. Staff Jeannette and Deanna, Partner Andrew, and Board Members David Clandfield and I were there. Jeannette received the award of \$30 000 on behalf of Common Ground Co-op.

Over the next two years, Common Ground Staff and Volunteers used the \$30 000 to develop a "kit", a package of information about how to start co-ops and business partnerships. The kit will include films and booklets full of ideas to help families and agencies to get started on new business partnerships. We hope that in the future, many more people will be helped to start their own business partnerships.

Joint Advisory Committee JAC - February 2009 - Changing How Partnership Meetings Work

Every member of the JAC committee was present for the February 2009 meeting. There were four Partners (Veronica, Aaron, Mike and Nazia), two Staff (Joan Barnett and Peter Ackie), and two Board Members (Paula Kaston and myself). First, each rep reported on the meetings of their Partnerships, Staff and Board of Directors.

Peter started a discussion about how each Partnership meeting is conducted. He made notes for everyone to see on chart paper. At some of the businesses, Job Coaches were setting the agendas and few Partners were chairing the meetings. But the Partner reps on the JAC were now willing to work on changing that. They wanted to try to encourage everyone to speak up more in the Business Partnership meetings. In addition, Paula Kaston said she would plan to visit each business site to help with improving business sales.

JAC - March 2009 - More on Partnership Meetings

At the next Joint Advisory Committee meeting at Surrey Place, Joan Barnett, Paula Kaston and I met with six Partners. There were three reps and three alternate reps: Mike, Aaron, Nazia, Kirk, Joanna and Petra T.

We followed up from the last meeting by discussing Partnership meetings. How could we encourage Partners to contribute to agendas for Partnership meetings? How could we encourage more Partners to chair those meetings? They were beginning to take hold of these questions. We also learned that the Partners were successfully running the Surrey Place Coffee Shed whenever Deanna was away for a few hours. This was so good to hear!

JAC and the Flu Epidemic

Five Partners from four Businesses shared activities and ideas at the next meeting of JAC. Two Staff and one CGC Board member spoke about the swine flu epidemic. Jeannette had sent out information about it to Staff, Board and Partners. The Joint Advisory Committee discussed how the flu epidemic might affect their Businesses and themselves. I shared the Businesses' financial reports with the Partners. I told them about plans for new Businesses that might come about through the money from the TCF grant. The reps were becoming much more aware of the overall Common Ground project.

A Special JAC Meeting

JAC held a special meeting in a new location on the 5th floor at Community Living at 20 Spadina on June 16th. Five Partners came - Aaron, Nazia, Mike, Andrew, and Petra T. and Katie (a new partner at NCCS) along with two Job Coaches: Natasha Tutt and Alice Bikeeva. I asked them for comments and memories about their work in the Partnerships.

The Partners spoke about the tough decisions they had to make in their Businesses for letting Partners go. It was especially hard with people they liked but who didn't understand the work ethic of a Business Partnership. Mike recalled, "We let a person go at JVS last year because arguments are not acceptable in a business. If a person is angry, he or she should talk about it, not argue about it." But it was a difficult situation because the Partners at JVS were divided about that decision. Some Partners wanted the Job Coach to decide. But after much discussion and some assistance from the Job Coach, the Partners did vote to let the partner go. The Job Coaches worked to develop clear guidelines for the Partners to follow when they couldn't agree. Talking about the problem at JAC could help with this too.

Veronica

We did not know it at our February JAC meeting, but that was to be Veronica's last meeting with JAC. Just a week or two later, Veronica collided with a bus, injuring her head, on her way to work. She was in hospital in a coma.

The news of Veronica at the March JAC meeting was that she had survived frontal lobe brain surgery and was beginning to waken, so we were hopeful.

Jeannette, Deanna and several of the Partners from Surrey Place Coffee Shed visited Veronica in the hospital. Veronica seemed to be making progress, bit by bit. She was mostly asleep but could see and hear a little. Veronica's parents had put up a message Board. The Partners and Staff who visited wrote messages to Veronica on the Board.

Although Veronica struggled valiantly to live, on July 31st, we received word that she had died. Her parents, Fran and Malcolm Peake, had watched over her in hospital for many months. Several of the Partners and Staff had spent time with her. They found it very hard to accept her death. She had been a good friend to many of us. She had made a wonderful contribution to the Partnerships and to the community. We would not soon forget her. It would take some time to grieve and then try to move on.

Publicity TVO

A group called "Get Involved" had contacted me to invite Cathy to participate with me in a short feature for TVOntario. Get Involved was filming many charities like ours that used volunteers. TVO showed three-minute videos on TV about these organizations. They invited people to "get involved" by volunteering. They wanted to film Cathy and me talking about Lemon and Allspice Cookery. We agreed!

Publicity for the Cookery!!

Peggy Taylor called from Get Involved to ask if she could come to the Cookery the following week. Jeannette said yes. Already, she had made plans with Global TV to be there on Tuesday. The Cookery was finally ready for lots of publicity!

Filming for TVO + Global TV

The day arrived for the filming for "Get Involved" and TVO. Peggy, and the two technicians, Matthew and James, led the way. They arrived at Jessie Manson at 7:30am so they could film Cathy arriving for work. Business Partners Doug, Sean, Kenny, Diana were filmed working at the kitchen that morning too. The crew caught Cathy and fellow Partner Kenny packing goods for delivery. Next, they followed Cathy getting on the bus to take the order to Surrey Place. They drove downtown in order to catch Cathy getting off the bus at Grosvenor and Bay on her way to Surrey Place Coffee Shed. They filmed the Shed, getting a good shot of Paul W. making a sale. Then back at Jessie Manson, they interviewed Cathy and then me for an hour. It was quite a day!

Three days later, on April 27th, Cookery Partners Cathy and Angela were seen on Global TV evening news in a segment called "Making a Difference". It was excellent!

Get Involved Airs on TVO

The Get Involved interviews were on TVO, just before 8pm on October 11th. The three-minute video was the very first one of Get Involved's second season. Also seen on the video was our ED Jeannette Campbell, Kitchen Manager Jenny Hope, and Job Coaches Alejandra Gonzalez, and Deanna Djos. The video was online two days later and was shown on TVO two or three times a week for several months.

Publicity for the New College Coffee Shed!

New College Coffee Shed began a new art project to advertise their Business. They created handmade flyers and posters about the business, about fair trade coffee, and about the baked goods and catering they provide. Every partner created his or her own handmade poster. These were presented at a Business Partnership meeting. The Partners voted on their favorites and they were laminated. They displayed their posters on their fridge at the Coffee Shed and on poster boards around the University. U of T students were active in helping the Partners design and carry out this marketing project. Board Member Paula Kaston made another wonderful contribution of a large professional sign.

Jack Quarter is head of the Social Economy Centre at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto. He and the people at the Institute had been regular catering customers of the New College Coffee

Shed for three years. In November, they decided to put the Coffee Shed logo on flyers advertising their weekly events. They did this whenever the Coffee Shed was doing their catering. It made a big difference in Coffee Shed sales to other organizations.

The DVD "Talk to Me"

Way back in March 2007, two of our Cookery Partners, Angela and Cathy, were filmed for a DVD called "Talk to Me" (See Chapter Ten, page 95). The topic was the shopping experiences of people with a disability. The DVD was to be shown to many people who work as clerks in stores and banks in Ontario. Many of them are not sure how to speak and be friendly with people who have a disability. The DVD was being distributed by the Ministry of Community and Social Services of the Ontario Government. At long last, the Ministry was having a gathering at Queen's Park to officially launch the DVD. Minister Madeleine Meilleur was there, along with all of the actors, including Cathy and Angela. Lunch was served, ordered from Lemon & Allspice Cookery. Jenny, manager of the Cookery kitchen, came too. We knew that people across the province were seeing the DVD. My good friend, Sally Martyn, lives in Sparta, Ontario. She wrote to me that she had seen Cathy on the video at a workshop she attended near her home.

Fundraising: A Partner Joins the Fundraising Committee

Board Members suggested to Cookery Partner Aaron that he join a committee instead of coming on the Board. At the next meeting of the Fundraising Committee, Aaron joined Deanna Djos, David Clandfield, Jeannette and myself to talk about the grants we were pursuing. It was good to have a partner on the committee and Aaron offered to speak with his Toronto Dominion Bank Manager about a grant to Common Ground. He was successful too, as the Manager donated \$200!

When some Members of the Fundraising Committee arrived early for a meeting at Surrey Place, we had the opportunity to watch Deanna aerate the worm composting box. It was good to see the project was still going strong! Jeannette, Deanna, Ann Veyvara, David Clandfield, Aaron, Chris Tolley and I had a very positive meeting on fundraising. Everyone contributed to the committee's work by applying for funding. The need for more money never stopped!

Get-in-Line!

In August, we built on our previous involvement in Surrey Place's annual "Get-inLine" fundraiser. Team Common Ground was the Top Overall Fundraising Team for the third year in a row, raising an incredible \$12,850! Our Staff and Partners worked very hard over several months to achieve this outcome!



Two Board Issues

At one of our Board meetings, Ann Veyvara took the minutes and offered to become our Board secretary. She said she would enjoy doing it! The Board was pleased to accept her offer. She agreed to stay on the Fundraising Committee too!

There were two big questions the Board Members were asking in the spring of 2009.

1. Staying at Jessie Manson? At the May Board meeting, Frank Pickersgill and Jeannette reported that they had met with the landlord at Jessie Manson. He was willing to have CGC make a proposal. CGC proposed that the Cookery and our offices stay at 4 Overlea, even if Community Living leaves. However, a few days later, we learned that the landlord would charge far too much for the space

we had wanted at Jessie Manson if Community Living left. So CGC might rent just the kitchen space.

2. Joining Up of the Four Business Partnerships?

There was also a discussion by the Board about joining together the four Businesses into one Business. People in favour of this idea thought it would be fairer to have all Partners earn the same hourly pay. Getting the same pay seemed like a good idea, but the Partners wanted to keep the four Businesses separate. So Jeannette met with each Partnership to talk about changing the discount the Cookery offered to the Sheds. They all agreed to the plan that the Cookery would give a 35% (instead of 25%) discount to all orders from the Sheds. (See Chapter 11, page 113.) Jeannette said this would not affect Partners' paycheques but would help the Sheds to pay their bills - it seemed to be a good business decision. The Businesses would remain separate and each would continue to work hard to improve their sales.

Tessa

Tessa had been a partner in the Cookery for several years. Her multiple physical and intellectual challenges meant that she was on and off the job. After each absence, she returned and found new ways to accomplish tasks in the Cookery. She lived at home with her family and they decided to relocate to another city. All the Partners and Staff were sorry to see her leave. I always think of Tessa as a real trooper, willing to try everything to lead a normal life.



TESSA'S FAREWELL PARTY: L-R JOAN, GLADYS, CATHY, ALEX, SARAH, KATY, TESSA (SEATED IN FRONT), ALEJANDRA, DOUG, JOANNA, MONIFA, AND JENNY

New Projects, Awards, a Retirement and Departures The Farmers' Market

'Twas a cloudy, rainy day in June 2009, but the new Farmers' Market, called MyMarket,¹ at Bloor and Borden had its opening day. Nice white tents allowed for the market to operate every Wednesday, rain or shine. . Common Ground Co-op had set up a coffee stand there. Partners with Job Coach Alice Bikeeva were there from New College Coffee Shed. They were looking forward to selling their fair-trade coffee one day a week, from June until October, at the Farmers' Market. This was a way to bring in a little extra money for the Shed and to let more people know about our Business Partnerships. Several people stopped by and bought a coffee. Then they shopped for strawberries, peas, and radishes from the farmers while clinging to their umbrellas.



JOB COACH ALICE BIKEEVA AND PARTNERS NAZIA AND PETRA T.
FROM NEW COLLEGE COFFEE SHED OPEN OUR STALL AT THE FARMERS' MARKET ON A SUNNY DAY

¹ MyMarket features real farmers, selling what they grow, at Bloor St. and Barton, on summer Wednesdays.

Red Wrigglers Again

Cathy Nesbitt, from Cathy Crawly Composters² and Mr. Willy Wiggler had a blast at the Surrey Place Coffee Shed's second annual Harvest Party on Friday, June 26th. The team worked from 11:00-4:00pm digging out the vermi-compost to sell their worm poo to garden lovers. The Partners set up sales in the parking lot behind Surrey Place Centre. They sold out of all their Willy Wrigglers poo balls and buckets of compost.

Jeannette, Deanna and I met with Cathy and her partner Rick about vermicomposting. The project had been going very well at Surrey Place. They talked about the possibility of setting up a new Partner Business based on vermicomposting. It seemed like a good idea to put forward for a different kind of Business Partnership. It could be combined with outdoor maintenance.

A New Business Partnership?

At the Board meeting in September, Frank and Jeannette presented a plan for a new toy cleaning Partnership at Surrey Place Centre. There were some questions raised about taking on a new Business ourselves rather than working to replicate our Business model. But overall, the Board Members favoured the idea. In early December 2009, Jeannette sent out a Business Plan to the Board regarding the toy cleaning Partnership. She and John Flannery worked on it together. This was the first time we had seen such an excellent detailed plan for any of the Businesses. If they could make it happen as they were planning, it would be great to have another Business Partnership. (This Business Partnership, called CleanAble, was established in 2010 and did well in its first year.)

Tuck Box Programme

The Coffee Shed Partners at Surrey Place Centre had started the Tuck Box programme in October 2008. They had been busy taking orders every two weeks to the four satellite offices that Surrey Place Centre operates in the Greater Toronto Area. The Partners made lots of sales from their Tuck Boxes in these locations. By 2009, they were making average sales of \$70 dollars at each visit to a satellite site!

² Cathys Crawly **Composters** is an environmentally driven vermiculture business in Bradford, Ontario.

JVS Brings in New Products and New Partners



LATHA, KAREN AND JOSHUA AT JVS COFFEE SHED

Partnership meetings at JVS were producing some great ideas for new products and these had been introduced. These new food products had led to greater customer satisfaction and increased sales!! JVS Coffee Shed brought in a new member too. Her name was Patty. She said, "I'm new to the Coffee Shed. I like the job. I go with the flow and learn from the Job Coach and everyone."

Rachel G. Wins Unsung Hero Award

December 3rd was the International Day of People with Disabilities, Rachel G., Business Partner at SPCS, was honoured by the City of Toronto. The City chose her to receive the Unsung Hero Award! The award recognized her outstanding contribution to the disability community of Toronto. It praised her tireless work toward making Toronto an inclusive city. Surrey Place Centre had nominated her for her work on their Self Advocacy Council and as Honorary Spokesperson for the annual Get-in-Line Fundraiser. Rachel received the award from the Honourable David Onley, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario. We had met him before when he attended our eighth Annual General Meeting.

Kirk

Kirk had been a Business Partner for a long time, but he decided to leave the Partnerships in August, 2009. His decision to leave came ten years after he joined the Cookery in August 1999. He had worked at the Cookery and at Geneva and JVS Coffee Sheds. He was always full of ideas for improving the Partnerships. But now he wanted to try working in the mainstream economy. He took a one-year leave of absence, so he could come back later if he wished. As it turned out, Kirk did find work and decided to end his relationship with CGC.

Peter

Peter Ackie decided to leave Common Ground after five years as Job Coach at Surrey Place and JVS Coffee Sheds and also as our Business Developer. Peter contributed much to the project and was well liked by the Partners and Staff. We remember him especially for his work to help establish and develop the Joint Advisory Committee.

Susan -The First Retiree from Lemon & Allspice Cookery

The Cookery Partners had a retirement party for Susan. She was the first Partner to officially retire from the Business. She had been a Partner in the Cookery for nine years. She had reached retirement age. We wished her well.

Partners Getting on Board Some New Faces at JAC

Several changes took place at the September JAC meeting. Mike was there continuing as chairperson of JAC. Rachel G. was present to take Veronica's place as rep for Surrey Place Coffee Shed. Joanna and Petra T. were sitting in as alternates for Aaron and Nazia. Joan Barnett was there, continuing as a Staff rep and our minute taker. Natasha Tutt, the new Staff person at JVS Coffee Shed, came as the second Staff rep to JAC. She replaced Peter Ackie, who had resigned from Common Ground a few months earlier. Paula Kaston and I came as the two Board reps.

A Partner on the Board ?

The main topic at the meeting was Partnership representation on the Common Ground Board. Paula reported on the reluctance of some Board Members to have

a Partner join them. The Partners spoke up to say they do want to have a rep on the Board and they wanted to elect a partner themselves.

Partners Plan to Elect a Rep to the Board

Aaron reported to the next JAC meeting that the Partners in the four Businesses had decided they want to elect their own rep to make a twelfth position on the Board. They hoped the Board would agree.

Jeannette, Deanna and I spoke together about the idea that had come up at the JAC about electing a partner rep to the Board. We thought that Partners could select their own rep. It would create a 12th position on the Board, so the Partner could attend the Board meetings. But the Partner elected would not have a vote. We decided we would present the idea to Members of the Board.

A Position on the Board for a Partner!

There was about to be change in the number of people on the Board. Board Members had heard that the Joint Advisory Committee had discussed having a Partner on the Board and the Partners wanted to elect someone. David Clandfield and Frank Pickersgill, Members of the Board, put forward a motion to the Board on October 26th. The motion said that a special additional non-voting position for a Partner be added to the Board on a trial basis for one year. The motion was passed unanimously (everyone agreed). So this was a big step forward!

Partners Elect a Rep to the Board

Andrew and Amy were two of three Partner candidates who visited each Business Partnership and spoke to them about how strongly they believed a Partner should be on the Board. In his speech to his fellow Business Partners, Andrew said, "We deserve to have a say in Common Ground". The Partners from all four Businesses elected him by giving him the most votes in a secret ballot held at each Partnership. Andrew became the first Partner rep on the Board, although he did not have a vote. Amy received the second most votes and became Andrew's alternate. This is a very good example of how the JAC made changes and helped to improve communication between Partners and the Board. Finally, at the AGM in 2010, the Membership of Common Ground Co-op voted to approve a motion from the Board of Directors. The motion changed the Co-op's by-law to ensure a **voting position** on the Board would be designated for a Partner.

Coming to the End of 2009 and the End of My Story Trinity St. Paul's United Church Helps CGC Again

Gladys prepared to begin her fifth annual Foundations programme class. She found out that there was no longer any classroom space available for the students at Jessie Manson. Once again, Trinity St. Paul's United Church lent us a helping hand. They agreed to donate classroom space to CGC. I went to TSP one weekday morning to see if I could help in any way with the Foundations class. As the students began to arrive, Jeannette turned up bringing all the materials and supplies. The students set up tables and chairs in the Rainbow Room. They interacted well and seem pleased to be there. A volunteer teacher arrived because Gladys was away helping with a programme for children in Thailand for two weeks.

Gladys Decides to Leave Common Ground

Gladys returned from Thailand after a few weeks. She continued her work with the young people in the Foundations Programme until the end of 2009. In January 2010, Gladys resigned from her position with Common Ground to accept a job with the City of Toronto. Many of us attended a farewell party for Gladys at the Cookery kitchen to thank her for her tremendous contribution to our partnerships and programmes over six years and to wish her well.

The Annual General Meeting Number Nine

The CGC AGM took place at Surrey Place Centre in November 2009. Partners, Staff, families, newcomers and people from George Brown Community College attended. All Board Members and candidates were present and two new people were elected. The Get Involved video was shown after the Surrey Place choir sang Christmas songs for us. Nazia and Aldene made a presentation from their course with Gladys. Karen Goldenberg chaired the meeting. Karen described how our present Board had built upon the work of the people who served on the Board in the past. (A list of all Board Members that served over the nine years is in the Appendix at the end of this book on page 145.)

Jeannette's E-mail to the Board

Jeannette wrote a wonderful e-mail to the Board just before the holidays at the end of December:

Board Members,

It is not often that I brag about how incredible it is to work at Common Ground, or what an amazing experience it is to wander up to Lemon & Allspice Cookery and reflect on the fact that my job is to ensure that this continues to grow and provide opportunities for a fantastic group of wonderful, loving, supportive, bright and energetic individuals...but this week has been incredible, and I wanted you to all know how great things can actually be when you not only love what you do, but enjoy every moment when you are working.

I spent a bit of time on Tuesday at Lemon & Allspice being taught how to ice to holiday cookies. Not only was I learning something that I have never done before, I had two Partners critiquing my every move, and having a good laugh at my expense when the Job Coach explained the cost of the little sprinkles that I was 'piling on' a bit too heavily. I had so much fun, and was glad for the break from the paperwork.

I cannot take any credit for the cookies...I couldn't tell you which ones I decorated, but it was definitely a small number. However, today Partner Kenny shared some of his Hanukah inspired shortbread with me, and I almost fell out of the chair. They were the best tasting shortbread cookies I have ever had (and I am part Scottish...)

I wrote Jeannette and the Board Members back to say that I liked to brag about the wonderful ED we have. Wow, the whole project was going very well - better each year!



JEANNETTE CAMPBELL RIDES THE MERRY-GO-ROUND TO SUCCESS
WITH THE PARTNERS

Yet Another Wonderful Holiday Party!

The traditional Holiday party was held at the Cookery dining room. We had food in the dining room and dancing in the activity room. Many Partners and Staff were there, plus four Board Members came - Frank Pickersgill, Paul Wolfe, Paula Kaston and myself. Jeannette announced that we received another \$5000 from Tippet Foundation - a good Christmas present for Common Ground!

And that is most of our common history to the end of 2009!!

Cathy's Thoughts for the Future of the Cookery

"Hopefully we will get a bigger kitchen in our own place so that people can come in and order food or buy it right at the kitchen. And maybe they could sit and eat in a little café in front of the kitchen and that would be ours too!"

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Common Ground Co-operative
Board Members 2001 – 2009

	Board Member	Position	Years Elected at AGM	Years Served	Relative of a Partner
1	Bahri, Chetan		2004	1	
2	Benedetti, Chris		2009	1	
3	Bovaird, Chris		2005, 2006	2	
4	Burnside, Linda		2003, 2004 2006	2	
5	Chan, Angela		2008, 2009	1	
6	Clandfield, David		2008	2	Yes
7	Gale, Bill		2005,06,07,08	1	
8	Gareau, Cathy		2005,06,07,08,09	4	
9	Goldenberg, Karen	Sec'y: 2005-8	2006, 07,08,09	5	
10	Halpern, Norm	Chair: 2006-8	2007,08	4	
11	Howden, David		2008,09	2	
12	Kaston, Paula		2006	2	
13	Klamph, Michel		2003	1	
14	Kushner, Gordon		2000-3; 2006-9	1	
15	Lemon, Carolyn		2007,08	8	
16	Mallindine, Pam	Treas: 2003-4	2009	2	
17	MacLeod, Greg		2001,02	1	
18	MacKenzie, Michael		2001,02	2	Yes
19	Murray, Marg		2001,02	2	
20	Oster, Ray		2006, 07,08,09	2	
21	Pearce, Christine		2006, 07,08,09	4	
22	Pickersgill, Frank	Chair: 2001-2	2001,02,03,05	4	
23	Radford, John	Treas: 2003-3	2001,02, 03	4	
24	Rowland, Ann	Treas: 2006-9	2001-07	3	
25	Sherman, Larry	Chair: 2009	2004,05,06	7	
26	Sherman, Ursula		2003,04,05	3	Yes
27	Smyth, Allan	Sec'y: 2001-4	2003	3	Yes
28	Sparks, Chris	Chair: 2003-5	2001,02,03,04	1	
29	Tolley, Chris		2009	4	Yes
30	Veyvara, Ann		2005	1	Yes
31	Williams, Marty	Treas: 2004-5	2005	1	
32	Willis, Sheila		2008, 09	1	
33	Wolfe, Paul	Chair: 2002	2006	2	
34	Wong, Choi	Sec'y: 2009-10		1	Yes
				80	Yes

The founding members came together in 2000. The first election of Board Members took place at the first AGM in November 2001. Thirty-four individuals have served on the Common Ground Board of Directors, for a total of 80 “service years” given over a ten-year period.

Current Staff at Common Ground Co-op

Name	Current Position	Start Date
Joan Barnett	Job Coach, Cookery	September 1, 1998
Alice Bikeeva	Job Coach, NCCS	November 7, 2003
Jeannette Campbell	Executive Director	July 1, 2008
Karen Curtis	Job Coach, SPCS	November 24, 2010
Andrea Dicaro	Job Coach, JVSCS	September 1, 2010
Deanna Djos	Training Coordinator	September 11, 2006
Alejandra Gonzalez	Job Coach, Cookery	September 30, 2008
Jennifer Hope	Kitchen Coordinator	September 23, 2006
Nazrul Islam	Accountant	July 30, 2007
Leonard Ribeiro	Job Coach, Sheds (relief)	June 3, 2003
Michele Steeves	Job Coach, Cookery (relief)	July 14, 2006
Kate Hough	Job Coach SPCS (on leave)	September 3, 2009

Former Senior Staff at Common Ground

Paula Murphy (Coordinator)	Jan. 1, 2001	Jan. 27, 2006
Sonja Persram (Interim Coordinator)	Nov. 1, 2002	Oct. 30, 2003
Shelina Akter (Accountant)	Sept. 15, 2003	June 30, 2007
David Pitt (Interim Coordinator) (Interim Director, part time) (Director, part time)	March 1, 2005 Jan 27, 2006 June 1, 2006	October 1, 2005 May 31, 2006 June 30, 2008

Former Job Coaches at Common Ground

Name	Start date	Last date
David Chivers	July 2, 1998	May 2002*
Carolyn Teal	Aug 2001*	Mar 2002*
Gladys Bumanglag	Sep 16, 2002	Jan 22, 2010
Leah Dolmage	Oct 16, 2002	Apr 1, 2003*
Jane Schmidt	Aug 28, 2003*	Mar 8, 2004
Christine Womijolou	Aug 2003*	Sep 7, 2004
Tashana Wint	June 1, 2003	Aug 26, 2005
Kathy Young	July 09, 2004	Sep 08, 2006
Peter Ackie	Aug 16, 2004	Jun 25, 2009
Barbara Kita	Nov 23, 2004*	Aug 15, 2005
Tara MacDonald	Apr 25, 2005	May 20, 2008
Delia Reyna	Sep 1, 2005	Apr 21, 2006
Kathryn Gill	Nov 14, 2005	Apr 03, 2006
Tamara Dachuck	April 24, 2006	Nov 19, 2006
Ve Duong	July 12, 2004	Sep 08, 2006
Katherine Facini	Dec 11, 2006	Jun 22, 2009
Tadas Vainius	Oct 15, 2007	Nov 1, 2007
Anna Trusz	Jun 22, 2009	Sep 04, 2009
Natasha Tutt	February 22, 2010	Dec. 01, 2010

*approximate date

Interns Past and Present

Natalie Roach	2007-08
Jodine Labor	2008
Monifa Barnes	2009
Shane Moffat	2009-10
Kim Hutchinson	2010-11

Names Appearing in Book

(Other than Board, Staff, Interns and Partners)*

Altobello, Ralph HRDC Amber, Gillian Scotiabank Amrhein, Carl UofT Anderson, Betsy TSP Aust, Rae Volunteer Baldwin, Graham CLT Biggs, John Accountant Bingham, Robert CLT Boardman, Robert Communications Bowman, Bev HRDC Brown, Ian Brock U. Campbell, Carol Tafelmusik Candillac, Rosemary Brock U. Capponi, Diana OCAB Capponi, Pat 25 in 5 Chow, Olivia TCC, MP Cluett, Doreen Membership Clutterbuck, Peter 25 in 5 Coulter, Kim JVS Devers, Sharon ODSP AC Duff, Rob SPC Ferguson, Mary Eko Nomos Flannery, John SPC Frampton, Peter Learning Enrichment Foundation Friskien, Frances Fundraising Gatiss, Cammie CLT Gibson, Lily TSP Gilani, Amir Designer Godfrey, John, MP Goldberg, Toby SEDI, MCSS Gouveia, David CLT Green, Nancy HRDC Guy, Denyse ONCo-op	Huestis, Linda Newsletter, TSP Iler, Brian Iler Campbell Law Firm Jamieson, Anne United Way Jondreville, Lynn TSP Kelly, Heather UofT Grad Students Kirkwood, Jim & Marion TSP Kogawa, Joy Canadian Author Krumins, Sabina Volunteer Coordinator Lang, Cathy Fundraising Larkin, June New College Ling, Hai Student Bookkeeper Lemon, Jim Finance MacDonald, Ann UofT Ancillary Services Markle, Kerry Ann MCSS McCabe, Marge and Rick FM McNair, Don CCED Meighan, Karen MCSS Developmental Services Meilleur, Madeleine MPP Mihevic, Joe Toronto City Council Miller, David, Toronto City Mayor Nathwani, Rashmi Builder Nesbitt, Cathy Composting Ng, Lily Cooperators Novick, Marvyn 25 in 5 Onley, David Lieutenant Governor Oster, Karen Facilitator Palmer, Don Krackers Catering Park, Chunha Student Bookkeeper Parsons, Sandra Tafelmusik	Quarter, Jack OISE Samson, Paul CLT Schwartz, Julie JVS Scott, David CLT Simidzu, Yone Newsletter Slamet, Nancy Facilitator Snow, Lois Sibley House Sparks, Chris New College Swan, Michael Newsletter Symons, John Business Symons, Marg Membership Taylor, Peggy Q Media Tolley, Viki Membership Ugwu, Julie APSW Van Del Laar, Paul GCA Vanderplaats, Nancy ODSP AC Veyvara, Ann Board Sec'y, Fundraising Vicente, Anna FSA Waxman, Ellen MCSS Whelan, Marg GCA Wilkes, Melissa NWHC Williams, Helen Communications Wright, Wade CLK Wynne, Kathleen, MPP <u>Others Who Made a Difference</u> Clark, Fred & Doreen Promotion Diesenhouse, Phyllis Membership Glass, Karen Membership Goldlist, Helen MyMarket Kinsella, Andrew Shed Retrofit Stager, Bev Founding Member Soles, Kama Research/Writing Sukraj, Matt Facilities Development Sutherland, Kate Research/Writing Tait, Bob Deliveries
---	--	---

Holas, Kim Iler, Campbell Law Firm Houghton, Hilda Office Help Hua, Colleen MCSS Developmental Services	Peake, Fran and Malcolm Petrenko, Carol Volunteer Pretlove, David MP Ass't Prue, Michael, MPP Pupatello, Sandra, MPP	CGC Board Members are listed on Page 145. Abbreviations are explained on Page 159
*Sincere apologies to others who contributed to our project and should be on this list!		

Community Partners

Community Living Toronto

20 Spadina Road, Toronto

Has provided, rent-free since 1998, a kitchen for Lemon & Allspice Cookery Present
location of kitchen is 4 Overlea Blvd. Toronto

Surrey Place Centre

2 Surrey Place, Toronto

Has provided, rent-free since 2001, a kiosk for a Coffee Shed
Built and outfitted a new kiosk near main floor entrance

New College

University of Toronto Campus

Has provided rent-free space for a Coffee Shed since 2003

Built and outfitted a new kiosk space in 2010

Wilson Hall 40 Wilcox Street

JVS Toronto

74 Tycos Drive, Toronto

Has provided, rent-free space, since 2004, for a Coffee Shed

Frontier College

This Canada-wide, volunteer-based, literacy organization teaches people to read and write and nurtures an environment favorable to lifelong learning. Frontier College Literacy Program has offered classes to our Business Partners. has come to a conclusion. Classes include one-on-one help from volunteers. Partners have learned how to strengthen reading and time management skills, how to prepare and give public presentations and more.

George Brown College

Common Ground Co-operative joins with George Brown SIFE (Students in Free Enterprise) for financial literacy classes. Business Partners have the opportunity to take the six-week course twice a year. Financial Literacy includes budgeting, understanding your bank account, reading bills and saving for the future with RDSP's.

List of Funding Partners

Ontario Government Disability Support Programme Employment Initiatives

Innovative Project, Ministry of Community and Social Services

Annual Grants 2003- 2005

Options Programme, Family Services Association

Ministry of Community and Social Services

Annual Grants 1998 – 2009

Developmental Services, Foundations Programme

Ministry of Community and Social Services

Annual Grants beginning in 2005-6

Developmental Services, Core Funding

Ministry of Community and Social Services

Annual Grants beginning in 2006-7

The Ontario Trillium Foundation

Grant for New Kitchen Development 2003-4

Grant for Business Development 2006-2009

CEDTAP (Community Economic Development Technical Assistance Progr

Grant for Design of Kitchen Renovation 2002

Grant for Feasibility and Sustainability Plan with SEDI 2003

Grant for Marketing Study with Canadian Business Resource Centre

The Cooperators Insurance

Annual Grants 2004 – Present

For Development of Coffee Shed Businesses

Ontario Co-operative Association

Grant for Cooperative Governance Development 2004

Federal Cooperative Development Initiative 2005-6

Grant for Technical Assistance with Fundraising 2007

Co-operatives Secretariat, Government of Canada, Co-operative Development Initiative

Grant for Research on External Investment from Innovations and Research Fund 2005-6

United Way of Greater Toronto, Toronto Enterprise Fund

Grant for Business Plan and Development of a Coffee Shed 2005-6

Carrot Cache

Grant for Marketing and Development of a Coffee Shed at New College 2006-7

Service Canada

Grant for Membership/Volunteer Coordinator, Computer Equipment 2006-7

Tippet Foundation

Grant 2007-8

Leon Judah Blackmore Foundation

Grants 2007-8, 2008-9

Scotiabank

Grants 2007, 2008, 2009

The McLean Foundation

Grant for Job Coaching 2007-8

Harry E. Foster Charitable Foundation

Annual Grants 2007-2009

FK Morrow Foundation

Grant 2007-8

Catherine Donnelley Foundation

One year Educational Grant for Business Partners 2008-9

Toronto Community Foundation

Vital Ideas Grant

To develop materials for Replication of the Business Partnership Model 2009-10

Bridge Street United Church Foundation, Belleville, Ontario

Grant 2010

ODSP Action Coalition Disability Declaration 2009 Plain Language Version
--

The government of Ontario runs ODSP. They should change ODSP so that it respects our human rights.

People with disabilities have the same human rights as everyone else.

These are our rights:

1. To have a place to live, enough good food to eat, and clothes to wear.
2. To enjoy life.
3. To be treated with respect.
4. To have a choice about where to live.
5. To be able to get around: on buses, subways, trains, planes, cars, and in public buildings, parks and city streets.
6. To receive and share information using phones, television, computers, reading newspapers, books, and signs.
7. To work at jobs we like where we are treated like others and are given the right tools and fair pay for our work.
8. To have help with finding work.
9. To have our own businesses, if we wish.
10. To go to school to learn and to use our creative abilities and talents.
11. To be appreciated and rewarded when we do good work and perform well in sports, public speaking, music and art.
12. To be included and asked to take part with other people in activities we enjoy.

Because we have these human rights, ODSP should be changed. People with disabilities need these changes to ODSP:

1. We need enough money from ODSP to pay for our rent, food, clothing, and other expenses.
2. When the cost of rent, food and clothing goes up, our ODSP cheque should go up.
3. When we earn money at work, ODSP should let us keep up to \$6 000 of it each year without taking away money from our ODSP monthly cheque.
4. If we do volunteer work in our community, ODSP should give us a special allowance for our community participation.
5. Make it easier to apply for ODSP.
6. Make it easier to talk with staff people at the ODSP office.
7. Give us information about ODSP that is easy to read and understand.
8. Make it easier to find work, to get to work, and to learn so we can keep our jobs.
9. Teach employers that people on ODSP can be good workers when they have support.
10. Explain clearly to us how our earnings from work will change our monthly ODSP cheque.
11. Change the rules so that we can set up our own businesses.
12. Review the rules of ODSP to make them fair – and let us help make the rule changes.

The government of Ontario has promised to reduce poverty. If they make the changes to ODSP that we want, they will help to reduce our poverty.

The ODSP Action Coalition is a group that includes people with disabilities and people who work for organizations that help people with disabilities. The Coalition is committed to trying to make ODSP better so that people with disabilities can live with justice and dignity. We have a website so you can find out more about us: www.odspaction.ca

Declaration of Young People with Developmental Challenges Nov. 17, 2009

(Appears on website of 25 in 5 Network, 25 in 5.ca, under Poverty Watch)

Three young people with developmental disabilities attended and actively participated in the Leadership Forum on Poverty Reduction held in Toronto on November 17, 2008.

Cathy, Kenny, and Veronica, all partners in a small catering enterprise called **Lemon & Allspice - The Coffee Shed**, framed their own declaration on poverty reduction in solidarity with the 25 in 5 Network. With the support of Carolyn Lemon of Common ground Co-operative Inc., they wrote and submitted to the **25 in 5 Network**:

1. Some people with developmental disabilities are living in poverty.
2. Poverty among people with developmental disabilities is hidden.
3. This is because families look after them..
4. Most people with disabilities want to be more independent.
5. Families are aging.
6. We need a poverty reduction programme that includes people with disabilities so they can become more independent as their families age or move away.
7. We want to make other people with disabilities who work business partnerships more aware of the poverty issues and how important they are to each individual in the partnership.

During the part of the program on November 17 when questions were drawn from the participants, these three business partners asked why half the money that they make on the profit from the sale of their goods is taken back from their ODSP benefits. They did not think that this was fair. All present in the Leadership Forum agreed that money earned by recipients of OW or ODSP should not be clawed back until they were out of poverty.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS
Session 38.2 of the Ontario Legislature
November 2, 2005

COMMON GROUND CO-OPERATIVE

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): I rise today to recognize a wonderful organization in Don Valley West called the Common Ground Co-operative. The co-operative is a non-profit organization that helps those with intellectual disabilities create employment opportunities for themselves.

The idea for the Common Ground co-op was formed in 1998 when Jim and Carolyn Lemon applied on behalf of their daughter Cathy for a grant from the provincial government. The grant allowed Cathy to start up a bakery and catering business called Lemon and Allspice Cookery.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): That's a good program.

Ms. Wynne: It's a good program. This grant, along with the generosity of Community Living Toronto, which provided Cathy free use of its kitchen, enabled the cookery to expand into a successful business.

As a result of this success, the cookery created the Common Ground co-op in 2000, which provides people with intellectual disabilities the support needed to create meaningful employment for themselves. Last year, Minister Pupatello and I visited the co-op and we can tell you it's really heartening to see people who might not otherwise have this chance actually have the opportunity to be contributing members of the workforce. It's been such a successful model that they'd like to reach out to other communities around the province, and this is a model worth duplicating.

Congratulations to Jim, Carolyn and Cathy Lemon for their vision and for working with the community to create this program. I'm proud that government funding continues to support this wonderful initiative. This year, the Common Ground co-op is celebrating its fifth anniversary. I'd like to invite all members of the House to join me in commending the Lemon family for this initiative.

From Hansard Ontario #257

Talk for Disability Day
Health Canada Building
180 Queen West
December 3, 2007

I want to tell you a story about fifty people who have intellectual challenges who are working year 'round in four successful food businesses in downtown Toronto. Are they sweeping floors or washing dishes? Well, yes, but those are only two of the tasks they are responsible for. You see, these fifty people actually own and operate the four businesses as partnerships, and some of them have worked in these food businesses for nearly a decade.

Perhaps you have heard of a catering company called Lemon & Allspice Cookery, or one of three snack bars called Coffee Sheds. You may not have known that these businesses are registered with the Ontario Government in the names of the Partners who have intellectual challenges. That means the Partners do a lot more than sweep floors and wash dishes. Some of them bake hundreds of cookies, lemon and date squares every week, some of them prepare vegetables and fruit for trays or salads, some of them work the cash register, or make coffee, and some take a coffee and snack cart around to offices in the buildings where they work. A lot of them take deliveries by TTC and that's where you might see them sometimes. They use the phone to request or receive food orders. With help from their job coaches, they count the cash at the end of the day and record it in their log books. They distribute their brochures in search of new business. They make deposits to their business accounts at their credit union or bank. And they all take home a paycheck each month from a portion of their business revenues.

Some people are surprised when they first hear about these Business Partnerships. But after they visit one of our locations and meet some of the Partners, they are amazed! How does this work? You see, each of the Partnerships has signed a contract for services with Common Ground Cooperative, a non-profit, charitable organization that offers administrative, financial, staffing and educational services to the Partnerships for a fee that the partners pay for out of their business revenues. The Co-op Staff and the Business Partners together hire Job Coaches who work alongside them. But make no mistake, the Partners have the legal right to be in charge. They have regular meetings, with the Job Coaches present, to discuss every aspect of their work and operations.

This is what we call "decent work for people with disabilities". We also call the Partnerships social enterprises – real businesses that have a double bottom line. On the one hand, they are succeeding in a competitive market. In this week just past, the Cookery and the Coffee Sheds did over \$8 000 worth of catering business. On the other hand, the Partners are gaining in confidence and social skills. For example, some of them regularly make presentations to workshops and conferences, mostly in Toronto, but occasionally farther afield in Vancouver and Ottawa. The reason only a few of them are here today is that Lemon & Allspice Cookery is catering an International Disability Day Fair at Variety Village.

They all receive government benefits cheques because they have a disability. The money they earn from their businesses supplements those benefits. When they first come to us as apprentices, they may be shy or uncertain of themselves. They may have had little interaction with the wider public. But that changes dramatically for most of them. Just having a regular long-term job and paycheck does a great deal for self-esteem. But the most important piece is having the ability to state their views and make decisions about their enterprises. That's where the empowerment comes into full force!

Common Ground Co-operative itself has a membership of 140 people, many of whom volunteer to serve on the Board of Directors or to raise funds to pay the Job Coaches. Common Ground receives funding from the Ministry of Community and Social Services for this project. But that's only 60% of the budget. We rely on our volunteers and, increasingly on our partners, who pitch in to help raise the other funds needed in order to provide the services. We are grateful to the Trillium Foundation and The Cooperators insurance as our major funders and to Scotiabank and five private foundations that are supporting our work: McLean, F.K. Morrow, Tippet, Blackmore and Harry Foster.

Common Ground Co-op and its business partnerships are honoured that we have been invited here today to celebrate the achievements of people with special challenges and to add our story to many other stories of success. You can learn more about our story from our website: commongroundco-op.ca

Carolyn Lemon

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*Special thanks to Foundations Student Maya Rubin for scanning photo's from the early days of the project!

Abbreviations

AGM = Annual General Meeting APSW = Adult Protective Service Worker AWC = Afghan Womens Catering Brock U. = Brock University CED = Community Economic Development CEDTAP = CED Technical Assistance Programme CGC = Common Ground Co-operative, Inc. CLK = Community Living Kingston CLT = Community Living Toronto ED = Executive Director FM = Families Matter FST = Family Services Toronto GCA = Geneva Centre for Autism HRDC = Human Resources Development Canada (now called Service Canada) IQOL = Individual Quality of Life Programme JVS = Jewish Vocational Services JVSCS = JVS Coffee Shed L&A = Lemon & Allspice Cookery LG = Lieutenant Governor of Ontario MCSS =Ministry of Community & Social Services MP = Member of Parliament (Canada) MPP = Member of Provincial Parliament (Ontario)	NCCS = New College Coffee Shed NWHC = Neill Wycik Housing Co-op OCAB = Ontario Council for Alternative Businesses ODSP = Ontario Disability Support Programme ODSP AC = ODSP Action Coalition OISE = Ontario Inst.Studies in Education OPSEU = Ontario Public Service Employees Union SEDI = Social Enterprise Dev. Innovations SPC = Surrey Place Centre SPCS = Surrey Place Coffee Shed TEF = Toronto Enterprise Fund TSP = Trinity St. Paul's United Church TCC = Toronto City Councilor TTC = Toronto Transit Commission UofT = University of Toronto 25 in 5 = 25 in 5 Network to Reduce Poverty in Ontario by 25 percent in 5 years
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Current Business Partners , 2011

<u>JVS Coffee Shed 15</u>  Cassie Gigi Graham Josh Joshua Karen M. Latha Maryam Mike Miranda Nancy Patty Sharon Siu Fan Teresa	<u>New College Coffee Shed 10</u> Amy Annie Jennifer Katie Lynn Nazia Petra S. Petra T. Rachel Rashida Rita
<u>Surrey Place Coffee Shed 12</u> Aldene Alison Andrew Dan Julie Karen N. Kevork Mimi Mei Yee Paul Rachel Terrance Art Work by Josh Art Work on Back Cover by Petra T.	<u>Lemon & Allspice Cookery 17</u>  Aaron Alex Angela Beth Cathy Diana Doug Irene Joanna Katy Kenny Mohammed Ron Sarah Sean Sharon Stephen