

Co-op celebrates year's achievements at Annual General Meeting

On May 7, friends, volunteers, and members of the Centretown Laundry Co-op (CLC) gathered at Heartwood House to mark another successful year at its Annual General Meeting (AGM).

D'thea Webster, Chair of the Co-op's Board of Directors, welcomed the group. "This is our second year at Heartwood House, and while making adjustments since moving from the Bronson Centre, we've grown and flourished," she said.

CLC Coordinator Marianela Santamaria presented the operational report for the year, outlining much of the progress made by the Co-op in 2007, including:

- a new partnership with the Ottawa Mission
- 123 new members
- 4,520 loads of laundry
- 2,380 volunteer hours
- 7 trainees working in the Community Economic Development (CED) program.

Santamaria noted the dedication and hard work of the trainees who participated in the CED program (which allows volunteers to gain valuable experience and develop job skills by working in the contract laundry services program, which provides laundry services to local businesses). "They show up to work, they come in on time – and if they can't come, they call," she said. "They've done a great job."

Treasurer Mary Forbes noted that



Original founders of the Centretown Laundry Co-op were recognized at the 2008 Annual General Meeting, held May 7 at Heartwood House.

while expenses increased by 22 per cent over the last year, revenues were also up by 17 per cent from 2006 to 2007.

Re-branding

The Co-op also began the process of incorporating as a co-operative and changing its name this year. Once incorporated, the Co-op will change its name to the Community Laundry Co-op in order to better reflect the expanded geographic area it serves since its 2006 move from the Bronson Centre. A new look and feel, logo and marketing materials (website, brochures and post-cards) will accompany the name change.

In addition, the CED program

will become known as Contract Laundry Services. The changes are set to become official later this year.

Webster also thanked the Co-op staff for their dedication and hard work. "We couldn't have built what we've built without the tireless efforts of Marianela and Gabriela (Huncikova)."



Volunteers recognized with Leslie Irvine memorial award

Centretown Laundry Co-op volunteers Sarah Beauchamp and Mireille Desmarais were presented the first year's Leslie Irvine Award at the AGM on May 7. The award was named for Leslie Irvine, a much-loved and devoted Co-op Board member and sometime staff member who died in November 2007.

Laundry Co-op Program Coordinator Marianela Santamaria presented the awards to the two members. She described Desmarais as a diligent volunteer and member who always works to "sell

the Co-op," to others through her enthusiasm and passion, and Beauchamp as a hardworking and dedicated volunteer who has thrived and made new friends since becoming involved with the Co-op in 2006. ■



Member and volunteer Mireille Desmarais, left, was presented with the Leslie Irvine Award for her commitment to the Co-op.



Member and volunteer Ray St. Germaine shared his experiences with the Co-op and the positive impact it has had on his life.

Former Board member and founder receives Sharon Moon Award

Co-op Board member Marg Fallis presented the annual Sharon Moon Award to Karen Hill at the May 7 AGM.

Hill was one of the original visionaries behind the Centretown Laundry Co-op. She played an integral role in the founding of the Co-op and worked with other community leaders to oversee personnel issues, fundraising and other management aspects both before and after the Co-op opened its doors in 1999.

"Without (Karen), we would not be here tonight," said Fallis. "[In the beginning], when we were struggling to come to grips with what a laundry co-op would look like ... Karen's conviction

and dedication never wavered – her mission, principles and values inspired us to keep going."

Fallis recounted that in the early stages of the Co-op's founding, Karen spearheaded many of the efforts in writing a business plan and grant applications, securing organizations to provide funding, etc. "Nobody turned us down," she said. "She kept us all going, and if something needed to be done – she did it."

The Sharon Moon Award, named in honour of a long-time Co-op supporter and volunteer, is presented annually to a volunteer who has contributed significantly to the Co-op's ongoing success. ■

Members share their stories

This year's AGM provided some of the Centretown Laundry Co-op's members with the opportunity to share their stories with fellow members, volunteers and friends.

Amy Holmes was among the members who spoke. Holmes became a member of the Co-op three years ago. She found it to be an inviting and friendly place. At the time, she was on a fixed income raising a young son. Shortly after joining the Co-op as a member, she decided to become a volunteer. By January 2007 – she was sitting on the Board of Directors as a member representative. "I felt I had a lot to offer," she said.

Holmes also explained the positive impact the Co-op has had on her. "(The Co-op) helped me change the way I was living my life," she said. "I've made new friends and now I'm hardly ever home!"

Ray St. Germaine is another Co-op member who spoke at this year's AGM. He has been involved with the Co-op since July 2007. "I began to look forward to doing my laundry," he told the group. "Clean clothes at an affordable price – this is something to feel good about." ■



Centretown Laundry Co-op founder Karen Hill

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