



Laundry Fun!
 Centretown Laundry Co-op Coordinator Marianela Santamaria has her hands full at the office.

Community Conversations: How will the Laundry Co-op respond in the economic storm?

By Karen Fee, CLC Communications Committee Chair

The Ottawa Chapter of Voluntary Organizations (OCVO) hosted a gathering in November to bring together people from voluntary organizations to share ideas and strategies for coping with the economic downturn. Approximately 60 people were present, among them representatives from the Laundry Co-op. Participants were asked to share responses to seven questions, reflecting upon the effect of the downturn on our clients and the demand for our services, our response strategy for both the short and long term, and ways to support our services and infrastructures. The results of the discussion were shared in plenary.

It was agreed by all that change is here to stay – we must look at managing that change proactively. We were heartened to see that the Centretown Laundry Co-op (CLC) is already doing so in many ways. Some of the strategies already utilized by CLC are:

- Partnerships with other like-minded organizations. Note our partnership with *Families Matter*, who are sharing part of the Community Economic Development work.
- Sharing of resources. Note our relationship with Heartwood House, the home of the Laundry Co-op. Heartwood House offers member groups an affordable space with the belief that "we are better together". On a practical level, groups share meeting rooms, photocopiers, fax machines and other resources, but more importantly we are a "village of community minded people who take the time to know each other and support each other." The result is mutual respect, assistance, and success.

- Connecting with Community Health Centres in the area to know what services and opportunities are in the community in order to both serve our clients and avoid duplication.
- Actively recruiting additional members for the Board of Management in order to provide strong leadership for the years ahead.

Initiatives for the upcoming year:

- *Telling our Story*, a workshop, is being planned for the late winter to help our members develop skills in story-telling so that more people can learn about our organization and its positive impact on the lives of ordinary people.
- Creating more opportunities for people to donate to the Laundry Co-op. The Board is thinking creatively in order to expand its funding base.
- Working with the OCVO to create a strategic communications plan to the community to help raise awareness of the economic downturn on the voluntary sector.

While it is true that the economic challenges are significant, we are assessing our situation honestly and creating a plan for moving forward. By continuing to be good stewards of our resources and working on creative strategies for expanding our base of support, we have every confidence that the Laundry Co-op will continue to thrive in the years ahead, and so continue to serve our members.



Thank you to volunteers
 Co-op volunteers were honoured at the annual holiday lunch, held at the Co-op Office in December.

HIGHLIGHTS -MOVING FORWARD-

Laundry Co-op goes green

The Centretown Laundry Co-op recently received funding to aid its efforts in going green. In January, CLC received a \$2,100 grant from the United Church of Canada to help with the cost of purchasing biodegradable detergent and bleach alternatives over the next year. “The cost of using environmentally friendly products is nearly double (the cost of regular products), so this really helps supplement the budget,” said CLC Co-ordinator Marianela Santamaria.

Co-op receives grant for expansion

CLC was also recently awarded a \$5,000 grant from the United Church of Canada Street Related Ministries to expand the Laundry Co-op facilities.

Renovations are underway. The grant will mean new office space for staff, and in turn, a private area where counselling services can be offered to Co-op members. Currently, the Co-op consists of one office area to house two staff members. “The door is always open,” said CLC Co-ordinator Marianela Santamaria. “But with the new facilities, there will be a place where our members can go if they need to talk to a counsellor.”

The expansion will also make room for a larger laundry folding area to be used by the Community Economic Development (CED) Program.

Volunteer opportunities

The Centretown Laundry Co-op is inviting interested persons to join the Management Board for the upcoming year. If you are interested in getting involved with an organization that seeks to make a difference in the lives of people at a grass-roots level, please consider this invitation. Board work is a great way to develop new skills, work with others in a fun and challenging environment, and make a positive contribution to the community. We are entering an exciting time as we prepare to celebrate our tenth anniversary year. For further inquiries please call Karen Fee, Board member, at 613-234-2432, or e-mail at jandk.fee@sympatico.ca.

Come and visit us!

Would you like to see the Laundry Co-operative facilities? Have you ever wondered how we are meeting the needs of our members in the Core program? Would you like to see the Community Economic Development program in action? Would you like to talk to our Co-ordinator or a Board member in person? We would love to have you come by for a visit. Simply call Marianela Santamaria (Co-ordinator) at 613-244-4762 and arrange a time. We always welcome our funders and friends of the Co-op!

A WORD OF THANKS

Dear Friends of the Centretown Laundry Co-op,

As we prepare to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Centretown Laundry Co-operative, we recognize the many successes the Co-op has had this year: formal incorporation, the laundry services contract with the Ottawa Mission, a growing partnership with the Families Matter Co-op, a continued growth of members, dedicated staff, and faithful funders.

This year – more than ever – we are aware that the economic climate will make securing new sources of funding a challenge, even as the need for our services grows. The Co-op Board wishes to extend its thanks to all its funders for the ongoing financial commitment to the Co-op. We appreciate your support of our mission.

The Laundry Co-operative makes a difference in the lives of people and in the well-being of our community. Your continued support makes our success possible.

Thank You

...Next Issue

Stay tuned for updates on the progress of the Centretown Laundry Co-op's incorporation.



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