

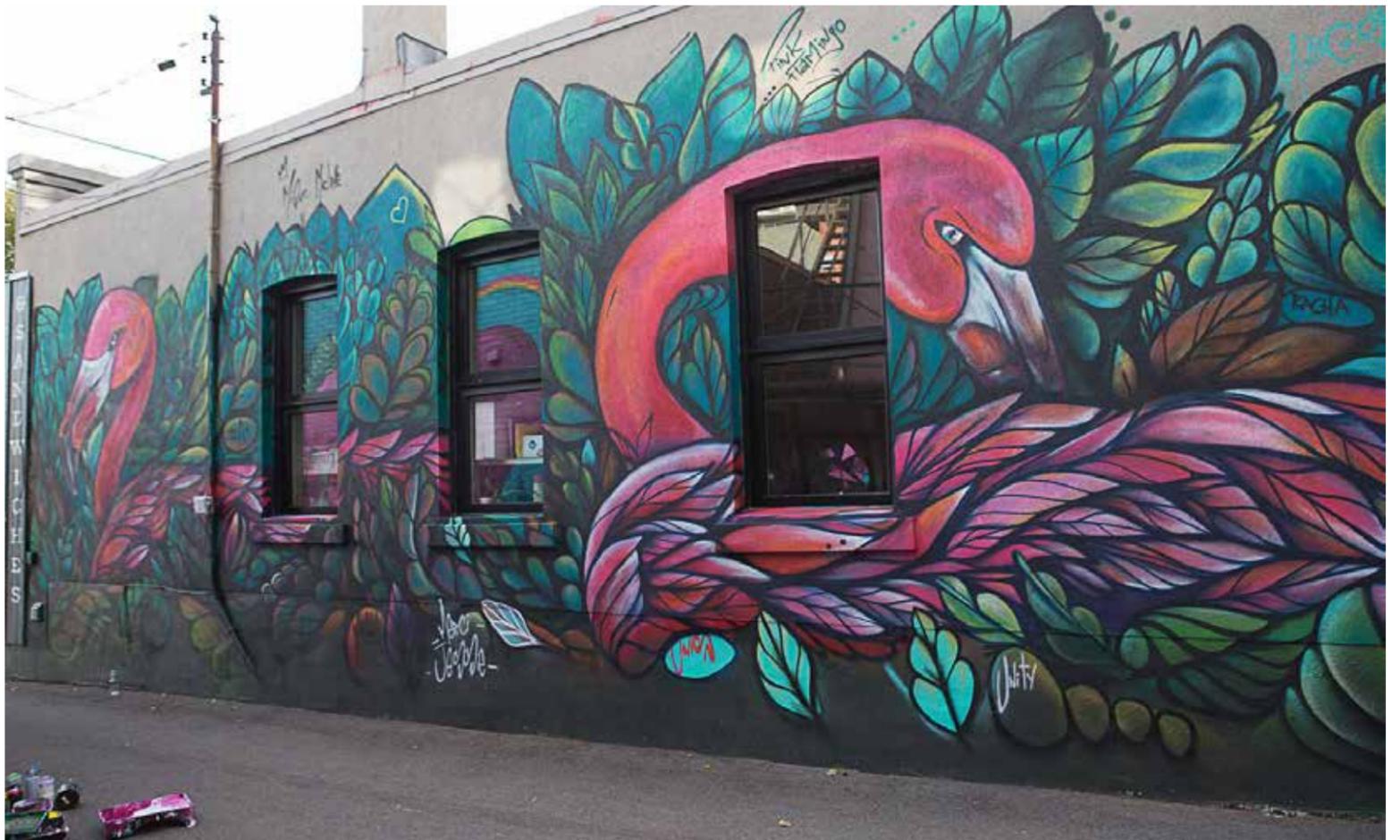


Shout Sister! won't stop singing, 5



What's on this month, 8

THE CENTRETOWN BUZZ



On September 5 and 6, eight local artists held a physically-distanced MuralJam in the alley beside and backyard of Arlington Five (on Arlington just west of Bank Street). They began decorating the walls with boldly bright murals in the rain Saturday and were just cleaning up and looking tired at 5 p.m. on Sunday. The event was sponsored by the restaurant and the House of Paint Festival. The largest mural, Pink Flamingo, (seen here) was painted by local mural artist Mique Michelle. *ALAYNE MCGREGOR/THE BUZZ*

Tenants to get more protection from bugs, better notifications - next August

Alayne McGregor

Sixty giant paper cockroaches decorated the front lawn of Ottawa City Hall on August 26, just before City Council passed new rules protecting tenants.

They were a reminder to councillors of the importance of the changes, which included a new Rental Housing Property Management By-law, and new pest and vermin control regulations. Ottawa ACORN, an advocacy group supporting low- and moderate-income families, organized the demonstration to support the bylaw and call for further changes.

It was the culmination of a several-years-long campaign by the group against substandard housing and for healthy homes, which included doorknocking in low income neighbourhoods, organizing tenant meetings, and organizing rallies outside of poorly-maintained buildings and at City Hall.

Landlords must now respond within 24 hours to issues that would make an apartment uninhabitable,



ACORN splashed cockroach cutouts across the grounds of City Hall to emphasize the importance of pest management to tenants.

such as the loss of vital services or security issues. They must also have a formal process for managing all tenant service requests.

They must let tenants know in writing where and

how to contact the landlord with problems; how to complain to the city if the landlord doesn't fix a problem; and the location and use of fire safety equipment, garbage and recycling, and parking spaces.

Edward Roué, a downtown renter who belongs to ACORN's central Ottawa chapter, said that having this extra information and better communication would have helped him. In his very first apartment, for example, his bathtub was badly damaged, but he wasn't aware that the landlord was responsible for fixing it. He's also had problems with his current landlord in terms of having a clear paper trail to ensure that reported maintenance issues are actually fixed, or getting consistent notifications of power outages or when fixes would be made.

"I think this will help clear up a lot of confusion. It's mainly an issue of ensuring that the tenants are aware of what rights they have and what responsibilities their landlords have, which, I feel

cont on page 3

Cindy Simpson: giving children what they need

Alayne McGregor

"Be well." That's Cindy Simpson's biggest concern right now, as children return to school. It's one of the Ottawa Catholic School Board's (OCSB) three strategic directions (the others are "Be innovative" and "Be community.") But it's assumed a particular importance in the last few months.

Simpson is the OCSB trustee for Zone 10, which includes all of Centretown as well as the city wards of Rideau-Vanier and Rideau-Rockliffe. She represents a very diverse area, including poor and wealthy communities. In Centretown, the only Catholic school is St. Anthony on Booth Street in Little Italy, an elementary school which offers junior kindergarten to Grade 6.

Responding to the pandemic and shifting requirements from the Ministry of Education, OCSB trustees have been holding virtual meetings all summer – and addressing many concerns from worried parents.

"The thing about being a trustee is you really need to be a good listener. You need to allow parents the ability to express their concerns and actively listen, and then direct them to someone who can address the concerns, not just listen, and hopefully help them find solutions," Simpson said.

What parents are debating is the choice between in-person and online learning. "Families are changing their minds as we move along – and we certainly want to be able to give them the ability to change their mind up until school starts within reason, because it is a big decision. Every family has a unique situation. You have to weigh the risks and benefits of sending your child to school.

"I certainly can empathize. I have a granddaughter in five-year-old kindergarten and her mom is on the phone

cont on page 3

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The Good, the Bad, and the Bumpy: the summer of 2020



Bank Street was closed to cars and open to pedestrians, bikes, and scooters on Saturdays this summer.

ALAYNE MCGREGOR/THE BUZZ

Ryan Lythall

As I write this column, it's the beginning of the Labour Day weekend, the last long weekend of the summer, a summer that has been one of the hardest by far for many of us, primarily due to COVID-19. Events have been cancelled, some businesses have closed, and people, who rely on public transportation, have been doing so with the risk of getting COVID-19.

But there were some positives to come out of the summer of 2020. One of the big highlights for me was the closure of Bank Street on Saturdays until September 5. For others, as well as me, this has meant that we have been able to enjoy a wide-open space to shop, to meet up with friends, or simply to enjoy the fresh air and the freedom of just going for a roll in my powered wheelchair.

Bank Street also became an outlet for local artists to bring a fresh look to their creativity. A special shout-out goes out to all of the artists who took the time to use the space to create different works of art.

I sincerely hope that the weekly closure of Bank Street returns next year, even if COVID-19 subsides. Along with the closure of the street, there are several things that could be added as a way to keep people in the area and, more importantly, support local businesses.

Possible ideas for Bank Street next year, just to name a few, might include:

- a small stage for local bands, singers and DJs,
- a chalk art contest,
- outdoor movies,
- buskers, and
- local food competitions.

My hope is that, if small things such as these are added to the street closure, then more people will come to Bank Street to enjoy different events while supporting the many businesses.

I understand that closing Bank Street is very expensive. In the case of Bank Street, this was paid for by the Downtown Bank Street BIA. The BIA estimates that the cost of closing down the street was in the range of \$10,000 to \$12,000 each Saturday.

Regardless of what happens, I want to say thank you to the BIA, and everyone else who was involved in the weekly closure of Bank Street and any other streets in Ottawa this past summer of 2020.

For those of you returning to school or work this fall, please stay safe.

Find Ryan on Twitter:

[@rolling_enigma](https://twitter.com/rolling_enigma)

MPP Report: Students with disabilities are worth more than \$70

Joel Harden

During the last week of August, Premier Ford's government spoke of "Ontario's robust back-to-school plan" which gave students with disabilities \$70 to adjust to the COVID-19 response in our schools. This wasn't a typo.

The premier has allocated \$70 per student, \$22.5 million for 340,000 students with disabilities, to ensure their needs are met. This is not \$70 per week, per month or per year but a one-time lump sum of \$70. Before that, it was \$10 million (or \$34 per student).

David Lepofsky, one of Canada's leading voices for disability rights, insists that far more be done. He has written to both Premier Ford and Education Minister Stephen Lecce, and done ex-

tensive media interviews to highlight that Ontario has no plan for students with disabilities during this pandemic. He is sounding the alarm but the Ford government isn't listening.

As the Ontario NDP's critic for people with disabilities, our office has done the same in a joint letter with Marit Stiles (MPP for Davenport and critic for education) and Monique Taylor (MPP for Hamilton Mountain and critic for children). We have echoed the call for an immediate, well-resourced plan for students with disabilities.

Of particular concern for us is the way school exclusions might be used against students with disabilities at a time when schools are facing huge challenges. I have already spoken to parents of children with disabilities who have been told "we aren't going to be able to

support your child."

Premier Ford has put us in this position. While he insults the leaders of teachers' unions, real needs are going unmet. This is not acceptable. We need smaller class sizes and more education assistants for students with disabilities. We need more help for deaf and hard-of-hearing students, Down's syndrome and blind students, autistic and dyslexic students, and students with social anxiety disorder and a range of other needs.

Under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, Ontario is obliged to ensure our public services are open to everyone. We cannot continue to pinch pennies and do public education on the cheap. As always, we must demand more from politics. Let's tell Premier Ford that students with disabilities are worth more than \$70.

Letter: a space for reflection in LeBreton Flats

Throughout this shutdown, I have been walking around my neighbourhood every day. I live in the west end of Centretown overlooking LeBreton Flats.

It occurs to me that a theme is evolving with the various structures being built surrounding the Canadian War Museum. Going west past the National Archives on Wellington Street, you pass a memorial to victims of Communism underway, then a memorial to Holocaust survivors and, opposite on the south side, a memorial to firefighters who have died saving others' lives.

More recently, I saw a notice, in the field by the Holocaust Memorial, that this is the proposed site for a memorial to soldiers who died in Afghanistan. And, a little south on Albert Street, a beautiful new library is about to be built.

All these structures are designed to make people stop and think deeply about human behaviour—to feel, think, read and, hopefully, react in ways that contribute to a better world.

At the apex of this area is an empty space that I am sure developers are itching to get into. At the moment, it looks like a swampy flood plain.

I have a suggestion. Why not plant a beautiful meditation arboretum there—a quiet oasis where people can sit or walk through as they absorb the messages all these memorials are sending? A hockey stadium or some other monstrous commercial enterprise there would be more than inappropriate. I hope that plan has been completely ditched forever and this idea will, perhaps, influence the eventual decision about what is to become of that small part of LeBreton Flats.

Angela Beale

Cindy Simpson: a trustee needs to be a good listener

cont from page 1 with me multiple times addressing concerns as they come up. I really do understand what their concerns are, but I also really believe that children for their social and emotional development need to be back with their peers. School isn't just curriculum – it's developing as a person and in a community of learners. I do get concerned about the isolation aspect of distance learning, although I feel confident that many parents are aware of this themselves and are going to ensure that their children do have interaction with their peers."

Simpson said the OCSB is "very committed to keeping the children in our schools safe and we will do whatever we can to make sure that our children are as safe as possible. I know that it is going to be a very anxious start of the school. I'm a nanny—I'm anxious for my little granddaughter! But I think we're going to do OK. Behind the scenes there is an incredible amount of work being accomplished. There are literally hundreds of people working very very long hours to make sure that this all works."

This is Simpson's first term as trustee, but her experience in education is extensive. She spent 34 years as a teacher and principal in the OCSB, followed by six years as executive director of Youville Centre, a renowned high school and accredited mental health centre for single teen mothers and their children.

In 2018, she ran for Zone 10 trustee: "I walked every area of the zone." She was runner-up, but the elected trustee died before taking office, and Simpson was appointed by the board to replace her.

"The family feel, the community feel of Catholic schools"

She grew up in Ottawa's west end. "I just always knew I wanted to be a teacher. I was that kid who had a little classroom set up in her basement and was teaching from the time I was 10 years old. My parents instilled a love of children in us. My dad was the president of the Boy Scouts of Ottawa. He ran a Little League. We always had to have other people's kids in our house. It was something born into us."

Two of her brothers taught in the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, but Simpson found she missed "the family feel, the community feel of Catholic schools ... and so when

I had the opportunity to be hired by the Catholic School Board, I jumped at it."

One of the students she most vividly remembers from her teaching career was a 12-year-old Rwandan refugee. He had autism; his teacher, who was quite devout, taught him how to pray, and discovered this helped calm him. With the permission of his mother and the group home he was living in, he was baptized "because he had really grown into this life of prayer as a way of centring himself and calming himself down."

He was baptized in Simpson's office with his mother and teacher there. "He was so calm and it was just such a wonderful thing for his mom to be able to experience after having lived for the past five years in a refugee camp. It was very powerful. And then he went into Mass right after [in the school gymnasium] and the whole school community was present for him to receive Communion for the first time. Six hundred children in that gym [were] celebrating with him."

In Catholic schools, she emphasized, religion "isn't a subject that is taught, it's a lived experience in everything that we do. It's the dignity with which we treat children and each other. Social justice is at the forefront of everything that we do. It's a way of being. That absolutely attracted me to being a Catholic school teacher and principal."

As a young couple, she and her husband moved to

Orleans with their children, and live there still. She taught primarily in Ottawa's eastern suburbs, plus several years in Stittsville.

Making parents feel comfortable

So why represent central Ottawa? It's because of Youville Centre.

The centre is in Zone 10, and most of its students come from that area, Simpson said. "I knew about their apprehensions about sending their own children to school and I started something where we would practice with the mom what a kindergarten interview might look like, because they're very apprehensive. Often these young women didn't have positive school experiences before they came to Youville Centre, and we wanted them to be able to enter a school with their child, their precious gift, and make them feel comfortable."

"I thought if I could help in any way by being a trustee, so that I could be accessible to parents in this area, then this is an area I would really like to represent."

Simpson emphasizes that her zone is very diverse—just like Youville Centre. Even in the Catholic elementary school in Rockcliffe Park, St. Brigid, the students are "not a population of haves. The people in the higher socioeconomic reality send their kids to private school."

At only 61 when she left the centre, she said, she wanted to volunteer in a meaningful way. She thought her experience running a non-profit and dealing directly with provincial ministries, combined with administrative and teaching experience, would be useful. "I knew how to run a place on a shoestring," which jibed well with the strong fiscal responsibility at the OCSB.

A "big-picture person"

She said she changed hats from being a teacher to a trustee "more easily than you might think. Having run an organization and being connected with the ministry, it really does give you a different perspective, more of a whole view of funding and



Cindy Simpson: "every child deserves equal access to education ... we give every child what they need." *ALAN DEAN*

programs and how to efficiently run an organization. As a principal, I did a lot of work at the school board that also enabled me to have a whole school view. So to become a trustee, you are a trustee representing your zone, but you are a trustee of all of the children in the school board."

Simpson describes herself as a "big-picture person," able to take a larger view of what's best for all the children in the board and how to be fiscally responsible. As a principal, she had a vision for her school and the kind of school improvements she wanted. At Youville Centre, she envisaged where she want the organization to be in six years when she left. "That's very similar to a trustee developing a strategic plan and helping a board accomplish a strategic plan."

Equity, not equality

A central tenet for her as a trustee is that "every child deserves equal access to education. It means that we give every child what they need. So one child may need something different than what another child needs but everyone should have avail-

able to them what they need to access the curriculum.

"You will see that when we go back to school after this pandemic. Students that need Chromebooks to work at home will have a Chromebook. Children that can't afford masks and need a mask will be given a mask, every day if they need [it], because we give children what they need. And that doesn't mean every child gets the same thing."

"That means special needs students. That means children living in poverty. That may mean a child who needs services from the Vanier Social Pediatric Centre. That's my tacit belief. It's probably my soapbox I get on whenever I talk to a school or staff."

"This is something that my parents modeled: my father spent his life giving back to the community. I have brothers that give back to the community. I guess what it amounts to is when I was growing up my father and my mother constantly said 'God gave you two hands, one to help yourself and one to help others.' That is a belief of our family and so for me not to be doing something like this would be not to be using one of my hands."

Tenants will get their rights in writing under bylaw

cont from page 1 prior to this was not something that everyone knew. It will make it easier for tenants to report issues to their landlords and, in extremis, the city, Roué said.

"The standards that are set out in these bylaws are standards that every landlord should meet as a matter of course."

For buildings with at least 10 units or three storeys, landlords must develop and maintain a capital maintenance plan to ensure the continued reliability and safety of critical services such as elevators, electrical and plumbing systems, and fire escapes. Roué said this would be useful in older rental buildings in Centretown.

Twenty-three percent of city service requests from rental housing involve pests such as cockroaches, bed bugs, or ants, and a further nine percent involve vermin such as rats, mice, squirrels, and raccoons. The new regulations will require that Integrated Pest Management be implemented in all rental housing.

Landlords will be expected to regularly schedule preventative inspections for pests, provide information to

tenants on how to prevent infestations, and develop treatment plans for infestations. The system also specifies how suspected infestations are to be reported, how tenants will be notified of an outbreak, and how they will be instructed about treating the infestations, including how to prepare the unit for treatments and post-treatment instructions.

Tenants must keep their units clean, report any pests or conditions encouraging pests to the landlord, follow instructions for treating infestations, and treat their pets for fleas, ticks, or other pests.

Roué felt the onus with pest management should be more on the landlord. ACORN had pushed for clearer deadlines for landlords to address pest infestations, and a requirement for landlords to use licensed exterminators, rather than handling outbreaks themselves.

The staff report on the pest regulations described them as a "nuanced standard." Roué was not happy with giving this leeway to landlords: "having that sort of wiggle room whereby a landlord could decide that an infestation is not serious

enough to require addressing, that's rather troubling, especially that if you don't address an infestation early enough it can require more extreme measures."

"It's a step in the right direction. It will lead to better-maintained and more livable apartments and houses. A lot of what's in these bylaws is things that ACORN has been fighting for for quite some time, although it does fall short of what we were hoping for."

The group had also been pushing for a landlord registration system, like RentSafeTO in Toronto. A trial of this system had been recommended in a 2019 consultant's report to the city of Ottawa, Roué said.

The bylaw will come into effect in August 2021. Ottawa ACORN had pushed for it to be implemented starting November 30. "In the context of a pandemic, where pretty much everyone is spending more time inside, I think the sooner we can get this system up and running the better. Tenants are already facing enough stressors without having to deal with a potential infestation of cockroaches or bedbugs."

Mayor: it's time to stop speeding and drive safe

Jim Watson

Students, parents and educators are adjusting to the new reality of a very different and challenging school year. I want to acknowledge the tremendous efforts of teachers, administrators and the entire community, who are working together to ensure the safety and well-being of students and staff everywhere.

As we are now almost a month into the school year, the number one topic of conversation these days, aside from the COVID-19 pandemic, is road safety. I'd like to take this opportunity to remind residents that we must all be more vigilant when driving in residential neighbourhoods and near schools and parks.

The city launched an Automated Speed Enforcement (ASE) Pilot Project this summer, installing four cameras—

two of which are stationary and two others that rotate periodically—between six key locations in residential neighbourhoods and school zones. The data collected between July 13 and 31 revealed that the four cameras led to 10,771 tickets being issued. That's more than 2,500 tickets per camera in just over two weeks. But the real concern is the highest speed recorded during this period, with a motorist driving at 89 kilometres per hour on Meadowlands near St. Gregory Elementary School.

In addition to the ASE pilot project, the city has equipped nearly 60 intersections with red-light cameras to reduce aggressive driving behaviours, with another 14 cameras being installed by the end of the year. Studies have shown that red-light violation rates can decrease as much as 42 percent within a few months of camera in-

stallation. I am confident that we will see some progress, as we extend these initiatives and continue to promote more cautious and improved driving habits in all four corners of Ottawa.

Finally, councillors will be able to implement gateway speed-limit signs and some permanent traffic-calming measures, such as speed humps and speed tables, median-narrowing islands and pedestrian-refuge islands, with funding from their annual \$50,000 budget for temporary traffic-calming measures. You should reach out to your local councillor if you wish to inquire about implementing any of these measures in your neighbourhood.

It is important to note that the revenue generated by the fines issued from the ASE project and red-light cameras will be reinvested in community safety programs with our partners at Safer Roads Ottawa.

I hope this shines a light on how seriously we have to take road safety across our city, particularly in school zones, and how essential photo-radar and red-light cameras will be in addressing some of this dangerous behaviour.



Support your community
Sign up or donate today

www.centretowncitizens.ca

Catherine McKenney City Councillor for Somerset Ward

Stay the course!

You've maintained physical distancing and flattened the curve so far. Let's keep up the good work for a while longer and keep ourselves, our families, and our communities safe.



Keep in touch!

For the latest news on Somerset Ward, sign up for my newsletter on my website and follow me on social media:

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Questions? We can help!

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PEARL PIRIE/THE BUZZ

Planet of the Scapes: you can can

Pearl Pirie

Confession: I bought the relish that was on sale—and then was aghast to discover it was imported from India. In peak cucumber season, we're importing relish from 12,000 km away? Eat local.

Stores have a lot of equipment for canning but it doesn't need to be complex. Start with sterile jars (washed and heated by microwave for two minutes) and you're most of the way there. The recipes seem to adapt well to being halved.

Side Dish: Harvest Relish (makes 6 jam jars of 250-300 ml)

10 tomatoes (blanched and chopped)
2 large green peppers, diced
4 small onions, diced
1 cup corn kernels
1 cup white vinegar
1 1/2 cups white sugar
1 1/2 Tbsp salt

To blanch the tomatoes, drop in boiling water until the skin splits. Remove from water and let cool while you chop the other vegetables before you peel the tomatoes.

Add all ingredients, bring to a boil, and then simmer with no lid for two to three hours until thick. When it is getting thick, microwave the

unlidded jars for two minutes until hot. Take the relish from the bubbling pot directly into jars. Fill to within a quarter-inch from the top so that, when the jars cool, they will seal. You'll hear the pop of the metal lids.



I made this in the 1980s. My father likes it on roast but you can also use it on lentil loaf, cornbread, vegan sausages, or dolloped on the top of soup.

Side Dish: Zucchini Relish (Makes 4 small jars & takes a day unattended)

Another sandwich topper or mix in with egg salad—as well as a great use for those enthusiastic summer squash. This is a variation on Old-WorldGardenFarm.com's *Grandma's Zucchini Relish*.

Chop in a food processor:
5 zucchini

1 large onions
1-2 bell peppers
1-2 ribs celery

Add:

2 1/2 Tbsp salt

Cover and let stand at room temperature overnight to get the extra water out of the zucchini.

Rinse the vegetables and press the mixture in a strainer to release as much water as you can.

Mix:

1 1/2 cups sugar
1/2 tsp turmeric
1/2 tsp dry mustard
1 1/2 cups apple cider vinegar
1/2 tsp pepper

Place everything in a large pot and bring it to a boil. Simmer for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Preheat jars. Use canning tongs or silicone oven mitts.

Add the mixture to jars until nearly to the top, and close metal lids. Once they pop closed, you can store them in the pantry.

Pearl Pirie's fourth poetry collection, footlights, is coming out in September with Radiant Press. Author site: www.pearlpirie.com. Stay home, as much as possible, despite what others may be doing. Keep washing your hands and wearing your masks. This could take another year.

We are here
for you
Ottawa Centre!



Nous sommes là
pour vous
Ottawa Centre !

Catherine McKenna

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Shout Sister! choir invites you to sing your cares away

Mariam El-Behiry

This fall, Shout Sister! Choir invites Ottawa singers to experience a unique and enjoyable choir, while singing from the comfort of their own homes.

This all-inclusive women's choir is committed to providing both current and potential members with a safe and welcoming space

to relieve their stress and express themselves musically in these uncertain times. Shout Sister! requires no audition, no musical background, and has no attendance policies.

The first choir was started by Georgette Fry in Kingston in 2002. She opened chapters in Brockville and Picton in 2006 and the Shout Sister! dream began to take

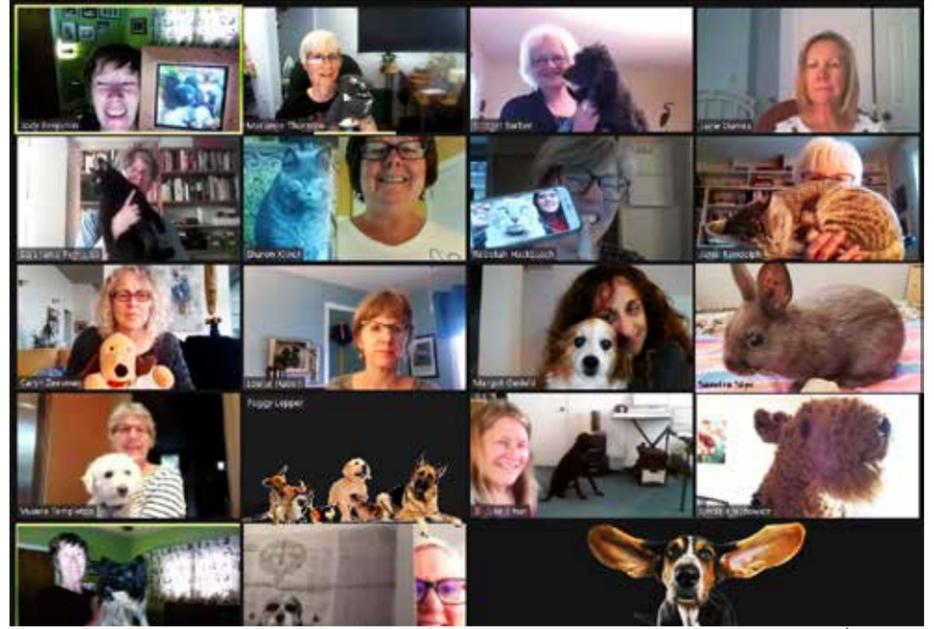
shape. Currently, there are 25 chapters in Ontario and they are constantly growing. The choirs are based on Fry's belief that one does not need to have an education in music to reap the physical and psychological benefits of singing.

Marianne Thornton, a member of and administrator for the Ottawa Centre chapter, has this advice for potential new members.

"We are a welcoming warm group and we invite all types of women to get involved. We are a strong community of women and we welcome mothers, daughters and younger women looking to get involved in their community. Our priority is truly having fun, making friends and promoting community values," she says.

Jody Benjamin, instructor and director of the Ottawa chapters, when asked about the musical genres and eras the choir covers, said, "We cover a fun variety of music from pop and Motown, to folk, to a touch of country and blues. We usually sing fun pop classics like Stevie Wonder and Bob Dylan and sentimental Canadian favourites. We learn from recorded tracks, so we require no reading of music."

Like many other weekly activities, Shout Sister! has had to move to online Zoom meetings for weekly prac-



MARIANNE THORNTON/SHOUT SISTER

Ottawa Shout Sister! choir members now singing on-line, with their pets.

tices. Thornton advised that she did not have any technical difficulties because of her familiarity with the Zoom technology.

"Zoom is a good substitute for in-person practices. Although some members had technical difficulties with their Wi-Fi connection and getting into the meet, support from the Kingston Chapter, where the choir is based, was offered and the majority are now acquainted with the technology."

Thornton finds Zoom easy to install, user-friendly, and able to work on most computers, smart phones, and tablets. The choir offers

support to help every step of the way.

When asked about obstacles the group faced going virtual, Benjamin said, "We can't do split tracks, so members have to pick out their own parts from all the arrangements playing from the speakers. On the bright side, we are able to spend more time on sectional practices where we work on high and low harmonies, so members are able to familiarize themselves with their vocal parts."

The choir typically holds a year-end event where they perform to raise money for local initiatives to help

women and children in need in long-term care facilities. They meet virtually every Wednesday afternoon from 1 to 3 p.m. and Thursday evening from 7 to 9 p.m.

For information on how to join, contact members@shoutsisterchoir.ca.

Be a distanced walker on October 4 to support Centretown's food bank



Tara, Julia, and Moni walk for the CEFC.

ANISHA EISEN/THE BUZZ

Patricia Marsden-Dole

We should thank the local unsung heroes and heroines, who volunteer at the Centretown Emergency Food Centre (CEFC), and help them to continue providing food to those in need in the downtown area.

Each year, CEFC holds a fundraising walk. This year, the walk must be virtual. On Sunday, October 4, from 2 to 4 p.m., the centre is asking you to walk in a place of your choice and to make a donation to help keep the centre going for another year.

The pandemic has forced the centre, which is located in the basement of Centretown United Church, located on the corner of Argyle Avenue and Bank Street, to change its entire operation. Social distancing and strict hygiene routines are required to sort, shelve and bag supplies coming in from many donors. Workspaces have been reconfigured to accommodate social distancing. The centre has limited its hours of operation to Monday and Friday from noon to 1 p.m., relocated to the main floor of church and reduced the variety of food-stuffs to pre-packaged food only. There are limitations now on the number of volunteers permitted in both the basement food pantry and upstairs where clients are served.

In 2019, CEFC served over 9,000 hungry people living in Centretown, the Glebe, Old Ottawa South and Old Ottawa East. The centre has two paid employees and

many volunteers who pack and bag food, and counsel the needy. Twenty-two local churches, collectively and through individual members, donated \$68,000 to the Centretown Churches Social Action Committee (CCSAC), most of which was used to support CEFC operations. While other important donors to the centre include the City of Ottawa and the central Ottawa Food Bank, there is still not enough money to feed all of those who come to our door.

You can donate via the CEFC website at cefcottawa.org by credit card on, before or even after your walk. Click on "Walk for the Centre" where you will find a pledge form for your name, address and the pledge amount. You can also send a cheque (made out to the Centretown Churches Social Action Committee) to 507 Bank Street, Ottawa, K2P 1Z5. CCSAC will send out receipts for donations. Want to give cash? Please check the CEFC and CCSAC websites before October 4 for any new instructions regarding time and place to make cash donations on the day of your virtual walk.

During your fundraising walk, please follow the Ottawa Public Health guidelines in place at that time (physical distancing, masks, gloves). Thank you for your assistance to neighbours in need.

Patricia Marsden-Dole is a member of the Centretown Churches Social Action Committee.

**Need to walk more?
Why not deliver The BUZZ each month?**

Email circulation@centretownbuzz.com



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Be kind. Be calm. And be safe. - Dr. Bonnie Henry

Comment

Prayer and meditation: antidotes to isolation

Stephen Thirlwall

People around the world are suffering not only from direct infection from COVID-19 but also from social isolation. At times, we feel cut off, limited in our movement and unable to do what we normally do when we want. The result: depression, listlessness, apathy, hoarding, online binge buying, and other negatives have started to fill our lives.

Yet supports already exist within society that we can revitalize and draw on to move us out of this state of “funk.” Prayer, meditation and other spiritual practices can lift our spirits, centre our being, free our minds, cleanse our hearts, create positive environments and give us a sense of hope, tranquility, and peace. Accompanying reflections focus our attention on things that really matter, open our minds to new perspectives, and help us exercise the many spiritual capabilities within us.

Prayer and meditation have served humans as central systems of coping, physical healing, and spiritual advancement throughout history. Hundreds of millions of people still apply these tools to some degree in their lives. While their roots lie in religion, these practices now go well beyond formal religion and they are not static. New insights and practices have been created with the arrival of various religions over time and as shared between peoples. Prayer and meditation have each undergone testing through intense prac-

tice within various spiritual groups, just as medicines have been scientifically tested. They help us face our pains and challenges; give us the means to rise above and better deal with issues; sometimes solve our problems and, at other times, help us learn to control them. But, most importantly, prayer and meditation can keep us from being mired down by our pains and challenges.

Too hectic, too distracted

The major stumbling block to prayer and meditation is that they run counter to many aspects of society’s current attitudes. For several decades, they have been pushed aside from public acknowledgement and conversation. Our daily lives have become too hectic in the work environment for us to easily engage in them; our leisure time is filled with too many distractions and entertainments. Technologies meant to bring more leisure time actually intensify the frenzy. Governments, businesses, and daily home lives have been reduced to monetary values, leaving out fundamental concerns for people and nature. Everything is deemed a commodity under consumerism. Competition remains the main mode of operation.

The global pandemic has given us space to reconsider and reintroduce prayer, meditation and reflection on the important aspects of life. This in turn leads toward more cooperative social action that upholds essential social values.

There are different choices in prayer and meditation.

They can be done personally or collectively; spoken, sung or chanted aloud or said inwardly in silence, while swaying or in stillness. Prayers may come from sacred texts or from our own words. While the origin of prayer is communion and conversation with God, the Creator, for some it is conversation with Nature or spiritual communion within ourselves. There are also those who believe that honest hard work, good deeds and family raising are worship.

People collectively pray as families and within various types of communities. Previously, most people prayed in churches, synagogues, mosques and temples. Now they also do it in homes everywhere. We have come to realize it is not the building that is crucial but the desire to commune with our Creator. Increasingly, individuals meet online to share a few prayers or hold longer devotionals, sometimes, joining others across the country and around the world. This has created a new global worship never before witnessed.

Cleansing, opening, connecting

Meditation is a process of cleansing oneself and opening one’s mind and heart to possibilities. We connect with forces greater than our own both deep inside and outside ourselves. Our minds are freed to allow creative thinking and deeper understanding. Meditation is a form of reflection that permits us to review and update what we know, and help us peel away our personal prejudices and bad habits.

While starting with oneself, both prayer and meditation can lead us toward concern and compassion for others. While personal meditation is often done quietly and alone, collectively, it requires open and friendly discussion. This leads to sharing personal reflections, generating group reflections and entering more constructive



STEPHEN THIRLWALL/THE BUZZ

We await the return of many annual special events, such as the Chinatown Night Market.

conversations. It can generate unified vision, decision-making and problem-solving at all levels of society.

A practice across faiths

Can people of different beliefs pray together? It happens often. It especially comes with the increasing diversity of the population. There is a significant rise in interracial, interreligious and cross-cultural marriages and friendships (especially among youth), easily visible in the streets. For new immigrants and refugees, prayer is often common practice, and they need to engage with others to adapt to their new home. In Ottawa, interfaith activities have been developing over the last 35 years, connecting over 50 faith groups. Although this does not mean that the full communities are involved, it does show a wish for collective prayer, sharing of practices, discovering commonalities and engaging in some collaborations.

We tend to see prayer and meditation as passive. But they can also lead to other more outward forms of action. However, as spiritual activities, they generate spiritual energy that brings hope, love, excitement, and other benefits to our lives. And, more importantly, they also give us the will to become active agents of development within our communities, taking part in collaborative public consultations and projects at the grassroots or other levels. Because the pandemic is truly global, all of our local activities increasingly take place in the context of global challenges and perspectives.

My personal experience

Various personal experiences play into this discussion. Prayer and meditation are daily activities, since each day presents its own set of conditions, emotions,

joys, pains and challenges. But they need not take up too much time. I only truly came to prayer and meditation when I was 20; since then, they have been staples in my life.

Before retiring from work, when a problem arose, I would try to take a meditative walk outside. Luckily, there were semi-wilderness parks nearby. I would give myself a question, usually, about nature and let my mind think freely. By the time I returned to the office, I usually had the solution to the day’s particular problem. I still take meditative walks but through the urban community landscape and visit nature in my backyard garden.

Over 10 years ago, I unexpectedly faced a life-threatening situation and underwent surgery. Recovery took several months. Throughout this time, I put aside all fears and worries because I knew hundreds of people were praying for me. I could equally confront death, or pains, and lack of energy in recovery. Nowadays, via e-mail, phone or online conversation, friends and acquaintances often ask for prayers. For example, “I am undergoing tests for cancer, please pray for me.” “My husband is dying, please pray that he passes peacefully to the next life.” “My dear friend’s daughter will undergo critical surgery. Her name is Please send prayers.” We are not all of the same background or belief.

Recently, through numerous online gatherings, prayers are often said. Those gathering are from varied backgrounds and locations. Online, I have recently joined three memorial services, one wedding and two concerts. There have been all sorts of other community-based meetings, some with a couple of hundred people

present.

Those who do not become tied down by isolation often turn toward their inner latent spiritual capacities. Here are a few examples. Some find increased patience in silence. Most accept obedience to the necessary COVID-19 protective standards, even though we all want to be unconstrained. Many reassess their expenditures and better conserve their resources. Large numbers are making great sacrifices of time, energy and funds to help others more needy and more susceptible to the COVID-19 virus, as well as encouraging the frontline workers. Most volunteers I know in the community have some religious affiliation. This volunteerism shows our great capacity for love and generosity towards others, and orientation to service. Prayer and meditation release confidence and courage to carry out acts of service. In the face of “alternative facts,” they help us reestablish who we truly trust, our own trustworthiness and what truth we accept. These qualities are essential for positive social relationships and community building.

Call a friend, share a prayer

Since isolation will likely be with us for some time, we need to explore methods that help us cope. Call a friend; share a prayer! I offer this prayer because it suggests that every spot on the face of the earth can be made sacred: Blessed is the spot, and the house, and the place, and the city, and the heart, and the mountain, and the refuge, and the cave, and the valley, and the land, and the sea, and the island, and the meadow where mention of God hath been made, and His praise glorified. (Bahá’u’lláh)

Which prayer will you share with someone?



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Several bike lane signs on Elgin Street near Catherine Street were toppled. ALAYNE MCGREGOR/THE BUZZ

Elgin Street bike lane vandalized, right in front of the police station

On August 21, temporary segregated bike lanes, delimited by traffic barrels and large signs, were installed on Elgin Street between Argyle Avenue and Isabella Street.

This initiative, sponsored by Councillors Catherine McKenney and Shawn Menard, was in response to a collision in that area on June 12.

A 20-year-old female cyclist turning left suffered broken bones when she was struck by a southbound pickup truck, and became trapped beneath the truck.

When *The BUZZ* photographed the lanes on Sunday, September 6, reporter Alayne McGregor discovered that many of the large signs had been toppled, and one had completely blocked the entrance to the southbound lane—immediately in front of the main police station. She pushed that sign and its safety sandbags back into place.



ALAYNE MCGREGOR/THE BUZZ

McKenney said they had city staff fully restore the lane and the toppled signs on Tuesday morning.

Centretown Community Association report



Jack Hanna

Fall Festival September 19

The annual Fall Festival in Dundonald Park is proceeding (with attendees asked to keep two metres distancing) on Saturday, September 19, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

There will be kids' activities—and free popcorn.

A presentation on Indigenous teachings about autumn is at 10 a.m.

Throughout the day, there will be displays on cooking with pulses (peas, lentils, beans, and chickpeas); bees and other pollinators; the Centretown tool library; and heritage in Centretown. City police officers will be chatting about bicycle safety and maintenance.

Those so inclined can even do a spot of gardening with the CCA's crew of volunteer gardeners who look after the park's flower beds.

The Fall Festival is sponsored by the CCA and the Dundonald Park Working Group.

Bucks for Blooms in Centretown's Parks

The CCA's volunteer gardeners have received two grants from the city to help keep Centretown's parks blooming.

Councillor Catherine McKenney helped obtain \$1,000 for the crew of volunteer gardeners who weed and plant the beds in Dundonald Park (at Somerset and Lyon). As well, the councillor obtained another \$300 for the volunteer crew caring for the gardens at St. Luke's Park (Elgin at Gladstone).

The funds will purchase plants and compost.

Plenty of greenery has already been put in, thanks to donations of plants by residents and Master Gardeners of Ottawa.

Anti-racism in Centretown

Councillor Rawlson King will speak at the meeting of the CCA's Anti-racism Working Group on Sunday, September 20, at 6:30 p.m.

King became the city's

first ever Black councillor in a by-election in Rideau-Rockcliffe Ward last year. He has been appointed City Council's liaison for anti-racism and ethnocultural relations.

Canada faces challenges of "anti-black racism, police brutality, the controversial practice of carding, and the wide economic disparities encountered by Indigenous communities and people of colour," King wrote in a recent newspaper op-ed piece.

If you would like to join the Zoom videoconference, contact: anti-racism@centretowncitizens.ca

Safe biking on Elgin Street

After a cyclist was seriously injured at Elgin and Catherine, the CCA held a series of meetings with the city to try to improve the safety of Elgin Street near the Queensway.

The city agreed to monitor vehicle speeds between McLeod Street and Pretoria Avenue, and look at lowering speed limits or putting in traffic-calming measures.

And since the talks, the city has put up lines of orange traffic cones on part of this stretch (Argyle Avenue to Pretoria) to create temporary bike lanes in both directions.

The CCA will continue discussions with the city.

Somerset Ward: Ottawa Housing Blitz requires immediate action on a vital issue

Catherine McKenney

Many of us have been working with the Alliance to End Homelessness and the City of Ottawa to address the growing problem of homelessness in our community.

Together, we are teaming up with community partners to house 100 people experiencing homelessness before the end of September.

This is a unique program aimed at coordinating the efforts of the public, private, and non-profit organizations to connect landlords who have vacancies with residents who need housing. Landlords are given the opportunity to fill out a survey indicating how many units they need filled and the Alliance will contact them to discuss how to fill those housing units.

The city will match people in need of housing with appropriate units and rent support from available housing benefit programs. Priority will be given to people experiencing homelessness who qualify for subsidies, are ready to be housed, and are currently looking for

housing.

City Council declared an affordable housing and homelessness emergency in January 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified the issue, with many residents lacking safe and affordable housing.

Homelessness in Ottawa persists and is growing, especially for families. On any given night, 1,900 individuals including children are sleeping in a shelter bed in our city. In 2019, there were 285 families staying in overflow accommodations in hotels and motels, for a total of 450 families in the city's family shelter system.

In 2019, Ottawa had 1,707 individuals who were experiencing chronic homelessness, an increase of 94.9 percent since 2014. The number of people sleeping outside this year has doubled since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

These are alarming numbers that require the immediate attention and dedicated funding from our provincial and federal governments.

As part of its 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan (2020-2030) the city,

in partnership with community organizations and other levels of government, aims to create up to 8,500 new affordable-housing units and housing subsidies by 2030 and to eliminate unsheltered and chronic homelessness. This will also require a significant investment in the city's upcoming budget.

Having a place to live is the first line of defence against COVID-19. Today you can help by joining the blitz and spreading the word to landlords. You can join us to be a part of the solution to ending homelessness in our community.

We know that Ottawa is a generous community. During these unprecedented times, we are asking everyone who is a landlord to put their vacant units forward to help people without a home get housed.

If you know of any vacant units in your community, please visit www.ottawahousingblitz.ca and let us know.

Together we can provide safe, secure, and affordable housing to individuals and families in need.

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What's on this month

Tony Wohlfarth

This fall, museums and galleries are re-opening with pandemic safeguards.

Canadian Museum of Nature

The nature museum in Centretown re-opened on September 5 and *The BUZZ* participated in an advance media tour.

The extra space is especially welcome for those of us who found the most popular displays crowded. Visitors should be aware that some of the interactive elements are not in use.

The galleries and exhibits are marked with directional markers and social distancing indicators to keep everyone safe.

Visitors enter at the McLeod Street entrance, where you are welcomed in a

external tent. Inside the museum, all the floors are open to visitors.

A new feature in the museum is two illuminated globes suspended in the open rotunda pictured here. Admission must be booked in advance at www.nature.ca or 613-566-4700.

Canadian War Museum

The war museum at LeBreton Flats re-opened on September 2. A maximum of 50 tickets per day are available at warmuseum.ca. (or phone 819-776-7000 or 1-800-555-5621). The museum also has an excellent virtual presentation of war art by Molly Lamb Bobak at www.warmuseum.ca/mollylambbobak/

Canadian Museum of History

The history museum (100 Laurier Street in Gatineau) re-opened to visitors on September 2. One highlight

is "UNCEDED: Voices of the Land." This multimedia installation comprises work by 18 distinguished aboriginal architects and designers from across Turtle Island.

Both the war and history museums are open from Wednesday to Sunday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and offer free admission on Thursday from 5 to 8 p.m.

ByTowne Cinema

The ByTowne Cinema (325 Rideau St.) re-opened in August, with a maximum of 50 seats, socially distanced, in the cinema's lower level. Tickets can be purchased in advance at bytowne.ca.

From September 18 to 24, the ByTowne will screen the biopic *Radioactive*, about the life of Marie Curie, the first woman to win a Nobel Prize. Directed by Marjane Satrapi, *Radioactive* stars Rosamund Pike.

Asinabka Film Festival

The 9th Annual Asinabka Film Festival will be online on September 16 to 20. It features films by independent Indigenous artists, allowing them to tell their own stories and talk about their cultures and issues in documentaries and dra-

mas. Film buffs can check out the 16 film offerings at www.asinabkafestival.org

Ottawa International Animation Festival (OIAF)

OIAF is also going online from September 23 to October 4. Check out www.oiaf2020.ca for schedules and updates.

ByWard Market Film Tour

The ByWard Market is the setting for many films. The Ottawa Film Office has produced a virtual film tour highlighting these settings at ottawa.film/byward-market-film-tour/

Ottawa Free Tours

Every Saturday from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Ottawa Free Tours offers a walking tour of Ottawa. Advance registration is required via Eventbrite. Further information is available at www.ottawafreetour.com/schedule

Out of Town

Vancouver Art Gallery

This summer, I had the opportunity to visit the Vancouver Art Gallery. The VAG (as it is known) is in downtown Vancouver (750 Hornby) and is easily accessible



The new Gaia sculpture in the Museum of Nature.

MARTIN LIPMAN/CANADIAN MUSEUM OF NATURE

via public transit.

A highlight of my visit was *Rapture, Rhythm and the Tree of Life*, an exhibition of art by Emily Carr and her contemporaries.

The work by the Victoria-born artist encompasses the fourth floor of the gallery. The display is attractive, providing insights on what motivated Carr to create art

in BC's aboriginal communities. Special thanks to Larah Luna for facilitating my visit.

Tony Wohlfarth is an Ottawa-based freelance film, arts and entertainment writer. He travelled to Vancouver in August to visit friends and family and while there he toured the VAG as a guest of the gallery.

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Faulkner Real Estate Celebrates 20 Years



By Judy Faulkner,
Broker or Record / Owner

I can't believe it's been 20 years since I left a national real estate company and made the big leap by launching Faulkner Real Estate. It feels like only yesterday that I was putting up my first "Sold" sign. I'd been working out of the basement of my home at the time, joined by my team.

In starting my own business, I knew that there was room for considerable improvement within the industry and I wanted consumers to experience a fresh approach.

My goal was simple: to create more fairness, honesty and integrity. It meant offering progressive compensation options, and ending the practice of "multiple representation", which occurs when a listing brokerage also represents an interested buyer. This puts both the buyer and seller at a disadvantage because their brokerage has a conflict of interest and can not give advice that favours one client over the other.

Despite our humble beginnings, Faulkner Real Estate immediately took off. Not long after, the Ottawa Chamber of Commerce honoured us with the New Business of the Year Award for our innovative business practices.



Judy Faulkner with her mother and mentor, Sandra Faulkner, and her team, outside her home-based office during the early years of Faulkner Real Estate, which is marking 20 years of helping people buy and sell.

I see my role as more than just selling homes. I'm helping people in transition — from those looking to buy their first home together, to empty-nesters wanting to downsize, to families relocating to the city but not knowing how to find the perfect home and neighbourhood.

We work in a fast-paced environment, one that also requires us to be educators, marketers, negotiators and confidants. Just as we celebrate our clients' successes, so, too, do we give them encouragement and a boost, when needed.

I've long since learned that the lines between my work life and personal life are blurred. I'm like hot water on demand; when I'm needed, I'm there. I love helping and connecting with people. I love the unpredictability of each day.

I'm also proud of the way Faulkner Real Estate has been able to give back to our community over the past 20 years. Among the groups that we've supported is the community meal program run through local churches in response to the COVID-19 crisis.