



THE ARK

Christmas '19 Newsletter



Here's to You

There are many interesting aspects to working at the *Ark*. Every day is different. People who give us food or clothes have the satisfaction of giving but I think we have the bigger joy in delivering those things directly to the people who need them. Of course, clients are interesting people, too. Everyone has a story, some heartbreaking, some of overcoming.

Some folks are in both camps, needing our services but at the same time, finding a way to contribute. These are perhaps the most inspirational of all.

I particularly enjoy students who volunteer. Perhaps it is the old teacher in me, but I like to think that by exposing students to the world of our clients, maybe they will be the ones who will make a more equitable and just place for everyone. Of course, one shouldn't stereotype a generation but those in their late teens and early twenties are individualistic, distrustful of authority, spiritual but not necessarily religious, to name a few common characteristics. But many of the students we've had here have renewed my faith in the future. They are creative, passionate, bright, engaging people and a lot of fun to have around. Generations tend to stick to themselves these days but we should find ways to mix more. We encourage the teams who come each night to serve meals to mix generations if they can because in serving together they can learn to appreciate one another.

This fall we are hosting an intern from triOS College who is completing the addiction worker diploma. At the end of his first week with us, I asked him what he thought. He said he was 'humbled', which was not what I was expecting. It wasn't seeing the struggles of those dealing with addiction or battling poverty every day. It was the volunteers which impacted him – that there are so many, kind, giving people who show up here every day to do what they can. Perhaps we've taken that somewhat for granted here as everyday at least one person contacts us asking if we can use their help. Some days it is a lot more than one – whole groups want to come to serve meals. We do our best to find a place, not only because we depend on volunteers but because we've learned that little push in one's heart to make a difference is sacred. So we have volunteers who sort clothes, sell clothes, cut hair, serve coffee and donuts, complete income tax returns, chop vegetables, fix things, sweep up the yard, oversee the art program, paint Christmas scenes on our windows, act, shovel snow and of course, serve meals and then wash dishes, sweep and wash the floor. Not glamorous jobs, but we rarely have to look for help.



2018 Cast & Band
The Homeless Jesus

I think our intern was coming from a world where people live more for themselves. Can we blame such people when everything around us suggests life is better with more stuff and bucket lists? But then there is our volunteer guy, a retired professional who said to me the other day, 'there are days I don't feel like going out but I'm always glad I came.' The *Ark* is blessed with hundreds of people who know what truly enriches life – giving and serving. They've learned, as Jesus said so long ago, 'that life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.' He also said, 'your heart is where your treasure is.' To actually meet such people can no doubt be humbling. The *Ark* works because you'll meet many of them here. So, this is my tribute to all those over these past ten years who have helped the *Ark* sail. People sometimes give me credit for all the *Ark* does but the credit doesn't belong to me!

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Another way to Serve

This is Crista, presenting her birthday present to Wayde. Crista, who has never volunteered here and has her own life challenges asked for socks so she could give them to others who have greater need. People who think like that are rich in ways that count most! There are many people who never step into the *Ark* but who serve the people here in many caring ways.

If you would like to follow Crista’s example this Christmas, we have cards you can give indicating you have made a donation to the *Ark* in someone’s honour or memory. Indicate on the response card how many cards you would like. If you would like a card sent directly on your behalf, include the details with your donation.

Art Work

The New School of Colour, our art program will be ten years old in the new year. Jeremy Jeresky came with the idea of a social space for art. It was an immediate success, winning the Pillar Community Innovation Award in its first year (the same award the London Food Coalition is nominated for this year). Jeremy is now Curator, Public Programs and Learning, London Arts Council. Over the years, we’ve had numerous shows and sales, were featured at the National Homelessness Conference in 2016 and won a Canada150 grant in 2017. At the moment, our artists have numerous pieces on display in St Thomas in *The Healing Palette* show, as in several previous years.



Pictured is Marshall Custus, who has overseen the art program for several years. He is unfortunately unable to continue to in that role, although he will help out in other ways. This means we are looking for someone to co-ordinate the program, currently operating Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. Artistic ability is an asset but being able to work with people is equally important. Contact the office if interested!

Counseling



Last newsletter we reported on our new counseling initiative. Counselors in training receive supervision here in return for working with our clients. To that we have added Single Session Drop In on Monday afternoons. Without an appointment, anyone can speak with one of our counselors for an hour. The idea is to discuss a single issue with a suggested ‘solution’ or way to respond to the issue presented. We have had a good take up thus far, with a couple folks indicating they would like to make follow up

appointments. The picture is of the sign in the *Ark*’s front window advertising the service.

Another Year of Thanks!

The Christmas season is when many people give a special gift to help those who need it. To all those who choose to do so through the *Ark*, thank you! We will use it wisely to make a difference. There are many ways to give:

- gifts of food: see the list on the website, turkeys, grocery store gift certificates, etc.
- gifts in honour or on behalf of someone: check the box on the response card to receive a special card from the *Ark* to inform your honoree of the gift.
- set up convenient monthly donations: by credit card – visit our [website](#); by bank withdrawal – check the box on the response card or download the [form](#) on our Donation webpage.
- credit or debit card donations can be done right on our [website](#).
- gifts of stocks and mutual funds can also be done from the [website](#).
- credit card donations and cheques can be mailed in the provided response envelope.

Thank you for your support throughout the year. Nothing would happen here without so many willing hearts and hands. Wayde, the staff and Board join me in expressing our appreciation of your trust in us and in wishing you a blessed Christmas season.

Doug Whitelaw
Executive Director

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