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INSIDE

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- Guelph Chamber's new CEO
- Maxwell's is ready to rock
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On the cover: "Larger than life" Michael Wekerle

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"DANGER MAN"

He's going to leave a mark

by PAUL KNOWLES



PAUL KNOWLES is editor of Exchange Magazine. He is an author and public speaker
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Watching the Golf Channel recently, I noticed that the announcers have coined a new cliché: "danger man". They're already using it to excess; it refers to someone likely to make an impact on the current

tournament, or on the world of golf in general.

As we were working on this edition, and writing the cover story on Michael Wekerle, that phrase popped into my head.

I think everyone in the Waterloo business community was intrigued when the Dragon's Den's newest member announced that he was investing in K-W; I think we were more than surprised when he announced that the new CEO of his Waterloo Innovation Network would be Brenda Halloran. What the heck?

But I'm thinking we should get used to such surprises. Wekerle is, as described by many who know him, "larger than life". His very presence in Waterloo will draw attention to our community.

He might be the best news to come along in a while – with his plan to revitalize real estate left fallow by the declining fortunes of BlackBerry.

Or, he might be terrible news, a flash in the pan locally, soon distracted by greener grass somewhere else. My guess is, there is no way to tell.

But good news or bad, I don't think anyone can argue that he's unquestionably news. As such, he demands our coverage – and your attention.

X



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Photo Courtesy University of Wallingford

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DON'T LET THE RHETORIC GET YOU DOWN

The global economy is once again facing turbulent times – so what?

by JON ROHR



JON ROHR is President of Exchange Business Communications Inc., publishers of Exchange Magazine and Exchange Morning Post.

The growth of our economy is not hinged on the global economy. It's hinged on the US economy, and they are once again coming into their own, placing the hardworking Southern Ontario businesses in position to once again become the darling economic engine of Canada. As we all are becoming acutely aware, Waterloo Region is more than a "try us out" community. We're a place where our pedigree is becoming synonymous with all the elements of a healthy growing system: education, research focused on innovation, collaboration and entrepreneurial expertise and operational experience. As a significant economic contributor to Canada, Waterloo continues to advance globally, marketing itself as the North American location, with diversified assets, an impressive list of success stories with lots of fresh talent to nurture growth, prosperity and success for those that choose to leverage what we have here.

There is a uniqueness here, and you feel it as soon as you engage with a community leader. Perhaps it occurs soon after you find out just how "we roll" - we're not for everyone.

As an ongoing observer, our number one asset does not come in the form of a 'capital asset' - yes, we have the infrastructure and tools to nurture our dreams - but more aptly it's when the "idea of an

idea", or the dream itself, is shared with a diverse group of people, and then combined with our area's ability to make and market products, only then do we actually release the energy, that powers this region.

It was nearly four years ago, when arm-chair economists were chanting doom and gloom for Waterloo, speculating that in the face of hard times (the first quarterly drop in smart phone shipments for RIM was logged) that we would lose our international

It's when the "idea of an idea", or the dream itself, is shared with a diverse group of people ...

pedigree and wither away. What these critics didn't get is that we have four remarkable higher learning institutions - all recognized for their unique pillars of contribution and growth. This, combined with a supportive government infrastructure, a history of global networking and a level of community engagement that understands the importance of business and community.

Our business community has morphed into one focused on producing more producers. As a learning and testing community, we're competitively attractive and a great place to call home. It's taken a long time and many people to build and fine tune this ecosystem, but well worth it because our local jurisdiction of over 500,000 has all we need to continue to make a difference and impact the world as we know it.

X

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Karen Redman

Karen Redman admits that she has followed an unusual career path. And she says this is not due to good planning. "I've had a really blessed life," she says, "being at the right place at the right time."

It might seem that the epitome of her success came from 1997 to 2008, when she was the Liberal Member of Parliament for Kitchener Centre; for five and a half of those years, she was Liberal Party Whip, and this placed her near the centre of power.

But that's ancient history, as far as Redman is concerned. And unlike many former federal politicians, Redman has certainly not slipped into the background since her electoral defeat in 2008; instead, she has reinvented herself.

This fall, she won election to Waterloo Regional Council, winning in Kitchener in an election that was held only days before she stepped into the role of CEO of Waterloo Region's Habitat for Humanity.

The one thing all of her roles have in common is Redman's passion and energy. She is an enthusiastic advocate for Habitat for Humanity, and an energetic mem-

REDMAN TAKES ON REGIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND NEW HABITAT LEADERSHIP ROLE

ber of Waterloo Region's new council.

It's not that she took time off, after 2008 – Redman completed a Master's degree in political science at Wilfrid Laurier, and served on the staff of Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff for a year and a half. She also led the local Habitat operation on an interim basis – and has now returned, making a long-term commitment.

It's obvious that she enjoyed her time on the national stage, but Redman seems sincere when she argues that municipal politics is also very important. "The issues the Region deals with have the most impact on the people you represent," she told Exchange.

She's not expecting it to be easy; she has taken office at the outset of construction of the Light Rail Transit system, which will undoubtedly cause at least temporary disruption in the cores of Waterloo and Kitchener. She knows regional council will face criticism over this and other issues, and observes that, "Democracy is really messy. But everybody will be heard. Everybody deserves respect and dignity, although we're never going to be able to give everybody what they want."

Asked about her personal priorities as a new member of council, it's not surprising that Redman lists housing as an issue. That ties directly in with her Habitat role.

"Habitat is poised to have an even bigger impact," she says. Of late, Habitat homes have been built only in Kitchener, but Redman is committed to seeing projects in Waterloo, Cambridge, and the townships.

Habitat for Humanity builds homes for one- and two-parent, lower-income families who have at least one child under teenage years. The new homeowners contribute their down payment as "sweat equity" – each adult works at least 250 hours on their home or other Habitat projects.

When their home is completed, the homeowners assume a mortgage, held at no interest by Habitat. The proceeds from those mortgages are "paid forward", says Redman, helping to fund new projects.

Habitat also runs two "Restore" stores – in Waterloo and in Cambridge – where donated items from entire kitchens to doorknobs are for sale, with the income funding the administration of Habitat. That's topped up with individual and corporate donations – and funds raised at events like the Habitat for Humanity Golf Tournament, sponsored by Activa, on June 11.

Whether she is wearing her Habitat hat, or her Region of Waterloo councillor's ID, Redman is invested in making a difference in her community. "This really is a very, very unique community," she says, referring to the "home town feeling.... People do have a sense of belonging." – Paul Knowles

CORPORATE PROFILE :

CROWNE PLAZA AQUA LOUNGE AND RESTAURANT

The Aqua Lounge and Restaurant has only been open for a few months, but already it is garnering rave reviews from its guests. Aqua was unveiled in November, 2014 – the newest jewel in the upscale Crowne Plaza Hotel in Kitchener. The Crowne Plaza opened after a multi-million dollar renovation of the entire hotel in April, 2014.

Hotel General Manager Yari Khan says that everything about the restaurant is innovative and new – the location within the hotel (just off the lobby); the seafood-inspired menu; the design, furnishings, dinnerware, cutlery, serving vessels – everything!

Aqua serves an extensive breakfast buffet, a full lunch menu, and a spectacular dinner selection. The environment adapts to time of day, with new lighting, music and general ambience for the evening crowd.

Aqua Lounge and Restaurant is more than a normal hotel restaurant, says Khan.



Aqua Lounge's new bar.

It was created both to serve hotel clients, and to attract the people of the KW community. That's the rationale behind the unique Aqua menu, specializing in seafood, specifically to meet a need in the local market. The GM says, "Kitchener needed a good seafood place."

"It's a little different, a little lighter, with an accent on the healthy," says Khan. "We want people to feel this is a new experience."

Patrons are responding. Khan says that lunchtime brings large numbers of local residents, and the dinner hour is also attracting diners from outside the hotel who come specifically to enjoy the unique dishes on offer at Aqua.

Unlike many hotel restaurants, the 90-seat Aqua is owned and operated as an intrinsic part of the Crowne Plaza – and the management team is keeping a watchful eye on their newest attraction. Khan and his colleagues have been carefully tracking responses to the new restaurant, and they are thrilled with the results. "There has been a tremendous response," he says, with patrons praising everything from décor to service to menu.

"We're not just a hotel restaurant," says Khan. "We're an inside gem." – EX



Renovated Meeting Room



(l to r) Dave Mansell, Paul Maxwell, Jay Taylor and Steve "Soupy" Campbell

NEW MAXWELL'S VENUE WILL HOLD 700: 'NOT A POOL HALL ANY MORE'

Maxwell's Music House has opened in a new location – very close to its old location – and is ready to rock over 700 people at a time. This unique Waterloo venue is located on University Ave., one block east of King in an area populated with university students and music fans.

The result of the move is textbook growth. Growth in music specialities, options and offerings, and also in corporate structure. Not only did founder Paul Maxwell and his partner Dave Mansell expand their operation, but they also took on new partners – Morty's Pub owners Jay Taylor and Steve "Soupy" Campbell.

"It didn't start out anything like a live music venue," Paul Maxwell says about his new location. Originally, Maxwell's idea was to create a music school with rehearsal space, recording and rentals. "Then we decided that we were going to have more of a coffee shop, so in the basement we tried coffees and pastries, with acoustic music... then it morphed. It then became live music, so we made the stage twice as big, then we upgraded the sound system, then we started to build on top of the live music portfolio and that's what we are working on now."

When originally opening in 2008, Maxwell never really thought that his creation would be this big: "We can accommodate over 700 people! I never would have thought that would happen ... it originally it wasn't suppose to be that at all."

Maxwell explains why it went the way it did: simply put, he got to know his clients. He became friends with clients, listened to them when they came in for music lessons and music school. "I just met a lot of people that way. I was always at the office, always at the desk, talking to everybody, learning about them, and I found out after having a client for many years, that he owned the Dooley building."

The building was owned by Chris Tank, owner of Swan Dust Control. "I started talking about it when Dooley's 9000 sq. ft. pool hall was coming to the end of their lease," says Tank. "I went to Paul and asked, 'Do you have any ideas?'"

Maxwell remembers that he "was asked by the Tank family what I would use this space for, and I told them that I would set up a Rock Club, live music and event facility. We started talking about three years ago about the whole idea. Even from that, going forward, it's changed completely in how I envisioned it originally, and now it's become this amazing, large, really unique facility."

Tank's son took drum lessons from Maxwell's Music School and that, as Chris Tank says, was how "I got the connection to music. It's important me and what could we do up there ... but I'm just the landlord now."

"What's funny," says Maxwell, "is that Tank's grandfather started the original Swan business at my old location on 220 King St. That's very ironic, to find out we use to be in their old space."

The challenge of the project – converting a pool hall into a music hall – is not as simple, nor as inexpensive, as it might sound. The project took three years, tied up

in issues that led to Tank needing to defend himself at a OMB hearing – just one of the unexpected expenses. Amongst other costs, they paved their complete lot to facilitate parking requirements that now exceed some of the more familiar venues like it through out Ontario. The whole ordeal has polarized landowners, a reaction Jay Taylor, owner of Morty's Pub, is very familiar with. "It's my neighbourhood, I've been here for thirty years... I got into it [Maxwell's] because it's so different than Morty's. I can reach out to a completely different demographic and do something I'm passionate about – music, live music – and I think we're gonna' touch the soul of Waterloo."

When commenting on why he would go through the pain for a potential tenant, Tank replies he was doing "something for the community, that's the important part of it. Financially, if it works – great!"

Maxwell's Music House incorporated in 2007, when Maxwell was completing his studies at Wilfrid Laurier University. It opened officially in 2008. Dave Mansell was an employee at that point and became a partner later that year. "Mansell ran a lot of the things in the music school and the Rock Star camps," says Maxwell. "I was doing a lot more of the venue portion of the business. But he had a lot of experience touring all over North America and Europe playing as a musician. He has a music degree from UBC. So he had a lot to contribute from a music standpoint, a community standpoint."

As a native of Burlington, Maxwell has found Mansell's "local boy" presence a added value. "I've been in the community for 11 years, Dave was able to contribute a lot to the local economy, culture, you know the local politics, local business practices, so that really helped."

Jay and Soupy are looking after the bar operations while Paul and Dave are looking after the music, engineering, marketing – almost everything else. "So it's a great partnership, we all come from four different corners but we have the same end vision and the same end goal," says Campbell.

Changes to the place included adding 30 water closets, a new floor, new sound system, new HVAC system. "The Tank brothers and Steve Wilkie were generous enough to help us pave the lot; really everything has been changed. It's a totally different venue. Hopefully, people will come out because it's not a pool hall any more." - EX

XQUOTE

"Poverty has been halved because of innovation. Countries are following others that have done it right. Economic miracles start with agriculture, education and then they can participate in the world economy... If you want to pick one thing in an economy, education is a master switch of economic improvement." - Bill Gates

TIM ELLIS - "HANDS ON AND SLEEVES ROLLED UP"



Tim Ellis

Tim Ellis spends about half his time in his new office in Kitchener, and about half with a company in New York City. He's in New York, because his new venture capital enterprise, Cadence Venture Partners, has made its first investment in the American firm. His support for the investment comes from the offices of his partners, based in Toronto.

And just to complete the international package, Ellis recently returned from Australia, where he received an honorary Doctor of Science from the University of Wollongong.

Ellis' interests may take him across borders or half-way around the world, but he continues to be committed to the Region of Waterloo. "Everything I do needs to be related to Waterloo Region," he insists.

So even a deal with Toronto partners and a New York company resonates in the region – Ellis explains that the U.S. company's founders, at this point anonymous, have developed software that will impact across the construction industry. But these innovators are builders, not techies, so Ellis is bringing all the R&D and tech development work right back to a new team in Waterloo region.

Cadence is a very new entity; Ellis, on the other hand, is a veteran of business development. He was with the Accelerator Centre from 2007 to 2014, first as COO and then, as CEO. He left the AC to work with Canadian venture capital star Michael Wekerle (see Exchange cover story this issue), but found it a bad fit, he says. "It just wasn't going to be the model I am interested in."

He parted ways with Wekerle last fall, and was almost immediately approached by Toronto investment bankers Frank Bellotti and Greg Misztela, two of the principals of BG Partners. "When they heard I wasn't with Wekerle any more, they immediately called me." The three formed the new Cadence Venture Partners.

Ellis says his new partners share his vision, to be more than "just another venture capitalist.... None of us wanted to do that."

Instead, he says, "I'm more hands on, I get involved, roll the sleeves up, and fill the gap they need to grow in scale."

That explains his weekly commute to New York, where he is hands-on, three days a week, working with the innovators who received their first investment.

Ellis is the point guy for Cadence investments. He says that he identifies the opportunities, and then his partners – and their in-house experts – do the "back end" including due diligence. But he says that even if the experts come back with a negative report, "If I have a strong gut feeling, I can overrule that due diligence."

The New York investment is their first venture, but there are more developing in the wings. They vary considerably in size: "We've been looking at deals close to \$8 million, and we'll look at things less than \$50,000," says Ellis. He told Exchange that Cadence is now considering investing in two Waterloo Region companies. Because the model demands hands-on involvement by Ellis, he anticipates "two to three deals a year. This is not something I can infinitely scale."

The target market is companies that tend to fall between "angel investor" level and full-out venture capital investment.

Tim is bringing many years of experience to this new enterprise; he says in some ways, he has come "full circle" – except now, he brings much more experience to the table.

He was involved in six start-ups prior to his work at the Accelerator Centre, where he was up close and personal with hundreds more. That's all good experience, he says: "You see the challenges, and the more you see, the more you can prevent."

A key challenge for start-ups, he believes, is that the companies nurtured by the Accelerator Centre or Velocity are given that assistance during very early stage development, but when "you get things to the point that you are generating decent revenues, you're kicked out!"

He contends that, "they need access to the DNA it takes to build a billion-dollar or multi-national company... We don't do such a good job of that."

Thus, Cadence's focus on investing in companies in that "gap" between start-up and maturity.



Tim and Tracy Ellis at the University of Wollongong

Ellis was deeply honoured to receive the honorary doctorate from the University of Wollongong, especially since he was also invited to present the keynote address to the graduating class. The degree acknowledged Ellis' involvement in helping the university develop its own iAccelerate facility – a voluntary task he accepted after being asked to do so by then University of Waterloo President David Johnston, who is now Canada's Governor-General.

Ellis praises the Australians for their achievement: "They accomplished amazing things; they did in one year what it took us five to do." And he's proud to say that this was possible because "they had the benefit of everything we'd done."

That's a clear example of the advantage an enterprise can have when it builds on the experience of others – which is precisely the plus Tim Ellis believes his new Cadence Venture Partners will provide to each of its new investment partners. – Paul Knowles



Kithio Mwanzia

NEW GUELPH CHAMBER CEO HITS THE GROUND RUNNING

Kithio Mwanzia has hit the ground running, and then some. Mwanzia is the new President and CEO of the Guelph Chamber of Commerce; when Exchange interviewed him, about three hours into his first official day on the job, the new President had the poise, the enthusiasm, and the local knowledge of a business leader who had been on the job for months.

That's probably why Chamber board chair Amy Kendall has stated, "We were impressed by his passion and the vision he has for the Guelph Chamber of Commerce."

Mwanzia has similar feelings about the community that has just become his home, talking about the "really dynamic, unique elements" of Guelph.

He says that he believes Guelph – and the surrounding region – has the potential to "be an economic powerhouse of manufacturing." Of course, his timing is good on this issue, as he arrived hard on the heels of the significant announcements at Guelph's leading manufacturer, Linamar (see Watercooler, page 24).

From Kenya to St. Catharines

Mwanzia was born in Kenya; his parents were diplomats, and in his childhood and youth, he lived in several countries, eventually settling down in St. Catharines, Ontario. That's where he did his undergraduate and graduate studies, at Brock University, and where he has worked since graduation.

He has served with the St. Catharines-Thorold Chamber of Commerce, and then with the Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce, most recently as interim CEO. Prior to his term as CEO, he oversaw the Greater Niagara Chamber's public affairs, advocacy and government relations portfolio.

Inside and outside boundaries

Mwanzia talks about the two, somewhat different, constituencies served by business leaders in Guelph. There is the actual municipality itself – the city of Guelph – and Mwanzia has already held productive meetings with the new mayor, Cam Guthrie (see Exchange Magazine, January-February 2015). But the Chamber CEO also looks beyond the boundaries to larger region that includes the cities of Kitchener, Waterloo, and Cambridge to the west, and Milton to the east.

He calls for these regions to "develop partnerships," to build "a better coherence in the region. There is value in that regional identity piece."

He is already well aware of the spotty record of inter-municipality cooperation, but argues that the time and the opportunity have come to change that. He echoes

Guthrie when he says that a heightened level of cooperation among these municipalities can only help everyone involved.

Working with City Hall

Mwanzia believes there can be some genuine cooperation with city hall. "I'm really enthusiastic to have an opportunity to work with the Mayor," he says. "He's quite serious about" the commitment to developing partnerships.

However, Mwanzia also has some specific target markets for the manufacturers of Guelph – food manufacturing, for example, and the supply chain for the auto industry – but he also sees a largely untapped market in other Canadian regions. Mwanzia believes Guelph and area could be a major manufacturing supplier for the oil industry of western Canada, and the mining industry to the north. He points out that neither of these primary industries have developed their own equipment supply infrastructures – they need to tap the manufacturing capability of cities like Guelph. "We have the capacity to take some leadership in that area," he says.

The new Chamber CEO switches gears to talk about another key development area for his organization, and the larger Guelph business community – sports tourism. This does not mean tourism generated by the presence of a major league franchise like the Toronto Blue Jays – in the case of Guelph and similar communities, it means leveraging existing facilities like arenas and playing fields, to attract youth teams from out of town to competitions and tournaments held in Guelph.

The revenue generated from this can be surprising – each person who "is just coming to watch their child play" spends, on average, \$1200 in the host city. That can multiply out to a lot of tourism dollars.

Mwanzia believes that Guelph businesses need to take this opportunity seriously. "How," he asks, "does the business community effectively leverage this?" He says that achieving maximum result in this area once again requires cooperation between the business community and the municipality.

The new President has identified key initial challenges he, and his organization, will face. He talks about the importance of aligning the vision of the business community with the vision of governmental authorities; "government," he says, "exists to allow businesses to become successful." He points to the need for continual communication between the major stakeholders.

But mostly, Mwanzia is excited – excited to be in his new role, and excited to be part of a community he clearly already loves. "Guelph is this wonderful community," he says. "I really look forward to being a part of it." – Paul Knowles

Health Care Provided to Thousands at The Boardwalk



Photo: Dawne Taylor-Gilders, Snapd Kitchener-Waterloo

February marks the first anniversary since the Medical Centre at The Boardwalk on the west side of Kitchener-Waterloo opened to the public. There are now 30 fulltime family doctors practicing in groups of various sizes in the Medical Centre. They are in diverse stages of their careers, with six new medical graduates and some doctors within a few years of retirement who want a smooth transition of care for their patients.

As one of Canada's largest privately-owned buildings dedicated to healthcare, the Medical Centre at The Boardwalk was built in response to community need. With 20,000 people in the region without a family doctor, this landmark medical building attracts new physicians to our community and entices graduating physicians to consider numerous practice opportunities.

With the intent of connecting orphaned patients with GPs accepting patients at the Medical Centre, The Boardwalk implemented a wait list, a year before the Centre opened. To date, over 9,600 families have requested a physician and thousands have been matched. As well, there are six local retiring physicians transferring all of their patients to new grads in the Medical Centre. Doctors are tackling this wait list as aggressively as possible, in chronological sequence, since patients are not accepted on a walk-in basis.

The Medical Centre was designed and dedicated to patient healthcare by providing a number of services in one place. Patients will enjoy the convenience and familiarity of the location. Those visiting the Medical Centre by car will appreciate ample free parking surrounding the building, unique to most medical facilities and hospitals. There are also convenient drop-off zones and covered canopy for vehicles on

the north side.

Grand River Transit now provides five bus routes to The Boardwalk Station and has planned two more in order to meet increasing demand. GRT has provided a bus stop just outside the south door of the Medical Centre.

The Boardwalk Pharmacy opened to assist with continuity of care as its primary goal in the services offered to patients. Owner and registered pharmacist Andrew Awadalla assures patients of the direct line of communication with their doctor for accurate, fast and convenient submission and filling of necessary medication and critical directions.



Clinic owner Keri Martin Vrbanc and her enthusiastic staff at **A Body in Motion Rehabilitation**, in its second location in the region at the Medical Centre, provide physiotherapy, massage therapy, and pelvic health physiotherapy. Their individualized, hands-on therapy in an environment that promotes encouragement and support has been recognized several times with the Record's Reader's Choice Awards, this year winning

first place for Best Physiotherapy Clinic, Massage Therapy Clinic and Best Overall Customer Service. A Body In Motion Rehabilitation has been recently nominated for the Chamber of Commerce Business Excellence Awards.



Oxford Medical Imaging provides x-ray, ultrasound, mammography, vascular studies, and bone density, with three clinics in the KW Region and a total of nine including the GTA. Their innovative diagnostic imaging clinics will exceed your expectations as their highly-trained staff focuses on sensitivity and customer care. Oxford Medical Imaging is an industry leader, providing high quality images with fast and accurate results which are sent to the referring physician within one business day.



TCART Fertility Partners has established itself as an innovative leader in Canadian infertility treatment. TCART's medical Director, Dr Robert Casper, has authored hundreds of papers and delivered countless lectures on scientific advances and research into fertility care, which are employed at TCART, and round the world. TCART moved to KW region when they realized there was a real need for the optimal reproductive care for patients, with the best results and best technology available. They provide a supportive, professional atmosphere where they work to address fertility concerns.

The Boardwalk Occupational Health offers hearing tests, driver's physicals for commercial licenses and employer physicals. Laboratory **CML HealthCare** offers convenient hours from 7am-6:30pm for bloodwork, EKGs and holter monitors. **Toothworks: The Boardwalk Dental** provides care for the whole family for a clean, whiter smile.

With the Medical Centre now open, patients can enjoy their healthcare surroundings in a welcoming atmosphere. As more physicians and specialists open in 2015, the doctor shortage will be reduced and hopefully eliminated. We anticipate that everyone in the region, including those providing and receiving healthcare, is captivated by what is emerging at the Medical Centre at The Boardwalk.

For more information visit www.the-boardwalk.ca/medical-centre



COMPLICATED BRAND

Michael Wekerle brings his larger-than life brand – and his dollars – to Waterloo

by Jon Rohr and Paul Knowles

The CBC Dragon's Den website describes Michael Wekerle as "Mick Jagger meets Warren Buffet". Dolce magazine called him "Bay Street's legendary bad-boy trader." The Toronto Star is more tempered: Wekerle is a "colourful entrepreneur... a high-powered wheeler-dealer."

Even his closest associates find it hard to be low-key when they describe their colleague and friend. Fellow "Dragon", Waterloo Region's own Dave Chilton says Wekerle is "wild" and new employee Brenda Halloran calls him "larger than life."

The latter assessment seems accurate. Wekerle is his own high-flying personal brand, known for expansive – and expensive – gestures, lavish parties, equally lavish tattoos, and over-the-top philanthropy. Anyone who knows him will talk about the frequent occasions when he whips off his shirt – during a rock and roll performance at one of his fund-raisers (or someone else's), or even in the dead of winter on the streets of downtown Toronto.

He also attracted a lot of media attention last September, when his Porsche 918 Spyder, worth just under a million dollars, burst into flames at a gas station in Caledon, while he was filling the tank. No one was hurt – headlines were made. Not an unusual outcome from a Wekerle appearance.

But that's not the sum total – or even the heart – of the story. Because Chilton insists that Wekerle is "a good guy", and that this magazine should absolutely feature him in a story. One of Wekerle's key staff members says he is entirely up front – "there are no secrets with him."



And Halloran – the immediate past Mayor of Waterloo, a woman who inspired more than a few tears when she recently told her story of sexual abuse at an event scheduled as an antidote to Bill Cosby's Kitchener appearance – is Wekerle's biggest fan. You might argue that this comes with the territory – Wekerle has hired Halloran as CEO of his new Waterloo Innovation Network – but given her credentials, it's unlikely she would have signed on unless she was confident about her new colleague.

And that's the real reason for this article – Wekerle, known on Bay Street, an investor in a number of Canadian and American companies and real estate opportunities, has come to Waterloo, buying six former Blackberry properties, and rebranding the group as the Waterloo Innovation Network (or, of course, "WIN").

Great moments, terrible ones

He's here, and it seems inevitable he will make a mark. Nothing he does is without consequences, good or bad. When he parties, some go home inspired, others, a bit queasy. When he talks to you, you'll either walk away

Wekerle is his own high-flying personal brand,
known for expansive – and expensive –
gestures, lavish parties, equally lavish tattoos,
and over-the-top philanthropy.

filled with new ideas, or completely confused by the abundance of information and ideas that have just swamped you. When he gets involved in a new arena of interest, sometimes the other denizens of that environment get uncomfortable.

He's had great moments and terrible ones. His first incarnation was as a

trader on Bay Street, where he was fabulously successful – one credible publication has called him "perhaps the greatest trader Bay has ever seen." In that role, he was a key player in taking the company then known as Research in Motion – and thus played a role in making a lot of people – very wealthy indeed.

But then, everything fell apart, not because of a financial crisis, but because his wife died of a heart attack, leaving Wekerle with young children. He crashed – and the stories about his behavior from that period are not pretty.

Rise of a phoenix

But, perhaps inevitably, this is not a story of rise and fall, but of a phoenix-like resurrection. He started a new venture, which he owns with partner Henry Kneis, in 2012. That merchant bank

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Michael Wekerle introduces his new Waterloo Innovation Network CEO, Brenda Halloran.

invests in late-stage technology and other ventures.

He's also into real estate investments; and he's a partner with movie star Mark Wahlberg in the Wahlburger's restaurant chain.

And now, he is building his investment portfolio, week by week, as one of the four Dragons on the popular CBC TV show.

A recent show pretty much sums up Wek's approach – lots of brain power, but even more emotion.

One pitch was from a couple who have developed a portable device for washing dogs – useful after a romp in the fields or woods, before the dog is loaded back into the car. Wekerle and two other Dragons – including Chilton – offered to partner on the investment deal. They then, as is usual, walked over to shake the hands of their new partners. Except Wekerle also wanted to shake the paw of the Black Lab the inventors had with them. "He doesn't do that," said the owner, but the supremely confident Wek ignored the advice, the dog snarled, barked and reared, and Wek beat a quick retreat. It was classic "Wek" – bold, assertive, a risk-taker, heart over head..

Later in the show, several of Canada's Olympic medal winners, members of the Canadian Freestyle Ski Association, made a pitch, asking for a lot of money in return for a sponsorship. There was not a strong business case – this was closer to philanthropy. The

other four Dragons expressed all their admiration for the athletes, and passed. Wekerle gave them \$2 million over the next four years. That, too, says much about Waterloo's newest corporate citizen.

In an exclusive interview with Exchange magazine, Wekerle explained why he has come to Waterloo.



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"Larger than life" Michael Wekerle.

"We [in Canada] have to build an economy outside of resources. We have to build an economy outside of residential real estate. We are a small populace on a large planet, but we do have more computer engineers coming out of the

Kitchener-Waterloo area than the whole state of California."

That inspires Wekerle's vision... to development an Innovation Network that will keep graduates here, that will provide facilities for start-ups, second-

stage companies, and that will attract international corporations to Waterloo Region.

He's purchased six Blackberry buildings, which are near one another but not always contiguous, and has now commissioned designers to develop a plan for that entire district. The development, he says, will go beyond business offices and R&D sites to include condos, restaurants, and hotels. "If you build it," he says, "they shall come."

Halloran told Exchange, "Mike Wekerle is an investor with a strong belief in Canada and in innovation and technology. He wants to put Waterloo on the map.... He wants to create an innovation village feeling."

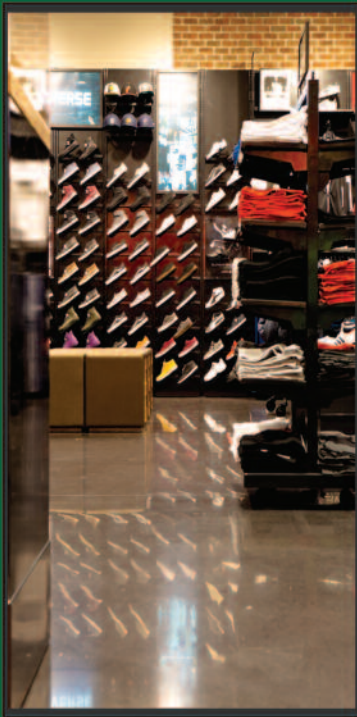
Nothing Wekerle plans is ever on a small scale. In fact, one of his team members says that "He's macro, the rest of us are micro."

So it's not surprising that he is less interested in talking about the individual buildings in the new WIN, and more



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focused on a very big picture, indeed. He told Exchange, "I'm going to build a waterway to the world. Water is like money, you can't hold it in your hand, but you can direct it. You have to channel it in such a way that you have social responsibility, economic responsibility, sustainability, and longevity."

But while he is a huge supporter of charities, he knows the difference: "We're not here to be a charity... we're here to make money. As you make money, you have a future, you have innovation, you have return on capital."

He sees Canada – and specifically Waterloo Region – as a very attractive locale. "Any investor wants to invest in a country that has democracy, that has freedom of speech, freedom of innovation and a multi-cultural society that has the ability to take the best in the world."

"A lot better than me"

The announcement of Brenda Halloran's appointment as CEO of the Waterloo Innovation Network – her new post was unveiled in Toronto, on the main stage of the Cantec Investment Conference – clearly came as a surprise – to say the least – to the business community in Waterloo Region. Wekerle, though, argues that it was no-brainer. He says, "You make a difference based on reciprocity, generosity, honesty, and empathy. Brenda has all those skill sets."

Wekerle outlines his philosophy of building a successful enterprise: "To make something very, very successful, it's about empowering people, acknowledging their skill sets, making them independent and accountable – give them the ability to make the decision.... Brenda is an advocate for her city, for women's rights, for the rights of single mothers, for Canada on a global basis."

And he adds, "I wouldn't lie to you... she's a lot better than me. Always hire people who are better than you."

Halloran, for her part, is sold – sold







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Wekerle on Halloran: "She's a lot better than me."

on the concept of WIN, sold on its potential impact for Waterloo, and sold on Wekerle.

She told Exchange, "I'm very, very excited about the opportunity.... to expand our global brand as a tech giant, not only as a city, but as a

region."

She added, "Michael and I are very excited about the opportunities to work together. We both have great contacts. We share a vision. He and I have great plans for what is going to happen at the WIN."

She believes she is the right person for the job. "I have global connections, I signed agreements all over the world to promote Waterloo Region. I couldn't be in a better place for me, and for Waterloo Region and for Canada. We intend to attract global businesses to Waterloo, to attract thousands of graduating students, start-ups, second-stage start-ups, large corporations."

She believes her new company will develop "a global entity that we can really showcase."

"Silicon Valley north"

Wekerle agrees that the time is right for Waterloo. He says he came here, this time around, first of all because "I like Waterloo."

And he suggests that he may have been more aware of the potential that others, 20 years ago. "I took Blackberry public in 1995. No one knew Waterloo." Now, he says, they do. "You have great music, you have great art, history, Com-

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munitech, the Accelerator Centre, you're creating a difference here."

David Chilton says, "It's why Mike is in town that is fascinating. He sees Waterloo as Silicon Valley north... maybe more."

Wekerle points to one of the tech giants that is creating an ever-increasing footprint in the community. "Google just [initially] took a small space, and now they're building a massive facility in the Tannery. Why? Because they see the viability of Kitchener-Waterloo."

The development will go beyond business offices and R&D sites to include condos, restaurants, and hotels.

He sees Waterloo Region as a great place for investment. "Two years ago, I walked around Waterloo. I knew this was coming." And he had a vision for WIN. His colleagues and senior staff make it clear that, while he is the visionary and big-idea guy, his visions come in a detailed and pragmatic package. Says one Toronto-based staffer, "He's his own consultant"

Open heart and wallet

As evidenced by his open heart – and wallet – to the Canadian skiers, Wekerle does give back, and with a flare. He has created events like Wekfest and Wektoberfest – large-scale, over-the-top parties that raise funds – and likely see him performing with a rock band, or displaying his tattoos.

His donations go to an interesting mix of causes. He is the biggest individual donor to Toronto's prestigious Opera Atelier – yes, it's an actual opera company.

He's a deeply involved single parent, with five biological children, and one adopted son – his kids range in age from senior public school to college. His own experiences – as a parent, and as a person who has known the chal-

lenges of depression – are evident in his ongoing support of Sick Kids Hospital, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Seeds of Hope, and the YWCA, among other causes.

Halloran says that Wekerle's compassion takes place on an individual basis, too. "If he sees a homeless man, he sits down and talks with him. Mike helps people in all different areas."

She adds, "I highly respect the man. I think he's a lot of fun. He looks at the

world for his own lens, and it's a good lens... He's a good example. I think people will learn a lot from Mike. In this community, I hope he is going to be a bright shining example of being generous and kind to those around him."

Halloran could not be more positive about her new colleague, or about their new venture. She says, "We've got lots going on here... We're looking at a 10-year vision. We're just at Stage One – wait until you see Stage 10!" **X**



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WLU President Max Blouw, with Dean of School of Business and Economics Dean Michael Kelly and ardent supporter Bill Webb.

A GRADUATE OF WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY has donated \$1 million to the School of Business and Economics. **Bill Webb**, and his wife, **Dr. Agnes Wong**, made the donation to support the construction of the university's new Global Innovation Exchange Building.

"In many ways, Laurier is a best-in-class institution with top-notch students. As such, we believe that it is important for Laurier to also have the infrastructure that goes with being a best-in-class school," said Webb.

Webb, who graduated from Laurier in 1986, is executive vice president

and chief investment officer at **Gluskin Sheff and Associates**.

GUELPH AUTO PARTS MANUFACTURER LINAMAR has announced that it will create 1,200 new jobs, all based in Guelph. According to Linamar CEO **Linda Hasenfratz**, the jobs will be created in several new programs, some already "in launch mode", some planned for the next two or three years.

The federal government will provide \$50.7 million in a repayable loan, while the province has pledged up to \$50.25 million in a one-time grant.

Linamar will make an investment of \$400 million. The company will develop a number of new programs, invest in research and development, and purchase new equipment. Jobs will be created across the spectrum, from semi-skilled to skilled to support staff to management.

Key to the expansion is the creation and production of new, more environ-

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mentally-friendly transmissions, engines and drive lines for the automotive sector. The company has a new Guelph facility, opened in the last two years, which will now go to full capacity; there is also a second plant, which ceased operations in 2009, which will now be refitted for the new programs.

In the first three quarters of 2014, global vehicle production increased by 3.5%, while Linamar sales were up a whopping 20%.

Currently, Linamar employs 19,000 people at 45 plants worldwide. Of those, 8,300 people work in Guelph.

EVENTASTIC, A WATERLOO STARTUP revolutionizing online ticketing, is building on its local success and expanding to



Adam Quigley

national and international markets in 2015. Since its soft launch in 2013, Eventastic has graduated from the **Accelerator Centre**, relocated into its own local office, and the site has hosted almost 10,000 events from small parties to large conferences on unique venues, such as the Queen Mary in Long Beach California.

"We intend on doubling in the coming 12 months through our devote users and a unique B2B SaaS Model," says Eventastic's Founder and President **Randall Bird**.

Adam Quigley was recently hired as Eventastic's new CEO. Quigley has decades of experience in the business world, working for HSBC Bank Canada Inc., TD Canada Trust, Manulife Financial, and the Bank of Montreal; he also has a Bachelor of Commerce degree from Royal Roads University and a Marketing Diploma from Conestoga College.

THE UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO has named **Sandra G. Banks**, CEO of The Royal Agricultural Winter Fair, as vice-president, university relations and **Stephen Watt**, professor of computer science at Western University, as dean of the Faculty of Mathematics.

MENNONITE SAVINGS AND CREDIT UNION and **Oikocredit Canada** have teamed up to launch the Oikocredit Global Impact GIC. For the first time ever, people in Ontario will be able to invest in a guaranteed, RSP-eligible investment aimed at lifting people out of poverty in low-income countries.

When members invest in the GIC, MSCU purchases shares in Oikocredit that match the principal amount, thereby providing funds to support impoverished communities across low-income countries.

NAVTECH ANNOUNCED THE APPOINTMENT of **Shawn Mechelke**, as Vice President of SaaS Products and Business Development. He brings to Navtech over 20 years of aviation experience working

in both airline and software industries. Mechelke will oversee Navtech's SaaS products which include Navtech Flight Plan, Crew Planning and Aircraft Performance. In addition, Shawn will be responsible for developing external partnerships and channel and merger and acquisition strategies in support of the overall business plan.

JANE MITCHELL HAS BEEN ACCLAIMED to a fifth one-year term as chair of the **Grand River Conservation Authority**. Mitchell, who represents the Region of Waterloo on the board, was first elected to the position in 2011.

ST. BENEDICT CATHOLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL in Cambridge has won the \$100,000 **AVIVA community Fund** national prize for the school's "Heart of the Community" project. The money will enable the school community to provide fitness alternatives and enhancements that promote the health and wellness of our community.

The proposal includes a 150 meter stone dust trail with several fitness stations along the route; a multi-sport electronic scoreboard that can be accessed and programmed to meet each club's and school's needs; and new stadium seating.

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of small-scale Asian farmers will further expand worldwide, thanks to more than \$4.2 million in federal support. The project involves innovative packaging developed in part by Guelph researchers using nanotechnology to improve the shelf life of mangoes, a major fruit crop in much of the world.

Already, the technology has helped to significantly reduce post-harvest losses in Sri Lanka and India. Poor storage meant that farmers routinely lost up to 40 per cent of their crops, worth upwards of \$800 million a year. The new technology has also boosted per-acre revenue.

New funding support from the **International Development Research Centre** and Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada will allow researchers to broaden this successful initiative to Kenya, Tanzania, and Trinidad and Tobago. Researchers will also look at other fruit — bananas, grapes, papaya, nec-

tarines and berries — and investigate ways to commercialize the technologies.

“Our global perspective aims to reduce post-harvest losses, which are estimated at 1.3 billion tonnes worldwide,” said project leader **Jay Subramanian**, a professor in Guelph’s Department of Plant Agriculture. “This is a key strategy to enhance food security across several regions of the world.”

THE CO-OPERATORS HAS MADE a \$100,000 donation to the **Wilfrid Laurier School of Business and Economics**. The national co-operative provided the gift to supporting the study of alternative governance models.

MOODY’S INVESTORS SERVICE HAS RATED the Region of Waterloo with the highest credit rating possible for the 15th year in a row. The Region’s Aaa rating reflects prudent financial management, a low interest burden and a

proven track record for positive operating outcomes.

The Region currently has an average level of debt, low interest burden and a healthy level of liquidity compared to its Canadian peers. The top credit rating was awarded for the following strengths: a diverse and robust local economy; consistent, positive operating results; strong management practices; and a mature and supportive institutional framework.

“Maintaining this rating for so long is a reflection of the Region’s consistently sound financial management and forward-looking budgets,” said **Ken Seiling**, Regional Chair.

“This rating means the Region can borrow money at a better rate and pay less interest,” said **Craig Dyer**, Chief Financial Officer for the Region.

THE REGION OF WATERLOO and Area Municipalities are looking for members of the community interested in applying for a position on the Inaugural **Waterloo**

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Region Economic Development Corporation Board of Directors. With the Waterloo Region Economic Development Strategy now complete, work is underway to establish the new WREDC. Deadline for applications are due by February 25, 2015.

A statement from organizers says,

"The Selection Committee is looking for people interested in forming the first Board of Directors of the WREDC. In 2015, the Board will launch the new organization and hire its first chief executive officer. Those interested in applying for the board can visit www.wreds.ca to find out more and submit an online application."

The WREDC will play a major role in implementing the new WREDS, which was approved in principle throughout summer 2014 and is now complete. It provides a roadmap for local and regional government, as well as a broad range of community stakeholders, to cooperatively support the ongoing economic prosperity of Waterloo Region. It includes a vision and several goals and strategic objectives that will be realized through a range of specific action items over the short and long term. Members of the community are invited to visit www.wreds.ca to find out more about

this strategy and implementation plan.

"The WREDS provides a common focus for all of the economic development partners in Waterloo region, which will help this community support existing businesses and attract new investment", said **Gerry Remers**, President and COO of Christie Digital Systems Canada, Inc., and Chair of the WREDS Advisory Committee. "The new WREDC and its new Board of Directors will play a key role in coordinating the implementation of the Economic Development Strategy."

Each of these initiatives are being co-ordinated jointly by the Region of Waterloo, the Cities of Cambridge, Kitchener and Waterloo, the Townships of North Dumfries, Wellesley, Wilmot and Woolwich and Canada's Technology Triangle Inc. and have been reviewed by an advisory committee of community leaders and other key stakeholders. **X**

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Kitchener Rangers #72 Ryan MacInnis and #20 Nick Magyar flank Don Cameron and the Potato Blitz mascot Spuddy at the kick-off of the 2015 event.

a PEI native who came to play right wing for the Kitchener Rangers in 1997-98. His family was involved in a major potato operation on Prince Edward Island, “in a little community called O’Leary”.

Harris’s family sent 1000 pounds of potatoes up from Prince Edward Island to “kick off the whole event”. Harris became a schoolteacher and hockey coach. Cameron adds quite meaningfully, “Not everyone makes the NHL, but they always make a success of their life.”

Cameron, who is coming up to his 60th year in broadcasting, has this to say about his choice of career: “It’s been a lot of fun... there is not a lot of heavy lifting and you get to meet a lot of pretty good people. When you get to do something that you really care about, each day becomes a little bit different.”

In the past Don has been Honorary Chair for Bowling for Dollars, “but they changed that complexion quite a bit. I do some volunteer work at the church, and with the youth. Also, I set up tables for seniors’ bridge club every week, at the community centre on Queen Street.”

Cameron reflects that there are “so many other things that you touch that you don’t really consider them as something I must do. It’s just something you do because sometimes our name carries more weight than we realize.”

Don Cameron is the face of the Potato Blitz. The name came about because Cameron does the play-by-play for the Kitchener Rangers and 570 News. As an additional tie to the spud, Cameron is also a native of Prince Edward Island, thus the affection for “potato involvement”. PEI spuds, the red ones, are a major export.

“They just needed a front name,” Cameron tells, “to put with the game, between the Rangers and who ever they’re playing on that particular night when they collect the money and the potatoes. So I said ‘Why not?’ It’s not exactly a lot of work for me to do. So that’s how it got started. It’s an honour for me and I think it’s also a situation where, as I said, it’s not that much work. We all have to be involved in the community and if there is anything that I can do in that nature, then I’ll do it. If it helps in anyway, I certainly can’t hinder, but if it helps, then I’m only to happy to do it.”

Cameron, who has been associated with the Rangers since they arrived here in 1963, says there were a number of years where Cameron didn’t do the play by play – another radio station did – but when you count them out, Cameron says “I’ve been calling the games’ play-by-play for over 45 years”.

Cameron’s mantra is to help out where and when you can. As a local radio personality, he has seen and experienced amazing change and evolution in his industry.

“Media has certainly changed over the years,” says Cameron. “It’s dramatically changed, but it can still be the same fun thing.” Cameron feels it’s “more difficult for the youngster coming in now-a-days.” Radio is controlled by a couple of major corporations, “so, where you could move around and try to gain experience, you don’t get that now because many of these companies operate three or four of these stations with one staff.”

Cameron wouldn’t change a thing about his career. “It’s great career, there is no question about it. I would concentrate on the sports and news side of the ledger but there still those who prefer the musical end of it. And if they do – that’s fine.” He encourages colleagues to get involved in community causes: “There are so many things that are available for people to get involved in.”

Cameron has worked with The House of Friendship for almost two decades. He says they “really do a remarkable job, I mean here we are in the dead of winter when it’s very, very cold and there are a lot of people that we don’t realize who need a lot of help. Sometime it’s not their fault... and it’s places like the House of Friendship, the type of place where maybe they can get a boost up again. In the course of a year they may need as many as 300,000 pounds of potatoes for the many functions that they do.”

Needless to say, Cameron is a big supporter of House of Friendship. “Everybody thinks House of Friendship is just a



Don Cameron with House of Friendship's John Neufeld.

gathering place for those who are homeless and need a place to sleep. But there are many, many other functions that they do within the community that require those three hundred thousand pounds of potatoes."

The Potato Blitz is a great start for

the House of Friendship. Not only does it communicate a community need but it also serves to inspire many volunteers. Neufeld says clearly that "Ranger fans get it". This annual event brings out a wonderful side of hockey fans. "It says something about the

Rangers' fans, and the kind of folks they are"

Neufeld says the "potato is something all of us can relate to, it's a humble food staple for all us."

Most of the potatoes collected end up in the House of Friendship food hamper program run out of their 807 Guelph Street location. Neufeld says that, "last year that program, which is open every day of the week, probably served over 20,000 individuals and did about 30,000 food hampers." Clearly the need for potatoes is great, and there is good reason why potatoes are so popular – they have an impressive ruggedness, storage quality and nutritional value.

The bulk of the potatoes go to that program. But the donated spuds will also be put to use throughout all the House of Friendship programs. "Needs have been increasing" says Neufeld. "With volunteers like Cameron, those needs will continue to be met." X

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THE HUMBLE TUBER

House of Friendship goes through a whole lotta spuds

BY JON ROHR



Don Cameron

Potatoes are both nutritious and delicious. Civilizations have exploited various attributes of the potato. Incan units of time were correlated to how long it took for a potato to cook to its various consistencies. The indigenous people of Peru developed the first method for dehydrating potatoes, thus permitting the production of flour and assorted products.

Twenty years ago, a Waterloo Region man named John Lambert dressed up in a burly burlap outfit, stood in front of the Waterloo Beechwood Zehrs, and asked people to make donations or give a bag of potatoes. His project was the impetus for what is now known as the Potato Blitz.

"People kind of just looked at him and said, 'If you're that crazy enough to stand there in the cold doing this, we're going to support you!'" said John Neufeld, Executive Director of House of Friendship, in an Exchange interview. "That first year," Neufeld continued, "Lambert collected between 2000 and 2500 pounds of potatoes. Twenty years later, the Blitz is expected to bring in over 300,000 pounds." It's a bit of an

understatement to call that a significant increase.

The February campaign focuses "on sharing the gift of food", through the collection of potatoes and donations. The event has three major collection opportunities, all hosted by the House of Friendship. First is the Don Cameron Potato Night (at a Kitchener Rangers hockey game), followed by the Super Market Blitz and, closing off the campaign, the highly anticipated Community Potato Lunch.

The House of Friendship accepts food and money donations all year long; however, the buzz that the Blitz ignites, generates the excitement, and that helps set the tone for a brand new year of fundraising and re-energized team of collectors.

Exchange caught up to sports announcer Don Cameron, and asked just how this kick-off event came to be known as the Don Cameron Potato night. "It was very simple to tie it into the Kitchener Rangers," commented Cameron. "I think the first ones that were performed was put around a player with the Rangers at the time." Cameron is speaking about Darcy Harris. Harris was

"We all have to be involved in the community and if there is anything that I can do in that nature, then I'll do it"
- Don Cameron

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