



MELODY WREN, SPECIAL TO THE MERCURY

The Guelph Public Library's new chief librarian, Kitty Pope, has already made changes at the institution. Among them is welcoming people to enjoy their lunches within the new "living room" of its main branch.

Fresh chapter for local library

New boss has already made several changes since she started seven weeks ago

Melody Wren,
Special to the Mercury

GUELPH — When Kitty Pope and her husband, a glass-blower, came to Guelph to check it out and explore the possibility of moving here, an after-dinner experience helped convince them to come.

They had dinner downtown, went for a sidewalk stroll and were struck by an atmosphere they found pleasing.

"People were walking their dogs. There was life and activity," said Pope.

After savouring the scene, Pope said her husband, Ross McIntosh, told her: "We can live here, honey."

A former Ontario resident, Pope is the chief executive officer of the Guelph Public Library. She came from East Peoria, Ill., where she worked as that community library's executive director for seven years. She was in charge of 250 academic, school, public and special libraries in that capacity. An energetic person, she remains an adjunct lecturer at San Jose State University, developing curriculum and teaching online for its School of Library and Information Sciences. She was also one of the first women hired by the sheik of Abu Dhabi, where she worked for three years. During the Gulf War, she wrote speeches for him.

Pope said she considers the Guelph Public Library Board "courageous" in deciding that the institution needed change and should hire an external candidate for its latest chief librarian.

"I feel very lucky. The board and staff are totally ready for some new ideas. I find there is nothing more invigorating than change and new ideas," she said.

Pope has made several changes in the seven weeks since she started the job. Ask at the desk about self-contained audio books called "Playaways." Look for staff member Chris Raso roaming the stacks with an iPad to help you locate books using the library's e-catalogue. Ask for help loading books on your e-reader from the E-reader task force; then sit in the new main branch "living room" and enjoy your find in comfort.

"I placed a lot of stock in first impression," Pope said of expanded seating section at the front of the branch.

The large living room, with added standing lamps and area rugs, is inviting. More space had been found for the area by moving the books away from the entrance turnstiles.

"There are the same number of chairs. But now it's always being used to read, eat lunch, and wait for the internet," she said.

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KITTY POPE,
CHIEF LIBRARIAN

You can even enjoy a drink or snack in the living room now.

That changed after Pope saw an elderly woman sitting in the lobby drinking coffee. Concerned that she must be cold, Pope asked her why she wasn't sitting inside.

The woman pointed to a "No food, no drink" sign. So, Pope said, she tore it down and welcomed her inside to enjoy her coffee.

She encourages people to visit the library at noon hour to eat their lunch and check out books.

Another innovation is Pope's blog — at www.kittysonapositive-note.wordpress.com. It also reveals her enthusiasm for people enjoying the library in new-to-Guelph ways.

Pope said she looks forward to working with the library board, staff and other stakeholders to keep the development of a new main library branch a municipal priority.

She said the vision is "to design a library that will last 50 years — a challenge as we don't know what the trends will be."

She said the building's design "must be open and flexible to new technology which cannot be predicted," but the library is working so the project is ready to go forward "once the money is found."

In a post this month on her blog, she writes that she has heard clearly a Baker Street location "would revitalize the northeast end of Wyndham Street and serve as the cornerstone for community and business development in the area."

The post also asserts: "A new main library would create real partnership opportunities with community agencies, educational organizations, and the private sector."

"The GPL main library has simply outlived its effectiveness. For this and many, many more reasons, we are working toward a new main library in downtown Guelph."

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Obesity solutions aren't simple

Local symposium tackles growing health problem

Thana Dharmarajah, Mercury staff

GUELPH — Eating less and exercising more isn't the solution to obesity, says Dr. Sean Wharton.

The internal medicine specialist addressed a group of nutritionists, dietitians, clinicians and students at Saturday's Human Health and Nutritional Sciences Symposium on Obesity at the University of Guelph.

People have the perception that obesity is an individual's fault and attribute it to their lack of willpower, he said, which isn't entirely the case.

"An obese person who exercises may not lose weight," he said. "All the evidence is against exercise."

Wharton said he found obese people ate less and when they did eat, they ate meals.

He said people should eat when hungry, but they should snack, rather than consume an entire meal. They should be eating six times a day, he said.

He runs one of the only publicly funded medical centres devoted to overweight and obese medical problems in Ontario. The Wharton Medical Clinic has locations in Hamilton and Burlington.

Wharton said when people don't eat, they are losing energy. Eating properly can include eliminating juice and pop, increasing fibre and consuming more fruit.

Dr. Anna Issakoff-Meller, a local family doctor, said she also once believed that exercise and limiting calorie intake made a difference.

"I quietly did think they were lazy and not determined to lose weight," said the family doctor, who listened to Wharton's talk.

In the last couple years, Issakoff-Meller said she'd changed her thinking to realize it's more about how people have been told to eat.

Within her practice, she tells people to reduce their carbohydrates much lower than what the Canada Food Guide recommends.

Although there is talk in the United States about protecting obese people from discrimination in the workplace, University of Guelph student Jennifer Ronan-Vander Veen doesn't want to see a society that condones obesity.

"Nobody should be treated differently, but it's also not a healthy standard," she said.

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Church group to build school in Nicaragua

Calvary Baptist members return after constructing church three years ago

Thana Dharmarajah, Mercury staff

GUELPH — Kids on streets begging for money. Malnourished horses pulling people along in carts.

These images of poverty blew Ed Schaefer away when he was in Nicaragua three years ago as part of a team from the Calvary Baptist Church building a church.

"In Canada, we have it so good," he said.

Schaefer is now part of another team of 17, largely composed of Calvary church members, heading to an area just outside the city of Chinandega from Jan. 29 to Feb. 13 to help build a school.

The building's foundation is to be laid by the time the team arrives next week.

The church group has raised \$14,000 to help build the school, which is expected to house about 65 students from kindergarten to

Grade 2.

"The people are not looking for a handout, but a hand up," Schaefer said.

He said instead of asking for food, Nicaraguans would rather ask for a tractor to work their fields to grow food.

There isn't any social assistance available for the Nicaraguans, Schaefer said.

"If you lose your job, you better go out and get another one," he said. "If you lose your arm, you hope other people in your family will be able to work."

Schaefer said he knew they needed to return and do more in Nicaragua. Pan Missions Canada helped the church identify the area that was most in need of the school, he said.

"It is something that is able to help for generations to come."

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Organic movement has come a long way, local farmer says

Melanie Karalis, Mercury staff

GUELPH — A local organic farmer said when he finds himself thinking that nothing has changed for the organic movement, he reminds himself just how far it has come.

"Organic is a household term now and isn't looked as a hippie fringe movement anymore," Gavin Dandy said. Dandy is the farm director of Everdale, an organic farm in Hillsburgh that focuses on education.

Dandy will be a part of this year's Guelph Organic Conference that runs Jan. 27 to 30. The conference will mark its 30th year of promoting organic living.

Dandy will lead a workshop about organic certificate programs, an emerging education issue of the organic community. Dandy is co-ordinator of the Everdale organic certificate program that trains new farmers how to grow food organically. The intensive program combines curriculum learning and hands-on training at the farm.

"A new demographic is interested in farming. We have people in their 20s and 30s that didn't grow up on the farm, coming from the city, in our program. It's a different shift," Dandy said.

In the Jan. 29 workshop, Dandy will show a documentary that followed the Everdale organic certificate program last summer.

"Organic farms are biologically diverse — a human-made ecosystem," Dandy said. "Corporate megafarms that use methods like monocropping don't mimic nature. They are a recipe for disaster."

He said that, unlike those corporate farms that focus on crops, organic farming supports the environment as well, like adding wetlands and forest areas.

"If we change how we grow and sell food, we can change the world."

For more information about the Guelph Organic Conference, visit www.guelphorganicconf.ca.

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Mount Forest pharmacy robbed

Mercury staff

GUELPH — Wellington County OPP is investigating a Mount Forest robbery.

Around 5 p.m. at the Shoppers Drug Mart in Mount Forest, police said, a man jumped behind the pharmacist's drug counter and removed prescription opiates, which included morphine, contin, kadian and meslon.

The suspect was last seen fleeing on foot east near the TD Canada Trust Bank. Police searched the area but didn't find anyone. The suspect is described as a white man, 25-35 years old, with dirty blond hair, clean shaven and about five-foot-five to five-foot-eight-inches tall. At the time of the robbery, he was wearing a dark blue canvas winter coat, a black wig with pony tail and large glasses. No weapon was seen at the robbery.

Anyone with information on this incident is to call Mount Forest OPP at 519-323-3130. If you wish to remain anonymous, call Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477.