

real leaders

special edition

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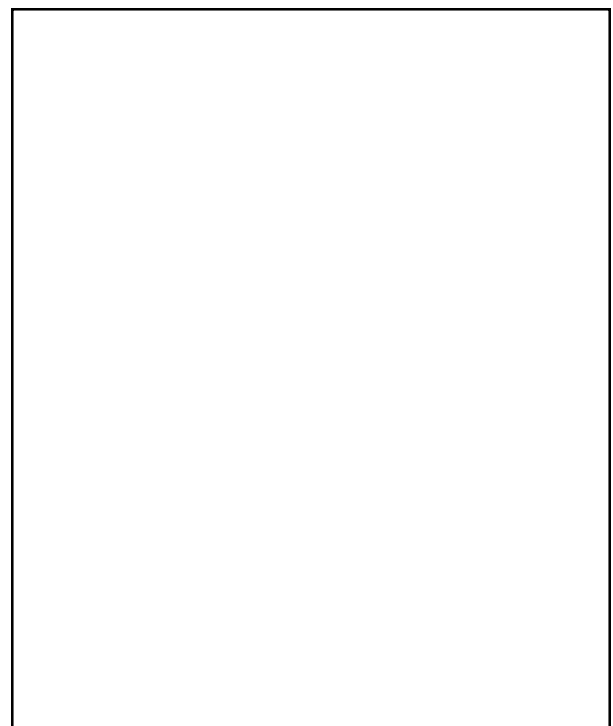
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*This special edition of 'real leaders' profiles three individuals who are involved in Opportunities 2000: **Pat Henderson, Jim Gordon and Frank Adamson**. Opportunities 2000 is an innovative community-based program to reduce poverty in the Waterloo Region of Southern Ontario. Working with a network of community partners, Opportunities 2000 has developed numerous initiatives to enhance the employment prospects of people living on low incomes. Its aim is to significantly improve the income levels and the social circumstances of 2,000 households by the end of the year 2000. Opportunities 2000 is a project of the Lutherwood Community Opportunities Development Association (CODA).*

Pat Henderson

As co-chair of OP2000's Leadership Roundtable, **Pat Henderson** is putting her expertise in leadership development to good use. The Leadership Roundtable includes representatives from the business, community and government sectors as well as individuals with low incomes. The Roundtable guides OP2000's overall poverty reduction strategy, providing expert advice on all aspects of the project. It also mobilizes support for the project throughout the community.

The founder of her own consulting and training firm, Pat Henderson and Associates Inc., Pat was a natural choice to co-chair this group. Paul Born, former Executive Director of CODA, went



Pat Henderson is co-chair of OP2000's Leadership Roundtable.

to Pat for advice when CODA was first thinking of establishing a strategic alliance with Lutherwood, a local nonprofit agency with a variety of human service programs including a youth employment service. Pat performed a feasibility study and helped the two organizations set up the partnership. "Since CODA was doing work on employment opportunities for adults, Lutherwood and CODA were a natural match," Pat affirms.

The alliance was one of the first mergers of social service agencies in Ontario. "The cross-

fertilization and enrichment of staff that occurred as a result of the consolidation of employment services was amazing. The partnership has become a model for other communities across the country,” Pat remarks.

After having provided the initial consultation, Pat continued to work with Lutherwood CODA in various ways. At Paul’s request, she sat on the Advisory Committee when OP2000 applied for the Trillium Foundation’s Caring Communities Award – “which we won!” Pat says proudly.

She is also keenly aware that OP2000 is having an important impact on Waterloo Region. “The initiative has evolved from a coordinated program of building capacity organization by organization, sector by sector, to a poverty reduction *movement* which has momentum and validity.”

Pat believes that the Leadership Roundtable is playing a key role in building leadership within the community because it is utilizing the vast networks of its members to raise awareness, bring together unlikely partners and encourage action. “There is credibility and integrity in the involvement of community leaders in any effort to improve circumstances and Opportunities 2000 is capitalizing on this involvement,” Pat notes.

She explains: “Through my work, I had initiated healthy community movements all across Canada, but I didn’t feel that I had done enough in my own area. I see my involvement with OP2000 as a wonderful opportunity to give back to my community.”

Pat has always been avidly involved in helping to keep her community healthy. She was Executive Director and CEO of Freeport Hospital for 11 years, during which time the hospital tripled its size and mandate, and was restructured around a patient-focussed paradigm. Her expertise allowed her to lead the organization through a highly successful quality improvement journey.

Randy Peltz first met Pat as a graduate student in gerontology at the University of Waterloo. Pat believed in establishing a solid relationship between local universities and the hospital, and Randy worked at the hospital as part of an internship program. “Pat has a wonderful ability to inspire people. She is well known in the Waterloo Region for her ability to drive beyond what is expected,” Randy comments.

Pat felt that her role at the hospital was to make a difference for the elderly, a segment of society that she feels has not been treated with enough respect. “My most fulfilling moment at the hospital occurred when we were transferring patients to the new Freeport building. I was pushing one woman in her wheelchair and showing her the new facility and she said: ‘Finally, I don’t feel like a second-class citizen anymore.’”

Lisa Vollmar, now Deputy Chief and Director of Corporate Services for the Guelph Police Department, used to work with Pat at Freeport Hospital. Lisa explains that Pat always did her best to make the residents feel like first-class citizens. “Pat saw that in order to make the residents comfortable in the hospital, it was crucial that we give them as many options and choices as possible. For example, we let patients choose the time at which they would be bathed, and we built kitchenettes on each floor of the new building so that residents could make a snack when they wanted.” Pat and her staff also implemented a variety of activities for the seniors, like a supervised pub night where they could socialize and play board games. “We wanted the seniors to feel that they were a part of a community,” Lisa explains.

When asked to comment upon her intense passion for quality improvement, Pat emphasizes her belief that organizations thrive when they invest in the development and involvement of their most valuable asset – their people. “It is the downfall of many leaders to believe that the organization

is ‘theirs.’ When they leave, they turn around and realize that no one is following them. It’s vital that leaders realize the importance of giving the organization to the employees.”

In order to empower her staff, Pat organized training sessions to teach her employees how to work effectively with others. Workshops included the development of listening, negotiation and mediation skills. “We typically do not receive formal training to develop these types of skills,” Pat explains. “It’s important that staff are able to look at a process that needs improvement and figure out how to make the improvements themselves.” And Pat was learning along with her staff.

Lisa comments: “Pat is indeed a visionary. Not only is she a visionary, but she manages to accomplish what she envisions. That, in itself, is a big feat.”

Pat explains that her priority after she retired from her position at Freeport Hospital was to devote her time to her family. Her management consulting firm was established in 1995 as a family-owned business and her partner is none other than her youngest daughter, Tracey. Pat explains: “It’s a perfect partnership. I am her mentor when it comes to facilitation and consulting techniques, and she has coached me on the wonders of integrating business and technology.” Services of Pat and Tracey’s firm include motivational speeches, workshops, customized training and consulting on all aspects of organizational effectiveness.

Pat feels that the Opportunities 2000 initiative will have a positive effect on future generations. As a community leader, she lives by the following adage: *Tell people there is poverty and they will forget. Show people poverty and they will remember. Involve people in poverty and they will understand. Give people meaningful actions to change a situation and they will act.*

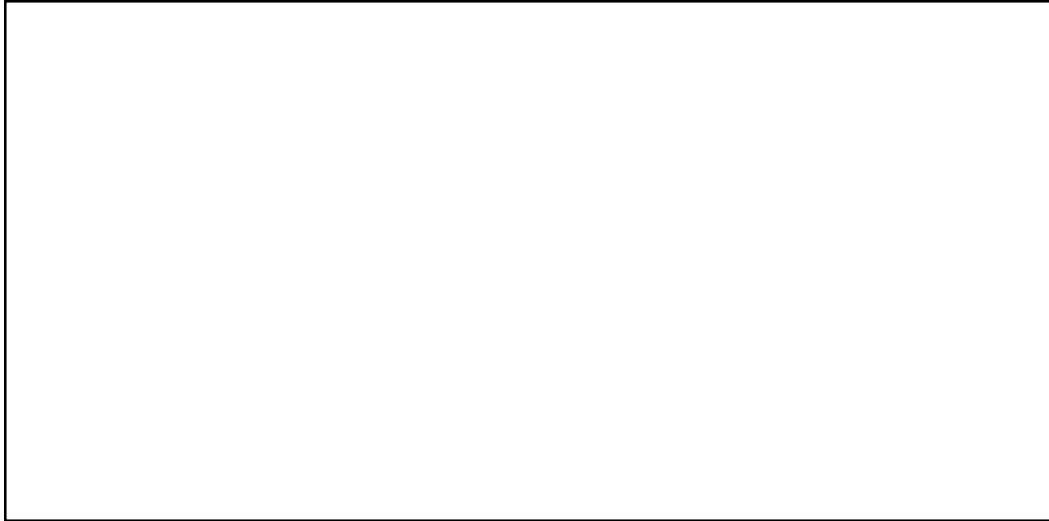
Pat explains: “My involvement in this community allows me to try to ensure that there is a good future for my grandchildren. I have four grandchildren living in this area and three just outside of Waterloo Region. I can’t help but wonder what my generation has left them as an inheritance – I think it’s a huge social debt. And I am grateful that I was asked to be a part of Opportunities 2000 because I think it is a project that is helping to lessen that debt.”

Jim Gordon

Jim Gordon works with the Royal Bank Financial Group as Vice-President of Commercial Markets for Southwestern Ontario. When the Royal Bank was approached to become involved in the Opportunities 2000 initiative, Jim’s interest was sparked by the fact that OP2000 was looking for more than simply a financial contribution. “When Paul Born talked about needing the bank’s involvement, not only from a monetary standpoint, but from a volunteerism standpoint as well, I was intrigued. Paul wanted to use our energy, he wanted the heart and soul of our organization.”



Jim Gordon is Vice-President of Commercial Markets for Southwestern Ontario at the Royal Bank.



Jim Gordon (right), Charles Pascal, Ann Van Norman, Paul Born and Rick Brock.

“The money donated to OP2000 by the Royal Bank has been secondary to our staff involvement. Getting involved with this particular initiative is probably one of the most rewarding things that some of our staff have done,” Jim comments.

Paul Born is Consulting Director of Opportunities 2000. He felt that having business bankers involved in the OP2000 initiative would be a valuable asset for the project. “We needed people who understood how the economy works and, more importantly, who had a network that we could tap into,” says Paul. “The fact that Jim was willing to help share his contacts with our cause has made all the difference. He has become the cornerstone of our Business Working Group. Jim can engage, with one phone call, someone it might otherwise have taken us months to bring on board.”

When Royal Bank representatives were told about the problem of poverty in Waterloo Region, many were shocked. Jim explains: “I was particularly surprised because my work is in the commercial side of things, and with the high growth that I’ve observed in this community, the poverty was a bit invisible to me.”

Paul Born suggested that Jim and several of his colleagues accompany him on a ‘poverty tour’

of Waterloo Region. The group toured different sites, such as a local food bank and Langs Farm Village Association, where they met with individuals who are working to reduce poverty in the community. “The tour really sensitized us to the issues that Paul was talking about,” Jim remarks.

Even prior to joining the OP2000 team, 30 Royal Bank staff members were involved with a project called Nutrition for Learning which is supported by the Food Bank of Waterloo Region. Employees would volunteer their time one day per week to cook breakfast for young schoolchildren. In the past two years, the Royal Bank has raised \$170,000 for this project through silent auctions.

Jim explains: “I think that what hit me the hardest was to realize that of the 55,000 people living in poverty in Waterloo Region, most of these people were children. The fact that Opportunities 2000 was trying to address child poverty is one of the reasons we felt it was important to become involved.”

Jim volunteered to take a position on OP2000’s Leadership Roundtable on behalf of the bank because he believed it was an opportunity for personal education. “I was looking for an activity that would get me out of my ‘comfort zone’ of

dealing with commercial business and felt that OP2000 would provide an interesting learning experience.” Jim chairs the Roundtable’s business subcommittee whose mandate is to find ways to engage the business community in the Opportunities 2000 initiative. “Some innovative partnerships have evolved and they are making a real difference,” Jim confirms.

There are various ways for the business community to become involved in poverty reduction. Jim notes: “Business needs to look at its own human resource policies to find ways to make their business more accessible to people in poverty. This can mean becoming involved in customized training, sharing their expertise with some of OP2000’s projects or sponsoring a community economic development initiative.”

Paul comments: “Jim looks for ways to get himself and his staff involved in Opportunities 2000. He is proactive in getting us the assistance we need and when he does, it always turns out to be a win-win situation. Jim’s help is very genuine and he never expects anything in return.”



The Royal Bank/OP2000 partnership received Imagine’s 1999 ‘New Spirit of Community’ partnership award.

Jim feels that business has important assets to offer – including its vast network of contacts and its understanding of other parts of the economy. In an effort to share the expertise of its own staff, the Royal Bank seconded an employee to Opportunities 2000 for four months to help members of the OP2000 team understand how to approach the

business community and to teach strategic management techniques.

Jim explains that the Royal Bank is keen on sharing best practices. Even though Opportunities 2000 is a local initiative, the Royal Bank saw the potential to promote its learnings through the Caledon Institute, an Ottawa-based national research organization which is contributing to the dissemination and evaluation components of the project. He notes: “It’s important for us that other communities implement the practices of OP2000. We felt very confident in Caledon’s ability to transmit documentation of our learnings across the country to other interested groups.”

The Royal Bank has developed a video which showcases its involvement in OP2000 in an attempt to encourage the business community to participate in the poverty reduction campaign. The video has been shown to various businesses, service clubs and social service organizations. Jim explains that the film is a useful tool for humanizing the partnership between the Royal Bank and Opportunities 2000.

A sports enthusiast, Jim has been involved in his community as an assistant coach for his son’s baseball and hockey teams. “Jim has a huge heart,” Paul Born comments. “He always says ‘yes’ when we ask for help even though I know he really does not have much spare time. Jim has been a big part of the success of Opportunities 2000. He exemplifies what it means to truly care for the community.”

Jim concludes: “It’s critically important that business gives back to its community – corporate Canada needs to ensure that communities are as strong as they can be. And the more we get involved with the OP2000 initiative, the more opportunities we see. As poverty impacts our children and robs them of their potential, we must do everything we can to protect them and give them every opportunity to succeed.”

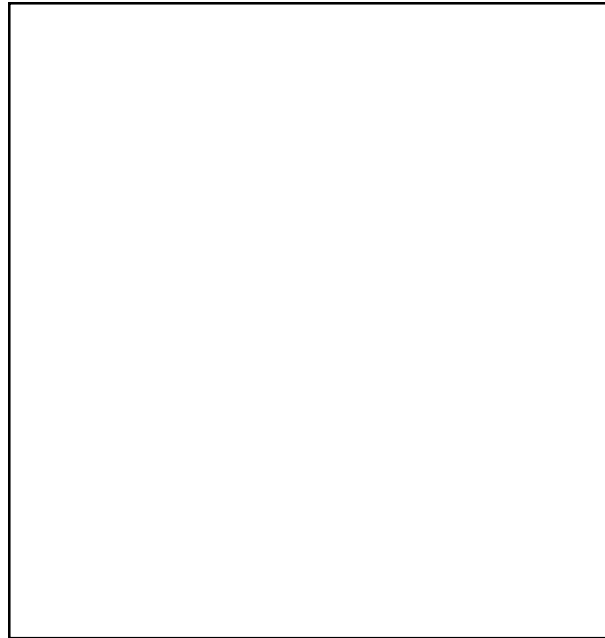
Frank Adamson

When Paul Born, Consulting Director of the Lutherwood Community Opportunities Development Association, approached the United Way of Cambridge and North Dumfries to ask the organization to become involved in the Opportunities 2000 (OP2000) initiative, **Frank Adamson**, former Executive Director, couldn't say no. "It's a no-brainer," he says. "Why would we refuse to help out with this project's ambitious goal to substantially reduce poverty in the region by the end of the year 2000?"

As Executive Director of the United Way, Frank led the organization toward taking an active role in the Opportunities 2000 project. Essentially, the project corresponds with the organization's mission, which is *to enhance the quality of life in the [community] by caring for and contributing to community needs*. When OP2000 received funding from Human Resources Development Canada to support the development of 18 local community economic development (CED) projects, the United Way agreed to work with the OP2000 grant allocations committee to establish criteria for funding projects.

And when Frank spoke to his Board of Directors, the organization agreed to take responsibility for getting 200 families out of poverty as a contribution to the overall poverty reduction goal of Opportunities 2000. "We are in the process of talking to businesses and asking them to help their employees stay above the poverty line – in this way, we are addressing the working poor," Frank explains.

Frank believes that community leadership is key when it comes to issues such as poverty. He emphasizes that: "Poverty affects everybody, not just the poor. A rich and vibrant community equates with growth and well-being. Opportunities 2000 brings together leaders who want to address the



Frank Adamson is former Executive Director of the United Way of Cambridge and North Dumfries.

problem of poverty and they serve as ambassadors for the program. Community leaders can convince others to take a proactive stand within their workplace."

Deborah Foster-Stahle is the Project Coordinator hired by the United Way to work with Opportunities 2000. Her role includes helping to develop three CED projects in Cambridge which likely will involve a nonprofit housing initiative and a program for new Canadians. United Way staff also has made presentations to local service clubs, like the Kiwanis and Rotary clubs, in an attempt to mobilize the business community to become actively engaged in poverty reduction.

According to Frank, one of the most important impacts of Opportunities 2000 is that it has raised awareness of poverty in the region. "There are 55,000 people living in poverty in one of the richest regions in the country. Through awareness and education, we can encourage others to help us reduce this number."

Frank says that businesses often do not know how to help their employees who are living in poverty. Opportunities 2000 is currently developing a booklet on 'Business Best Practices' in order to give employers ideas and tools to reduce poverty within their own workforce. Frank explains that employers have many options, including sponsoring a CED project, offering programs to train and reclassify their staff, as well as providing transportation and child care subsidies. Unions also could waive dues for low-income individuals.

Karen Wilkinson is President of the Board of the United Way and a Senior Tax Manager at Deloitte & Touche. She explains that Frank's vision helped the United Way go beyond its traditional involvement in the community. "Frank saw that we, as an organization, could be doing more for the community by becoming involved in economic development projects. Though this type of initiative is not typically undertaken by the United Way, the Board certainly sees the merit in participating in such a project."

Frank is enthusiastic about the agency's involvement with Opportunities 2000. He explains: "Traditionally, the United Way does an annual fundraising campaign in the fall. But as part of our commitment to OP2000, we are canvassing employers all year round and we're getting such a wonderful response from them and from the community."

Indeed, business people in the Waterloo Region are already creating job opportunities for low-income individuals as a result of the United Way's campaign. One employer recently needed to hire someone to fill a clerical position. The applicant most in need of employment was a single mother living in poverty. She was also the person with the least amount of work experience, though she had the necessary qualifications. "The employer hired her, and it's working out very well. We encourage employers to take a chance on

someone, because in most cases, these people just need a break," Frank explains.

Employers who hire an individual living in poverty are asked to give their support in other ways as well. They are asked to accompany the project coordinator on visits to businesses in order to provide a testimonial of success. Deborah explains: "We are helping business leaders make presentations to their colleagues and peers. We have found that these one-on-one presentations can be a very powerful way to get other business leaders on board."

"Being involved with Opportunities 2000 has great benefits for the United Way and its agencies. We provide a certain amount of funding and technical assistance to our member agencies every year, but pressures on these agencies are increasing," Frank points out. "The fewer the families needing to rely on these organizations, the better." And now the United Way is doing something from the other end. Instead of simply providing support for its agencies, it is attempting to reduce the number of low-income clients these agencies serve by helping families move out of poverty.

There are 55,000 people living in poverty in one of the richest regions in the country. Through awareness and education, we can encourage others to help us reduce this number.

– Frank Adamson

Deborah is quick to note the advantages of the initiative: "One of the things I find most exciting about this project is that there is great potential for United Ways across Canada to implement a similar initiative in their respective communities."

Frank's background is in health services management. Prior to his position at the United Way, he was Vice-President of Planning at the Welland County General Hospital in Niagara. His skills as

a leader and a planner made him an important asset to the United Way team. When he arrived in Cambridge, he says his first task was to make everyone a fundraiser. “We had two arms to the organization: the administration and the fundraisers. I came in and gave everyone fundraising responsibilities, and changed the physical setup of the office so that everyone was working on the same floor.” The changes were effective, and the United Way saw a 28 percent rise in funds from the previous year.

Deborah and Karen agree that Frank is a relationship-builder. “He leads by example, which is very important,” Deborah comments. Karen adds: “His positive attitude and visionary ideas have been instrumental in developing the United Way.”

Deborah notes that Frank’s leadership was key to the United Way’s partnership with OP2000. “Frank is a very empowering individual. He allows his staff and volunteers to grow. He is able to identify when people have particular skills and encourages them to put their skills to use within the organization.”

Frank recently left the United Way to return to Niagara as the Director of the region’s Emergency Medical Services, but he plans to keep in touch with the organization and attend monthly meetings. “The staff is doing some great work, and the partnership with Opportunities 2000 is working out wonderfully. People in this community are very supportive and they certainly give generously to make things happen.”

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