

# Windfall Clothing Service

SPRING / SUMMER 2008



## How does an outstanding, over-achieving student find himself in the welfare line?



My name is Hector and I graduated from Centennial College in the spring of 2007. During my time at Centennial I served as Vice-President of a student

club. Outside of school I became involved with Erinoak, an agency helping physically disabled people, advocating through public speaking and meeting with politicians in an attempt to secure support. During this time, I published a collection of poetry and organized a poetry event. On Saturday mornings I took French classes. This impressed the folks at McGraw-Hill Ryerson so much so that I was awarded the 2007 Scholarship Student Award. I should also mention that I am fluent in Spanish and also speak French.

Doesn't this sound like the ideal candidate for a job? By the spring of 2007, I had an impressive resume. Not only did I have previous employment in the arts, I also had relevant community experience. Everyone told me I would get a job immediately. But ideal thinking doesn't translate into the material world.

No one wanted to take on the candidate with the impressive resume. Not even the local building supplies

store. By early 2008, it wasn't a matter of pride or suitable employment; it was desperation. It was about resigning to the fact that I could not partake of life because I did not have the finances to do so. And some would argue I lacked more education.

A couple of years back, I found myself, at 26, with a job that was sucking me dry. It was a call centre. Supervisors could create laws and enforce them at will. It was exploitative. We even had to sign in and out to go to the bathroom. My person was being used to fuel a machine. I had to get out. So I decided to go back to school. I needed one more year to complete my diploma. I knew that if I did not get a diploma I would only end up at another call centre. People kept telling me that I had potential; I wanted to use it in constructive ways. I asked the company if I could take a leave of absence for the time I went to school but they turned me down. Here is an example of how one can get trapped. I had to quit. I was determined to get a formal education. So I began doing 16-hour shifts until I saved the money for tuition.

In September 2006, I returned to school. I was invigorated. I told my professors I was there to work. Tests and essays were coming back with A+'s. I wanted to be active in helping

to end the marginalization and segregation of alienated students.

Through contacts, I got a part-time administrative job. That lasted three months because it was a contract position. The money I earned in those months soon dwindled; then disappeared.

E.I. wasn't an option. They told me that I had chosen to quit my job. I argued that I had gone to school. I had done something constructive in an attempt to better myself. I was then told flat out, "You don't quit your job to go to school." I'll never forget that. It's imprinted in my head. But so was the graffiti on the wall of the TTC that read, "If you want \$30/hr., go to university."

So E.I. turned me away and I couldn't get a job. I was offered a cooking

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Our newsletters and most recent annual report are available on our website.

position at a large chain restaurant. Too bad it never came through. Then the building supplies store said I was "overqualified."

I went to see my doctor, perhaps I could get on Disability. He said I'd be turned down. Since I can move my arms and legs, I would not be eligible in spite of my spina bifida.

Then things got bad. Very bad. Poverty and the lack of a job are a dangerous place. One is susceptible to anything. One has no power. I tried to apply to a provincial employment assistance program but they told me to go to welfare.

So at 28 with my head between my hands, at the welfare waiting room, the award-winning graduate who takes French classes on Saturdays and writing courses at University of Toronto school of continuing studies is asking himself, "How did this happen? Where did it all go wrong?"

The welfare workers were great. A wonderful worker directed me to a job training agency, Gateway Cafe. And within a month I was looking at a position at Windfall. I had a job placement at last.

Windfall has been a wonderful new beginning. I am partaking in an internship where I am learning new

skills and preparing for the future. I am learning about technology, what to expect from employers and also looking at the social services industry as a place where I can give back. The staff at Windfall has been most kind and welcoming. Working with Mary Brown has allowed me to see human kindness once more after having become quite cynical of it. The rest of the staff has also been wonderful. There is no prejudice and I am treated like a human being. I feel like a person again.

I believe that the work that Windfall performs is important and essential to our society, and that's why I feel most happy and fulfilled to have arrived at a place like this. On the days when I see the team from Community Living in the warehouse it makes me so happy to be part of a group of people who are open to giving a chance to those who wouldn't necessarily have one elsewhere. I can relate because of how many doors have been closed on me. It speaks volumes to me that not only is Windfall's principle in regards to assisting those in need about providing new items (so important to one's self-esteem) but also about the opportunity to do a job placement. They have given a boy like me the chance to work.

People often look at those on the street and dismiss them as lazy and good for nothing. But how do they know this isn't an individual on whom society has closed the door. When we dismiss people, we are taking opportunities from them and our prejudice incarcerates them to that existence.

I have been very lucky. Windfall gave me a chance and hope. Things are going well.

So why did I share my story? First, to show my genuine gratitude towards Windfall and Gateway Cafe. Thanks to them I am on my way to a better life. I can once again participate in education and work towards achieving stability in my life.

Second, I wanted to show that anyone, even an award-winning student, can find himself needing help. Finally, I wanted to point out why organizations like Windfall must continue to exist, why they are necessary and why we must all do all we can to support them.

Héctor V-M

## Please donate

Help us assist people who are working hard to get their lives back on track. Donations of brand-new work wear, basic-needs items and financial support make a huge difference!

Visit our website, [www.windfallclothing.ca](http://www.windfallclothing.ca) to make a donation on-line.  
Mail your cheque to: 29 Connell Court, Unit 3, Toronto, ON M8Z 5T7.  
Call 416-703-8435 to donate over the phone using your credit card.

### \$25 provides

- A brand-new backpack full of school supplies for a child in need
  - A winter coat for a new Canadian
- Personal care items for a woman escaping abuse by entering a shelter

# Partner Agency Profile

## West Scarborough Neighbourhood Community Centre: Gateway Cafe

Gateway Cafe is a program of the West Scarborough Neighbourhood Community Centre. The service was established in 1998 to assist youth and adults who face barriers to employment enter the workforce. Our mission is to support and guide our clients in their quest to become contributing members of Toronto's vibrant economy. Over the years we have helped thousands of participants with their resumes, interviewing skills, job searching techniques and most important perhaps, the development of their self-esteem. Our success has led to the expansion of our services to include funding from the Province of Ontario through the Premier's Youth Challenge Fund to purchase work-related training and items like work boots and tools. As well, we have a wage subsidy program for employers (sponsored by Service

Canada) called Ready to Work. This is the program that introduced Hector (see page 1) to Windfall.

The thing that keeps us going is the success of our clients. There is nothing more gratifying than getting a phone call or a note from a young person who is so happy in their new job and finally feels like they are heading in the right direction. Our partnership with Windfall is a major part of our clients' success. The pride on their faces when they receive new clothes for their interviews cannot be measured. They know that they are going to receive good quality, appropriate items at NO CHARGE.....TO KEEP!!! The work of Windfall has contributed tremendously to Gateway Cafe's accomplishments and we thank them for their continued partnership. Windfall ensures that Gateway Cafe

can realize West Scarborough Community Centre's motto, which is, "Helping People, Help Themselves."

*Diana Gatti  
Divisional Co-ordinator  
Gateway Cafe*



*Participants from Gateway Cafe's  
pre-employment program*

### Looking for Interesting and Meaningful Volunteer Work?

Windfall is currently looking to fill three board of directors' positions.

- These positions are volunteer positions and entail responsibility in the governance of our innovative, creative and always-evolving charity.
- The positions require hands-on work as well as participation in setting out policies and strategic directions.

If you are interested in finding out more, please email Jill Richardson at [windfall@windfallclothing.ca](mailto:windfall@windfallclothing.ca).

If you are interested in other volunteer positions,  
please check out the Volunteers section of our website,

[www.windfallclothing.ca](http://www.windfallclothing.ca).

# New Program Expansion Manager-Martha Wilder



I love new clothes. As a child, I always yearned for a larger wardrobe. I learned to sew and made

some very simple garments. I was encouraged by internationally renowned Toronto designer, Zoë—who had a very successful business designing custom clothing. After graduating from Trent University I worked at a variety of small retail businesses with specialty niches, including Zoë's. I also worked for other smaller establishments such as the Newfoundland Historic Trust Museum Gift Shop and the David Wood Food Shop. There I expanded upon my entrepreneurial skills. Interested in product development, and inspired by Canadian heritage, I went on to create an educational board game called Trailblazer. Then partnering with a Harvard Ph.D. History student, developed an award-winning American version.

I have always volunteered and have had an on-going interest in the public sector. As the Volunteer Co-ordinator at Street Kids International, I was able to participate in the Non-Profit Management Certificate Program at York University's Schulich School of

Business. I have also helped organize events for the Evergreen Foundation, the Textile Committee at the Royal Ontario Museum and the Fact & Fiction Committee for the ROM Foundation. I am presently on the boards of Canada's National Ballet School and the Canadian Federation of Friends of Museums.

Becoming increasingly interested in philanthropy, I began taking professional courses in fundraising at Ryerson University and then worked on contract research positions for George Brown College through their foundation. Eventually, I discovered Windfall.

I love working at Windfall. I could not have imagined this opportunity in my dutiful job search. I like being in a warehouse with the hustle and bustle of people and trucks coming and going. I love the decor of boxes and more boxes! I love the people I work with—Helen, Mary and Alessia who are always so helpful as I learn my new responsibilities and Tammy who is there to unbundle the printer or show me how to perform a complicated technical computer operation. I love all the commotion and chatter when the group from Community Living comes to work in the warehouse. I also love our lunch discussions. Today's revolved around Hector's English class; deciphering Gertrude Stein's novel, *Ida*. We will be

continuing this conversation after we get more insights from his professor.

Here at Windfall, it is very much an entrepreneurial spirit that pervades and that is needed to continue to build this still-young organization. We all pitch in and do everything that needs to be done. But most important, we all work together towards a worthwhile mission – finding more clothes and basic-needs items for the many, many people in need and spreading the word about the plight of those living in poverty.

I am so excited to be a part of this extremely simple, yet brilliantly innovative service. As I work to increase the number of items coming into the warehouse, I hope to get to know as many of our supporters as possible. Please feel free to contact me at [martha.wilder@windfallclothing.ca](mailto:martha.wilder@windfallclothing.ca) or at 416-703-8435 if you have items you wish to donate or have ideas or leads on where we can find additional items.

*Martha's position is generously funded by the Trillium Foundation.*



“ I like being in a warehouse with the hustle and bustle of people and trucks coming and going. I love the decor of boxes and more boxes! ”

# Buy Design 5<sup>4</sup>

This year's Buy Design for Windfall gala and auction was held on April 26 at the Distillery Historic District. The event, the most successful ever, saw over 500 guests dressing up and dancing the night away. We grossed over \$100,000! The evening began with a VIP reception at Tappo where guests got up close and personal with our host, Adrian Mainella

of CBC's *Fashion File*. Later they shopped in the Factory Auction, hustled with the Disco Ducks dancers, got 70's hair at the Solo Bace Hair Salon booth and bought out all the limited edition t-shirts at the Shared Shop.

Our sincere thanks to the Buy Design Committee led by co-chairs

Jill Richardson and Tralee Pearce and creative director, Andrew Sardone. We hope to see you all at Buy Design 2009 next April!



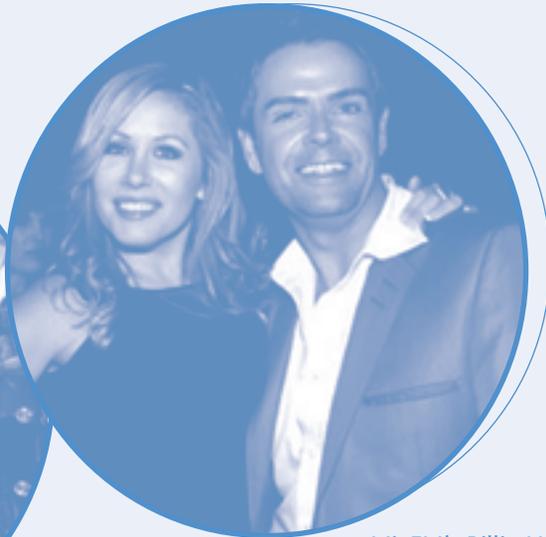
Buy Design host Adrian Mainella charms guests into emptying their pockets



Buy Design creative director Andrew Sardone and designer Philip Sparks



The Disco Ducks hustle guests onto the dancefloor



MixFM's Billie Holiday and Dixon Doyle Design's Glenn Dixon

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Students from Lorne Park High School  
Students from Ryerson  
Tappo Wine Bar & Restaurant

***and all our incredible volunteers!***

***Congratulations to the Buy  
Design committee. Our event has  
been selected as one of Toronto's  
Top 6 fashion events by BizBash.***



# WW4W 2008

This year's campaign was a great success! WW4W is a series of mini-events put on by various businesses and groups to benefit Windfall's programs and raise awareness about the continuing problem of poverty in Toronto. Our sincere thanks to co-chairs, Jennifer Campbell and Yona Zukerman, the WW4W committee and the following generous event participants.

- Poster Campaign Media Launch – Hazel, Jan. 10
- Celebrity Poster Campaign – meemo.com, Toronto, Jan. 10-31
- WW4W Scarf at Bayview Village – Bayview Village Shopping Centre, Jan. 7-31
- WW4W at Hammam Spa – Hammam Spa, Jan. 10 to Feb. 10
- WW4W Wedding Dress Auction – The Total Wedding Show, Jan.18-20
- WW4W Fashion Show at Bayview Village – Bayview Village Shopping Centre, Jan. 27
- WW4W Day – Toronto, Jan. 31
- White Party at Amber Lounge – Amber Lounge, Jan. 31

## New This Year

An exciting addition to this year's events was the launch of our WW4W poster campaign. Our thanks to our incredible celebs for helping us to spread the word.



### WW4W Celebrities

Anne Mroczkowski  
Chris Hyndman  
Dina Pugliese  
Shawn Hewson  
Shinan Govani  
Steven Sabados  
Zack Werner

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