

BUZZ the centretown

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Photo: Lois Siegel

Chef Arleigh Martin
fires it up in Centretown.
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Centretowners among award-winners

By KATHIE LYNAS

The designers of a project which brought a new level of barrier-free accessibility to Canada's highest court and a program which fosters self-esteem and a sense of purpose for people on disability pensions have each received a 2008 Celebration of People Award.

For the past eight years, the Celebration of People Awards have recognized individuals, businesses and organizations which have made a positive contribution to the lives of persons with disabilities in the Ottawa community. The 2008 Awards were presented December 3, 2008, on the United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

Centretown-based architectural firm Watson MacEwen Architects and the Supreme Court of Canada received the *Accessibility by Design Award*. As part of a project to modernize broadcasting and computer technology, the Supreme Court sought to address a long-standing accessibility issue—the fact that lawyers in wheelchairs couldn't use the main lectern to present to the Justices because its height was fixed and designed for a standing adult.

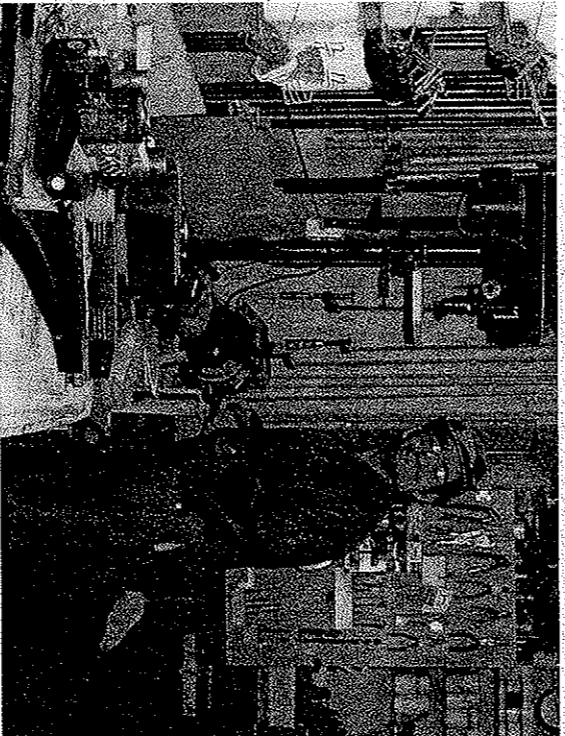
"We had accommodated counsel in wheelchairs by having them sit at the side tables but our preference was always to have them argue from the main podium," says Louise Meagher, Deputy Registrar of the Supreme Court. "We wanted to give them the same opportunity as other counsel."

The goal was to design a lectern that could be adjusted in height while preserving the historic architecture of the room. This was a big task, says Watson MacEwen associate Allan Teramura, since the project was believed to be the first of its kind for a courtroom in North America.

"The challenge for us was how to make it work mechanically because it was like nothing we had ever seen," says Mr. Teramura. The team recruited an industrial designer who adapted an industrial hydraulic lift to raise and lower the podium. "This is something used in a loading dock elevating pieces of machinery. It's obviously not something that normally belongs in a heritage courtroom interior," he says.

The architects worked with artisans and craftsmen to design and build a cabinet that would conceal the lift, and consulted the Canadian

Conservation Institute about historically appropriate wood veneers. The



Jimmy gets down to work at the Good Day Workshop

result is a lectern that not only meets the needs of lawyers in wheelchairs but which can be adjusted in height for all counsel.

"Visitors from other courts have been impressed by the podium," says Ms. Meagher. "We can't wait with the technology to retract in any way from the room and its purpose—arguing cases before the bench. We are really pleased with the way in which Allan and others were able to come up with a design that integrated the technology really well into the courtroom."

The *Tolerance Opportunities Award* was given to another Centretown organization, the Good Day Workshop Program, located on Bronson

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Traffic trouble on Lorne Avenue

By SAH DASC

Residents of Lorne Avenue have been concerned with the traffic situation on the street for a long time and it only seems to be getting worse. The "no stopping" zones near the Lorne Avenue/Somerset Street intersection are the main area of contention. Despite the fact that this portion of Lorne was re-zoned from "no parking" to "no stopping," cars still park or idle there for long periods.

More problematic, large trucks delivering to the surrounding businesses continually park in the "no stopping zone" in front of the fire hydrant, rather than using the loading zones on Somerset Street. Lorne Avenue is a dead end street and these cars and delivery trucks force cars turning onto Lorne Avenue from Somerset Street to turn into the oncoming lane, making them at fault if they hit any vehicle returning down the dead end street.

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Avenue. Since 1996, this program has welcomed people who are unemployed because of mental or physical disability or homelessness and taught them how to repair and restore furniture.

"Many of our participants are on disability pensions," says Liz Gauthier, executive director of the program. "Most live alone and without a job, might not have a reason to leave their room. We help give them a reason to get up and go somewhere instead of living in their four walls."

People give the Good Day Workshop broken furniture that needs to be fixed or old pieces that would benefit from restoration. On a typical day, 30 to 40 people are in the shop working on their furniture projects. Not only do they learn a new skill but they also gain a sense of purpose and have the experience of being part of a community.

"This program builds self esteem. It gives participants some feeling of control over their own lives, and helps them to meet other people and learn how to work as a team," Ms. Gauthier says. Social interaction is provided in the workplace and the workers also have morning coffee and lunch together.

The participants take on responsibility for their projects but they are not pushed to work to a deadline, and they make their own schedule. "There is absolutely no pressure on any of our participants," says Ms. Gauthier. "They work at their own pace but they still have the responsibility of taking on a piece of furniture that needs stripping and of seeing that piece to completion."

Some of the people who have been in the program have gone on to get regular employment, while others continue at the shop for many years. No matter what course their lives take, says Ms. Gauthier, the participants gain from the experience.

"We often use the analogy that stripping away the paint and getting to the heart of a piece of beautiful furniture is like getting to the soul of a person."

Kathie Lyman is on staff at the Celebration of People Awards.