

# The Better Times

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We encourage you, our readers, to express your views about the stories we print and the issues that are important to you. See page 4 for contact info.

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We want our readers to be our writers! If you have written an article or have an idea for a story, please let us know. See page 4 for contact info.

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April/May, 2011 — Volume 1, Issue 2 This newspaper is free!



The Ndinawe Youth Resource Centre at 472 Selkirk Avenue. Photo by Google Streets

## Ndinawe's focus on youth

By Morgan Thomas



Ndinawemaaganag Endaawaad Inc., or Ndinawe for short, is one of the many outstanding community organizations in Winnipeg. Located on Selkirk Avenue in the North End, Ndinawe staff and volunteers focus their time, energy, and resources on youth.

Unlike so many of the resources available to the youth of our community, Ndinawe's programs are specifically designed and delivered so that youth can access them directly, without the referral of an outside agency or adult. So often, the amenities provided to youth by society become themselves barriers to the very same services; this is where Ndinawe breaks the mould.

**Ndinawe Safe House** offers 24-hour shelter and basic necessities for Winnipeg children and youth who are living on the streets and are at risk of abuse and exploitation. This includes youth who have had previous conflict with the law. Unlike most group homes, youth can admit themselves into a safe place without the help of child and family service workers.

**Ndinawe Second Stage** is a supportive long-term independent living opportunity for youth between the ages of 16 and 17 where they can develop the necessary life skills and capacities to transition to independent living in the community.

**Ndinawe Youth Transitional School**, in partnership with Winnipeg School Division No. 1, and R.B. Russell High School, is an off-campus program

that provides a structured learning environment for youth who, for a variety of reasons, have found themselves outside the mainstream school system. They work at their own pace, participate in alternative activities, and maximize their learning potential in a supportive and stress-free environment.

**Turning the Tides** This project will address and support safety and crime prevention in our communities by providing holistic and cultural support to community youth 15-19 years of age at high risk of and/or involved with gang-related issues. They provide support through mentorship, resources and employment opportunities to develop skills and capacities which will assist them in school, job, and career development. This program offers recre-

**Ndinawe's programs are specifically designed and delivered so that youth can access them directly, without the referral of an outside agency or adult**

ational opportunities, skill building opportunities, and support to youth and their families.

**Youth Care Worker Training Program.** You can't teach physics if you don't know physics! This is an exciting training initiative in partnership with Red River College. The Youth Care Worker Training Program provides Red River accredited, community based education and training towards the first year of a Youth Care Worker Certificate. The program is aimed at individuals formerly exploited in

*continued on page 4*

## Bedbug Wars: Interview with 'Joe'

By David Henry

Joe (not his real name) is on disability, and has lived in the same low-rent apartment building for over seven years. I spoke with him about recurring reports of bedbugs in his building.

**Do you have bedbugs?**

**Joe:** No, I don't. Three years ago I had a bout of them. I freaked out, got on the phone, and made sure they fixed it. The day before the night I found them (bedbugs), they (the landlord) sprayed next door.

Most owners try to save money by just spraying one suite at a time. But it costs more in the long run, 'cause they have to do it again and again. It's been going on here for three months.

Look around. They sprayed today. I told them if they ever had to spray again, to spray me again.

As you can see, I've taken every precaution. (Much of the wood and fabric furniture is removed, laundry is all in plastic storage bins, the bed is an air mattress, raised and away from the wall, with little plastic 'bug cups' on each foot.)

**Are you getting any help?**

Welfare gives me \$25 every time they spray. I didn't know that. They must have sprayed a half-dozen times, and I could have used the money.... It's for doing laundry and plastic bags. You're supposed to do laundry so they make sure you can do everything.

All you have to do is bring in the notice and make sure the company that's doing the spraying—the company's name is on the notice.

**You said you wanted to move:**

(Bedbugs are) part of the problem. It's also the management. I don't want to move.

**We talked a bit about some of the challenges with moving:**

There's that (high occupancy rates) and finding a good place. This is actually a good building.

**Would you use a bedbug registry?**

There is one? I'd definitely use that. I don't want to go through this again.

**Would having this building registered hurt your chances of moving?**

Maybe. It would help if owners could give you a referral, saying you didn't have bedbugs.

**What needs to be done to solve the problem?**

First, proper extermination. All apartments, not just ones with bedbugs. When they're only spraying some suites and not doing others, they'll never get on top of the problem.

Second, the owners have to enforce the rules. If there are no overnight visitors, that has to be enforced. That's also a tenant responsibility. There's a responsibility on both sides, the owners and tenants.

Third, stop the stores from using fabric bags. Pawn shops have signs 'We will not accept anything in a bag made of cloth'.

*Note: The Manitoba government did not include a bed bug registry in its recently released bed bug policy. Details are available at: <http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/press/top/2011/03/2011-03-10-094200-10986.html>. A non-government bed bug registry is available at: <http://bedbugregistry.com/location/MB/winnipeg/>*

David Henry is an inner-city graphic artist.

**When they're only doing some suites and not doing others, they'll never get on top of the problem.**

editions

### Know your welfare rights:

Part two in our series covers how the appeal process works see page 2



### The great squeegee debate rages

A cartoon and article help clear the view ahead see page 3



### Contest winner: Wayne Petty

Famous cyclist gets to wear the yellow jersey see page 4



## The Better Times

April/May 2011

The **Better Times** is an independent, bi-monthly publication for people in Winnipeg concerned about hunger and poverty.

The **Better Times** is distributed free of charge to clients of agencies associated with Winnipeg Harvest and at other community locations.

Our mission is to empower and inform people who live with hunger and poverty. Our goal is to find and tell the stories that reflect the realities and the dreams of our readers.

The **Better Times** is overseen by an Editorial Board composed of persons who have lived the experience of hunger and poverty. All responsibility for content rests with the Editorial Board.

The views expressed in this newspaper do not necessarily represent the views of the Editorial Board or our supporting organizations. The Editorial Board may edit submissions for length and style, and reserves the right not to publish submissions.

For publication, we welcome letters, stories, story ideas, photos, cartoons and illustrations from our readers.

We encourage support for The Better Times through sponsoring subscriptions, donations and advertising.

**Circulation:** 6,500

**Next issue:** June/July 2011

**Deadline:** May 6

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## Point Of View

# From Dachau to the bread room

By Morgan Thomas

“You must respect the bread,” said the man who feeds the birds.

Bread is not just something you buy from the store. The farmer grows the grain. The miller grinds the wheat into flour. The baker transforms the flour into the loaf. The grocer brings it to your table. Those who seek to fill an empty stomach from the leftovers are a part of the whole process.

You must respect this bread. The man who feeds the birds has taken a long journey, too. From the Dachau concentration camp in Germany he came to the shores of Canada, and ultimately to Winnipeg. He knows the value of a journey. He knows how truly cruel life can be.

He feeds the birds with the leftover leftovers—a kindness he shows to a world that has not been so kind to him.

If you are not aware, the use of word concentration comes from the idea of putting all the undesirable people in one place, where they can be watched by those who incarcerated them.

Allowing people to live in poverty is very much the same. The barriers may not be walls of concrete and stone, but they are just as real, and just as formidable.

I believe a man that has had this experience, who in his late eighties, leaning heavily on his cane, regularly makes the journey to Winnipeg Harvest’s bread room. He collects stale bread for the birds.

He does not want to see even a scrap go to waste. I listen to a man who has been to hell and returned with his soul, enough so that he feeds the birds.

I see with my own eyes the countless people who work together to help feed and uplift our community. I see the diversity of their journeys, cultures, values, and the commonality of their desire to see justice done. We can have hope because we feed the birds. We can have hope because if this man can endure and prevail in a life full of trials, we can too.

You must respect bread. For

it represents the hard work, open love, and coming together of a community. We feed and nourish ourselves, and others, and birds!



Illustration by David Henry

## Better Letters

### Homeowners, not developers, could create housing for poor

To The Editor,

I attended a community forum at the Norquay Community Centre on February 5, 2011. Of course, the most important issue for the community members in attendance was housing.

There are communities in great need of housing in the poorer areas. As a homeowner, I suggested that instead of property developers from Vancouver building condos and houses for Manitobans, why shouldn't Manitobans do it themselves?

I suggested homeowners invest 5 per cent or 10 per cent of the equity of their homes from that community. That money would create a land

trust fund called Community Spirit initiative and have an organization oversee the fund. This way, the catch phrase can be: “Homeowners building homes for their community.”

The Point Douglas committee thought this was a good idea and so did the people in attendance.

I told them this would not happen overnight. There would have to be rules and regulations in place. But with a lot of hard work, they can then draft a proposal and approach homeowners with a buy-in. This would be a form of social enterprise or a co-op. This idea can be used as an example for other communities where there is a high need for housing.

Sincerely,

Curtis Dekoning

# Know your welfare rights: The appeal process

By Harold Dyck



In our last issue, I discussed several steps Employment and Income Assistance (EIA) recipients could take to better protect their rights when dealing with their case coordinators. In today's column we will deal with the appeal process when EIA clients feel they have been unjustly treated or denied benefits by the program.

All EIA recipients have the right to appeal any decision by EIA regarding their benefits to the Social Services Appeal Board (7th Floor, 175 Hargrave St., Winnipeg, R3C 3R8, phone 945-3003 or fax 945-1736).

Recipients should be aware that only decisions regarding their financial benefits can be appealed through this process. The legally defined grounds for appeals are:

- You were not allowed to apply or re-apply for EIA;
- Your request for assistance or for an increase in benefits (including reasonable special needs benefits) was not decided upon within a reasonable time;
- Your application for benefits was denied;
- Your benefits were cancelled, suspended, varied, or withheld;
- The amount of your benefits is insufficient to meet

your needs, limited, unfortunately, by legally defined amounts set by the provincial government (For example, the government has established a \$195 per month maximum basic needs benefit for single general assistance recipients, which is clearly inadequate, but cannot be exceeded by your case worker or the Appeal Board).

One important additional legal requirement on the EIA program that all recipients should be aware of is that, under Section 9(2) of the Employment and Income Assistance Act, whenever any of the five steps identified above is taken against you, they are required to “forthwith notify” you “in writing” of what they are doing,

confirm that you did receive the written notification, effectively there may be no time limit to filing the appeal.

In my 12 years as an advocate, it is my experience that more than half the time the EIA program does not itself comply with this legal requirement. I must give one caution to EIA recipients, however. Often they will send you a letter advising you of a change in your benefits, and include a note that there is important information on the back of the letter. That information is usually a standard printout advising you of the appeal process and is considered adequate notification. So make sure you read and keep a copy of all of the information sent to you.

**The provincial government has established a \$195 per month maximum basic needs benefit for single general assistance recipients, which is clearly inadequate, but cannot be exceeded by your case worker or the Appeal Board**

“stating the reasons for the decision”, and “advising (you)...that (you have) the right under the Act to appeal the decision to the appeal board.” You then have 30 days to file an appeal against any such decision, unless you can establish reasonable grounds that it was not possible to do so within that time frame. It is important to note we have established some history that, when the department fails to properly notify you and is unable to

You also have the right to representation when you file an appeal. You can contact me, Harold Dyck, at 947-2220 for further information, if you have any questions or need help on an appeal.

Harold Dyck is the Executive Director of the Low-Income Intermediary Project (LIIP)



Do some squeegeers make it harder for everyone else by being inconsiderate? Holding up traffic, squeegeeing the windshield of those who obviously don't want it, and littering are concerns that are often expressed by the public. Do you agree with them? Or do you agree with Rodney Graham in the article below, that squeegeers are "soldiers of democracy"? Send your views on squeegeeing to *The Better Times* (see contact info on page 4). Cartoon by Tom Andrlich.

# ALL report puts low-income people in charge

By Donald Benham



Some research projects study people living with hunger and poverty as though they're exhibits at a zoo—strange-looking and possibly dangerous.

A new research project puts people with low income in charge. They make the key decisions.

The primary goal of the Acceptable Living Level (ALL) report is to determine how much money an individual or family needs to achieve a decent standard of living.

It's based on the belief that every Manitoban has the right to an acceptable living level.

A panel of Winnipeg Harvest clients provides financial information about their current spending patterns and then establishes the level at which they think most people could live with an acceptable quality of life.

The report is then used to inform the public, the media and policy-makers.

This approach was used for previous ALL reports, published in 1997, 2000 and 2003. Those reports strongly influenced the federal government in its development of the Market Basket Measure, one measurement of poverty.

**Previous ALL reports strongly influenced the federal government in its development of the Market Basket Measure, one measurement of poverty**

The 2011 ALL report will add three new elements:

**African immigrant community:** More than half a dozen focus groups have been held with members of the African immigrant community, asking them about household spending and what foods they eat.

**Chronic illnesses:** People with chronic illnesses often have to spend more money on special foods or other supports.

**Community engagement:** Engagement of the broader community in a discussion of hunger and poverty issues.

Winnipeg Harvest is supporting the ALL report in partnership with the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, through a steering committee with equal representation from both organizations.

The report is scheduled to be released in the summer of 2011.

# Where have all the squeegee punks gone?

By Rodney Graham

Where have all the squeegee punks gone?

The answer is simple. They were outlawed. Just about every major city in our nation went to great lengths to pass laws targeting these citizens. Over the years I've kept in touch with several I interviewed in Winnipeg in the '90s.

One couple have two kids now and are close friends. I visit them in B.C. every year. Many others have kids of their own now and are doing just fine. In a way these rebels were soldiers of democracy, whether they did so purposefully or not.

In the 1990s there were hundreds, if not thousands of traveling kids washing car windows at intersections all across Canada. They were as ubiquitous at major intersections as the Dickie Dee ice cream carts on a hazy city summer's day.

People still do it, but they are more likely to be locals who have learned the practice over the years from the pioneering punks. Traveling kids still do it while in transit—until they are ticketed and hounded out of town.

Why did they do it?

Simple again—lack of resources for youth, especially for youth who are termed "fallen through the cracks."

There was never a firm foundation to help abused and neglected youth in Canada anyway. The industry is more like a spiralling route that descends towards your eventual exit. Then you were no longer a 'client'.

Having been a homeless youth myself 35 years ago, I had a hell of a time in the system. Panhandling, couch surfing, begging off relatives, and being processed through the revolving doors of the children's aid system which then spit me out at the age of 16.

One may ask, "Where do gangs come from?" When society rejects you, you create your own. The squeegee kids were often kids who were mostly abused and neglected. They created their own resource.

Society's answer for both gangs and squeegee punks was and still is equally brutal. Instead of treating them with respect and equality, it uses the heartless force of law and the mindless self-serving system in place to force them into more desperation and poverty.

The irony is that even though these resourceful Canadian kids used this form of self-employment and were criminalized for it, they benefited others in each town and city they went to and were kicked out of.

They've done more to improve the democracy in our nation than most of us ever will. Local people of all ages across Canada now go out and squeegee for spare change, because they saw the squeegee punks do it.

There are a few more resources as a result, but still not enough front-line resources for homeless youth. There's one in Winnipeg where kids can seek resources for jobs and use computers and phones (see *RaY contact info, page 4*). They stirred up activists and got them talking about the issues of youth homelessness. In this way, in my opinion anyway, they were true soldiers of democracy.

Personally, I have written, debated, and battled about the issue of youth homelessness since they passed the very first anti-squeegee kid by-law in Canada here in Winnipeg in 1997. The solution may not come soon. First we have to strive towards building a culture where less fortunate youth, and the less fortunate of every age are treated equally. We can start by repealing the squeegee kid by-law and the ubiquitous panhandling by-laws in Canada today.

# Everybody can recycle

By David Ladd

My grandparents were recycling long before it became fashionable. In fact, they died in 1979 and 1981, before I'd ever even seen a blue box. Maybe it was because they lived through the dirty thirties, or because they came from big farm families, or because my mom and my uncle were born during World War II.

Grandma would wash out plastic bags and hang them out to dry. Empty javex jugs served as water containers at the farm, as we had no running water. And in the drawer of the sewing cabinet were hundreds of buttons she had

saved from clothes that had finally gone to rags—rags that were used until there was absolutely nothing left of them.

Grandpa saved everything. He had a garage he built with scrap lumber. It was full of stuff he had salvaged, and it was from him I learned the art. One wall was lined with shelves he had built, and the shelves were full of tobacco containers, labelled and full of nuts, bolts, screws, etc.. He was a service man for GE, so there were rows and rows of old appliances and parts for toasters, kettles, frying pans, ranges, refrigerators, dishwashers—anything and everything!

The farm house was painted with left-over paint with walls of many colours, and old sheets hung in the windows. Out back in the foundation of the old barn we had a dump for metal, and another one for burning anything that shouldn't go in the stove. Nothing got wasted.

Fast-forward to 2011.

I'm all for recycling, but they have a lot of stuff wrong here. The point of it is to re-use things, to make less of an impact on our environment, and to save money. Driving around in big fancy diesels to pick up blue boxes isn't making less of an impact on our environment. Here recycling is just revenue for the government, and they already have enough money for bombs.

I was living in Charlottetown, PEI in 2009, and there all the recycling is picked up in trailers pulled by bicycles.

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# Legal Help Centre: Drop-in clinic

By Loren Braul

The Legal Help Centre of Winnipeg, a much-needed community resource, has opened its doors. A partnership among the universities of Winnipeg and Manitoba and the legal profession, the Centre offers a problem solving approach to helping people with their legal problems.

Staffed by students from law, social work, criminal justice, conflict resolution and Global College, who work with volunteer lawyers, the Centre offers services through a drop-in clinic that provides referrals to other community resources, or appointments with volunteer lawyers who provide legal advice. A series of workshops for persons who are representing themselves in family or small claims proceedings is also getting ready to launch.

"The mandate of the Legal Help Centre is to assist economically disadvantaged members of our community identify, access and exercise their legal and social rights. The Centre is not intended to duplicate any existing service, but to fill the gaps and to be a hub for information and referrals for those in need," explains Executive Director Karen Dyck, who says a needs assessment done last year showed that finding appropriate resources and navigating the system is often very challenging for people.

Although the Legal Help Centre targets the needs of women, indigenous Canadians, newcomers, students and the working poor, it serves individu-



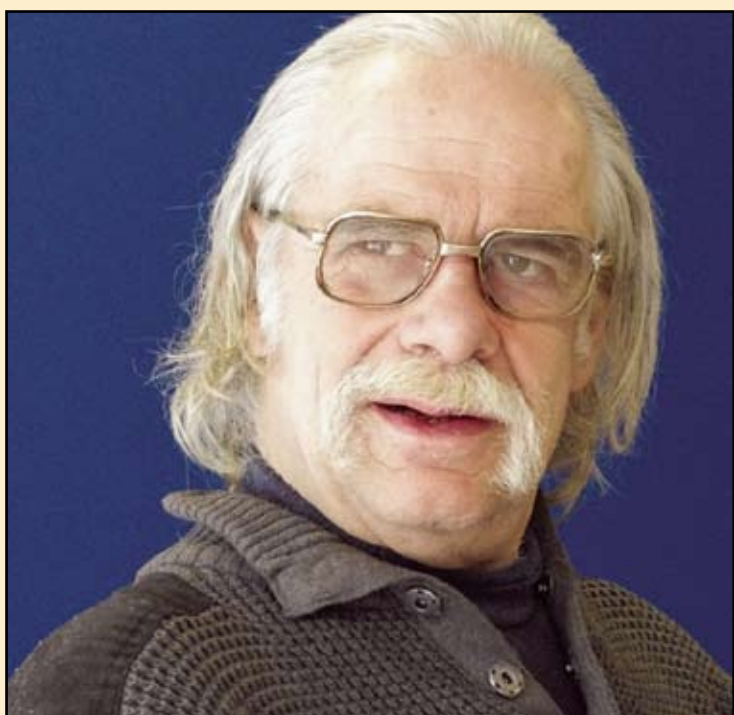
Lloyd Axworthy, President and Vice-Chancellor, University of Winnipeg; Colleen Suche, Chair Legal Help Centre Board; Karen Dyck, Executive Director, Legal Help Centre; and David Barnard, President and Vice-Chancellor, University of Manitoba, open the Legal Help Centre at 380 Spence Street, March 9, 2011

als regardless of their place of residence. "We are already seeing that our clients reflect the diversity of our neighborhood," says Dyck.

The drop-in clinic, which provides information and referrals, and the workshops for persons who are self-representing are open to all members of the public. The sessions with lawyers who offer free legal advice is restricted to persons with family income of \$50,000 or less.

Located at 380 Spence Street, between Portage and Ellice, the Centre's drop-in clinic is open Tuesdays and Fridays, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Legal advice is by appointment only. For further information visit [www.legalhelpcentre.ca](http://www.legalhelpcentre.ca).

Loren Braul is a law student at the University of Manitoba



## "Name This Paper!" Contest winner

Wayne Petty is the author of *Cycling Back Road Manitoba* (he gave us a copy) and a former volunteer of Harvest. He came to Harvest while recovering from congestive heart failure. He currently is a volunteer and Manager of the Orioles Community Centre "Bike Cage," a non-profit, volunteer-run, bike fix-it shop. Photo by Robb Nickel.

Thanks to everyone who submitted an entry. There were a lot of good names sent, and we're happy with 'The Better Times'.

## leaving Acadia

i spent my whole life  
coming back  
to this place  
i've never been

to these people  
who are like me  
my brothers, my sisters,  
my children

in the soup kitchens  
and the shelters  
on the streets  
of Acadia

i thought about  
trying to change things  
and wondered  
if i should

because blessed  
are the poor  
and the meek  
shall inherit the Earth

and so i left Acadia  
but my heart remains  
by the lonely  
North Atlantic

Her beaches  
stained red  
by the blood  
of the oppressed

and as God  
is my witness  
there shall  
be a reckoning

January 2010  
David Ladd

## Ndinawe's focus on youth

continued from page 1

the sex trade. The program provides both personal and professional development to allow for further education and employment opportunities.

The **Outreach** program provides support to our most vulnerable youth: Street-involved youth who are struggling with homelessness, trapped in the sexual exploitation industry, and/or struggling with issues of gangs, addictions and crime.

Through nightly foot patrols in the local area, outreach workers build positive relationships based on trust and respect to provide youth a valuable link

to available resources. Street Outreach workers connect youth to resources and help youth toward getting off the streets.

These are just some of the major programs that Ndinawe operates. They also run a food bank, supplied by Winnipeg Harvest, that serves anyone in the community.

### Ndinawe Youth Resource Centre

472 Selkirk Avenue, Phone: (204) 589-5545  
Drop-in hours: Monday to Friday, 3pm to 11pm;  
Weekends, 1pm to 9pm.

Source: <http://www.ndinawe.ca/>

## Everybody can recycle

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You would think that might make more sense. A lot more people could be employed here doing things a little more Amishly, and it isn't as hard on the ozone layer. It could create more labour-type jobs that could employ unskilled workers off the street even casually, paying cash. A win-win situation.

At Trois Rivieres, Quebec they have machines at the grocery store where you can deposit bottles and cans, and money comes out! I saw homeless people there with shopping carts full of recycling, and the streets were cleaner as well.

If you go to the dump here, they don't allow you to take anything out. Why not? Do they own our garbage? Wouldn't it make more sense to be able to re-use things, to be able to salvage stuff you need, to lessen the impact of all the waste by salvaging scrap metal and cashing it in? Seems to me that would be recycling.

At the dump in Hargrave and McAuley, Manitoba you can take whatever you want. In Moosomin, Saskatchewan, they have a building set up where they put furniture and appliances that people have thrown away but are still good, and you can help yourself to them.

And the last time I was at Hornby Island, B.C. they had a recycling depot/free-store. Basically how it worked was you took what you needed and

left what you didn't want. There wasn't any need to steal. There were clothes, furniture, household items, bicycles, cars, trucks, and parts thereof. It was run by volunteers, and it was a model for the rest of Canada. Twice a year scrap cars, trucks, iron and precious metal were sent to the mainland for scrap to subsidize the project.

We compost and we blue box, and I'm not beyond salvaging what other people throw away, as long as it's useful and can be cleaned up, or converted into cash. Since being off the streets five months ago we have salvaged tables, chairs, dressers, a desk, a toaster, a telephone, dishes, blankets, clothing, a bicycle—and I'm fussy about what I take.

Even living at the Sally Ann we managed to accumulate blankets, clothing, a tent, dishes, a toaster oven, plants—all for free.

Everybody can do their part. If you're on the street or at an emergency shelter you can still compost by throwing your apple cores and banana peels in the bush or a field or vacant lot somewhere where they'll biodegrade naturally. Salvage what you can for cash, and only keep what you absolutely need if you're carrying it around everywhere. Wash your clothes if they're still good. Shop at the free store. Set an example! Every bit helps.

## Contact addresses

### Send letters to the editor to:

Email: [the\\_better\\_times@yahoo.ca](mailto:the_better_times@yahoo.ca)

Post: The Better Times, c/o Morgan Thomas

1085 Winnipeg Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba R3E 0S2

Please use the above addresses to send story ideas that you want to write, or finished articles; or to ask about writing workshops; or if you want to offer to do photography or illustration.

For any other questions related to this publication, please write to Nick Ternette, Editorial Board Chair, at: [ternette@mymts.net](mailto:ternette@mymts.net).

### Organizations featured in articles:

#### Resource Assistance for Youth (RaY)

125 Sherbrook Street, phone: 783-5617

#### Ndinawe Youth Resource Centre

472 Selkirk Avenue, phone: 589-5545

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

#### Legal Help Centre

380 Spence Street, phone: 258-3096

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