

Living on minimum wage

Struggling to stay above poverty line

Number of workers making minimum wage have more than doubled

By Solana Cain

Half of Ontario's workforce is living paycheque to paycheque, and even those working full-time all year are struggling to stay above the poverty line.

According to the Ministry of Labour, one in 10 workers in our province is making minimum wage, and this number has doubled in the last decade.

Gairy-Ann Brown worked at a factory and fast-food restaurant before taking a job as a housekeeper at a hotel in Belleville for almost a year.

"I'm thinking about going back to a factory job unless shit starts working out," said the 20-year-old, who is currently making \$10.50 an hour at an international hotel chain. She was making \$11.75 an hour at a factory in Belleville.

Raised in Trenton, Brown now lives in Belleville and is currently renting a house on Coleman Street with three roommates.

She spends her days cleaning rooms, and making beds. On average, she cleans up to 17 rooms a day.

"We go in there, strip the beds, take out the garbage, you know, make it nice and neat and by the end of all that it looks like a brand new room for the next person," she said.

In a good week, Brown will work about 35 hours and in a bad week she pulls in 20 hours. It depends on how many guests are staying at the hotel, she explains. There is an opportunity for tips, which Brown does not have to share, but usually she is left around five dollars a room.

"A good customer will leave you like \$60, so you know you did a really good job," she says. "That's a really good day."

Brown is currently a quarter above



Photo by Solana Cain

Gairy-Ann Brown, 20, is a housekeeper at a hotel in Belleville. She makes minimum wage and when a guest leaves her a good tip, which is not often, it's a "cherry on top of the day." Most days she's stressed about rent and her phone bill but she tries not to think about it.

the province's minimum wage and wishes her pay would be increased beyond the new minimum wage in June, but she fears that if that happens, the cost of everything else will go up as well.

"It's pretty friggin' hard trying to make it every month with this job," said Brown.

Like many young adults in Ontario, Brown lives paycheque to paycheque.

"My paycheques aren't steady, so you never know if this pay coming up, I'm going to be broke," she said.

Her biggest worry is rent, at \$460 a month, followed by her phone bill, about \$85 a month, and her car payment, around \$300 a month.

"Well, I had a car...I got in a car accident but I'm still making the payments for it. I'm almost done but it sucks cause

I don't have a car," she said.

Brown walks to her job, which can take up to 35 minutes. She says it's good exercise.

A former cadet, Brown is considering signing up for the military. She is also contemplating cosmetology as a career but thinks it will be easier to create that business after joining the armed forces.

"It's just a better life in the military,"

she said.

"Everything comes free, so why not?"

For now, Brown pays her rent and other bills with little to no cash left over for herself. She rarely eats out, maybe a Subway sandwich every now and then.

She waits until her next paycheque, hoping it'll be better than the last.

"My plate's pretty full right now," she said, "I'm trying not to think about it."

Drake Devonshire Inn being welcomed in Wellington

By Emily Cumming

Local residents look forward to the opening of the new Drake Devonshire Inn in Wellington.

The centuries-old home has been under renovation for two years, since Jeff Stober, CEO and founder of the Drake Hotel in Toronto, bought the property for \$1.3 million. With the date of completion having been delayed several times already – originally expected to open in 2013 – the only complaint from local residents seems to be that the inn can't open soon enough.

"It's been under construction forever. Everyone wonders when it will be done," said Margery Wiltse, 86, whose great uncle, W. P. Niles, owned the property and converted it from a foundry into his fam-

ily home, where he lived until his death in 1916.

The Drake Devonshire Inn is the first business venture outside of Toronto for Stober, who made his name with the development of the famous Drake Hotel on Queen Street West, which opened in 2004.

Billed as a "restaurant, bar & boutique hotel," the Drake hotel in Toronto is known for its celebration of art, live music, sleek design and a notable menu. The Devonshire Inn will be the most recent edition to the Drake brand since Stober opened the restaurant Drake One Fifty on Bay Street in Toronto a few years ago.

"We look forward to the joint mission of inviting our urban guests to experience Wellington's amazing offerings, and also

bringing our unique Drake culture and hospitality to the vibrant Prince Edward County local community," said Strober in a press release.

The Inn is now expected to open in June or July of 2014.

Paulette Greer, owner of the Side Street Gallery on Main Street in Wellington said the opening of the Drake Devonshire Inn will be "great for Wellington."

"It will create another destination experience in Prince Edward County."

"We have wineries, great restaurants, local artisans and the opening of the Drake will just enhance Wellington," said Greer, who has lived and worked in the area for 14 years.

Chris Loane, along with his wife Jessica, will serve as an innkeeper of the new Drake Devonshire Inn. The couple,

who both have 15 years experience in the food and beverage industry in Toronto said that they expect a diverse clientele.

"The great thing about Prince Edward County and Wellington is that it is basically the hub of the area," said Loane. He expects a lot of guests from Toronto, Montreal and Ottawa because Wellington is within a few hours of each city, but also is looking forward to hosting locals.

"In Wellington, there are also a lot of seniors in this community, so I expect a lot of seniors here as well in the daytime and the early evenings. We are looking forward to catering to them."

"The demographic is really wide. It goes anywhere from the mid to late twenties to the mid to late eighties."

In addition to innkeepers Chris and Jessica Loane, the Drake will also be sending in chef Chris Sanderson from Toronto to work at the Wellington location. They are also hiring about 30 local employees and are currently training them at the Toronto location.

"I hope my son gets a job there," said Debra Cox, of Rock N' Rogers Pizzeria on Main Street. Cox went on to say that she doesn't expect the opening of the Drake Devonshire Inn to impact their business, saying, "Our clientele is quite different."

Some hope that the presence of the Drake will bring exposure to the many local offerings the community already has, rather than just hog the spotlight. In reaction to the Drake's signature tagline "A Hotbed of Culture", Wiltse said "We did have a culture before, you know."

Guide dog helps woman live independently

Animal gives her confidence navigating streets

By Samantha Hobbs

You leave your house, you go out and you always seem to catch at least one person's attention.

That is what it's like for Betty Persuric. She's blind and has a canine vision dog guide.

A lot of people have never seen a dog guide or think that they are a new thing, but they have been around for quite a while.

Canine vision or seeing eye dogs have been around for almost 30 years. The Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides has been training canine vision dog guides in their Canine Vision Canada program since 1985. The dogs are trained to guide their handlers who are blind or have low vision.

This includes navigating around obstacles and getting them to places they go to on a regular basis. This gives the handlers more confidence in achieving everyday tasks.

Persuric has not been blind her entire life. She was able to see until the age of 11, when she was playing outside with her brothers and sisters and was hit in the face with a snowball.

Initially she was fine, but soon after, she lost sight in her left eye and gradually lost sight in her right eye a year later. After becoming completely blind, Persuric's parents sent her to a special school for the blind, where she was taught to do everyday things like cooking and cleaning. She also learned how to crochet, knit and sew.

As she grew older, Persuric learned to get around with the help of others and a white cane. She did things every girl did as they grew into a young adult. She moved out of her parent's house, lived independently and even got married.

Her husband at the time did almost everything for her. "He wouldn't even let me cut my own food or pour my own drink I felt like a child" said Persuric. So she applied for a guide dog from Guiding Eyes for the Blind in the United States.

Shortly after applying for a guide dog,



Photo by Samantha Hobbs

Betty Persuric walks with her dog Mac around her neighbourhood in Belleville. Betty is blind and Mac is her dog guide. It is his job to guide her and help her navigate around things when the two of them are out.

Persuric was matched with a yellow lab named Imarry from the Guiding Eyes for the Blind training facility.

After coming home from their training Pursuric and Imarry had developed a strong bond. She felt much more confident going out and doing things with her guide dog leading the way. Having Imarry made many positive changes in Persuric's life. Persuric's second husband Peter is also blind, losing his eyes in an accident.

Persuric had Imarry for several years. They were a great team and she had the independence she wanted. She was able to go out without another person.

Unfortunately, her guide dog became sick. She had developed problems with her liver, and was no longer able to work and keep Persuric safe. So Persuric had to make the tough decision to retire her guide dog.

Retiring Imarry meant Persuric would lose the independence that she had gained, so she decided to apply for a new

dog.

Her current dog Mac came from the Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides. The Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides trains six different types of dog guides and is located in Oakville, Ontario and provides dog guides to people with disabilities across Canada. The foundation does not receive any government funding. All their funding comes from Lions Clubs all over Canada, along with sponsors and donations from the public.

Persuric was approved and in November 2012, traveled to Oakville to meet and train with her new dog.

She was matched with a canine vision dog guide named Mac. Persuric bonded with Mac, a male black Lab.

"Mac and I clicked instantly," said Persuric. "We started walking and we were in sync. It was like I was walking with my old dog."

Persuric and Mac trained together for a month, learning how to walk in sync,

working on commands, making sure Mac kept her safe by doing things like alerting her to a doorway and curbs and guiding her through traffic. If it was not safe Mac would stop her.

When Persuric returned home with Mac, she began teaching him new things, including leading her to the bus stop near their house and home after a walk.

Shortly after Persuric returned home with Mac, her husband Peter also received a canine vision dog guide, another black Lab named Buddy.

"Between these two playing and the cat, our neighbors must think we have a zoo over here or something," said Peter.

When she and her dog are out, Mac is all business, but at home he is just like any other dog, loving to play and cuddle.

"Having a dog is like having a toddler. Even though Mac can be a little whiny and crazy, I love him. He's like my kid. I wouldn't trade him," said Persuric.

Loyalist films to be screened

By Emily Cumming

Loyalist students will screen their films at DocFest in the first ever collaboration between the college and festival organizers.

The screening will take place tonight in the Alumni Hall at Loyalist college and will feature 12 student produced and directed films.

Paul Papadopoulos, professor of the TV & New Media program teaches the *Advanced Field Production* class where students developed the films that will appear in the screening.

"It's going to give them an opportunity to have their work showcased to the public," says Papadopoulos, who thinks the experience will be invaluable for the students.

"They are going to have an audience, a panel of three industry professionals outside of faculty who will give their feedback on each of the pieces, so it really is an opportunity to be at a film festival type setting for the first time in their lives"

The panel of will consist of filmmakers Adam and Andrew Gray (Fly Colt Fly) and Tess Girard (Just Passing Through, Old Growth) and Ryan J Noth (Northwords).

The films will cover a variety of topics, from a local band whose members are all in their eighties, to a film about Memorial Arena and it's state with in the community.

The films all derived from a class assignment in the TV & New Media department, called 'Foursquared.' The students are put into groups of four with four different roles (director, director of photography, audio and editor) and are challenged to make a four-minute film based on one of four topics. The topics are *going green, hot button, the scene, and insider.*

Rob Howsam, a second year student in the TV & New Media program, will be having his film about the Memorial Arena screened tonight.

"I've seen my video a bunch of times, I know where it's at, so I'm pretty pumped to see other people's just because you never really get to chance to see how everyone else did, to see the final product. It's going to be pretty cool to see everyone else's."

The films will be screened tonight at Alumni Hall at Loyalist College and is free to attend.