

Monday, October 1, 2001

Mostly Cloudy and 16.3iC in [Ottawa, ON](#)



radio one



[Ottawa Morning](#)

[Ontario Today](#)

[All In A Day](#)

[Bandwidth](#)

[In Town and Out](#)

Find a Show !

91.5 Live

ottawamorning

ottawa.cbc.ca

weekdays 5:30 to 9 a.m.

Features

- Daily Information
- Trends
- Theatre/Arts
- Internet
- Live Music
- Films

Commentary

Latest

Feature Interview

Latest

Columnists

- Bob Johnstone
- Dr. Brian Goldman

e-mail

[ottawamorning](#)

Talk Back

613-562-8666

Fax

613-562-8813

Mail

P.O. Box 3220,
Station C,
Ottawa, K1Y 1E4

Phone

613-562-8506

TIME: 8:22 AM

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT: RITA CELLI WITH COMMENTARY BY JOHN LACHARITY

INTERVIEW SUBJECT: KEENAN WELLAR, CEO OF LIVEWORKPLAY, CO-FOUNDER OF HEARTWOOD HOUSE: AU COEUR DE LA VIE

INTERVIEW TOPIC: TROUBLE AT BRONSON CENTRE LEADS TO NEW BEGINNING AT HEARTWOOD HOUSE

John Lacharity

Well, the Bronson Centre is supposed to create a sense of community for people with special needs. It's owned by the Grey Sisters, they rent out space to community service groups at reduced rent. But the Sisters have had a strained relationship with at least some of their tenants for the past year or so, which has led some of them to strike out on their own. Rita Celli is on site with more. Good morning Rita, where have we reached you today?

Rita Celli

John, you have reached me at Heartwood House, which on the outside looks like a grey building which used to be a school, and on the inside is a big green tree, the logo there created by a client in the building, with people holding hands dancing, not quite finished because they are still in the "scrubbing" portion [of their work] here, a nice foyer, kind of a Friendly Giant look here John, with a nice fireplace and chairs with afghans, and I took a quick spin through to look at the building, some rooms still being worked on, ladders and scaffolding, and on the top floor I found Keenan Wellar, he's with the organization called LiveWorkPlay. Their room was all set up, ceramic floors, and a little kitchen, your organization helps people with developmental disabilities?

Producer
[Jane Anido](#)

Keenan Wellar
That's correct.

Host
John Lacharity
with Rita Celli

Rita Celli
Now maybe we could go back, you are one of the founders of Heartwood House, maybe you could take me back to last year when you were a tenant at the Bronson Centre, just to briefly remind people what was the problem at that centre for you?

Audio Help
[Click here](#) if you
can't hear the
RealAudio clips

Keenan Wellar
Well, there was one major incident that lead us to an understanding of a lot of the problems and that was last September when the centre's director Maureen Moloughney was fired in a very abrupt and not well-handled manner, and it upset every single person in the building and certainly got us thinkig together as a community about "what exactly is going on here" because there was no explanation provided for the firing, and we were unable to obtain that information in several weeks of questioning afterwards

Rita Celli
So what did you decide to do, you and the others?

Keenan Wellar
Well, we started meeting weekly, beginning in September, and just focusing on at first "what can we do to fix things here, we have to find out what has happened, we have to work with the Grey Sisters and resolve these problems" and that just didn't happen for a period of some three or four months of trying, and eventually the talk turned away from the negative, and towards the positive, which was: what do we have in common, what is it that we've lost, and could we do this somewhere else if not here?

Rita Celli
One of the issues was that you were getting a good rate of rent if I am not mistaken.

Keenan Wellar
That is correct, as far as I know Bronson Centre is still offering affordable rents.

Rita Celli
You decided you wanted to recreate the kind of environment that you had previous to this dismissal, so how did you go about making this turn into a reality?

Keenan Wellar
Well, I'm not sure [laughs] it somehow happened, people working very hard and continuously together, a lot of it was just extremely fortuitous and extremely hard work, and finding the building here, and having a successful negotiation with the Beth Shalom Synagogue who are the owners and who were extremely generous, they were intending to lease the building at market rates, and we walked in and said "how about half" and uh [laughs] we started from there and they didn't throw us out [laughs].

Rita Celli

What other sorts of challenges have you had?

Keenan Wellar

Well, there's just an awful lot of hard work and the fact that we've had absolutely no money [laughs] between those two things, those minor problems, we've forged ahead and managed to recruit an incredible amount of volunteer support in fixing up the building which had been idle for about two years. And now we are just settling down to figure out how we are going to afford this for the next five years.

Rita Celli

The next path! And we should note that your section is all set up but you can sense that there are workers still in here, paint and dust on the ground, a little bit of work ahead.

Keenan Wellar

That's correct, and we aren't at 100% occupancy yet, so we're still interviewing additional groups, we're at about 75-80% so we've got room for perhaps 3 or 4 more sympathetic groups who work with people.

Rita Celli

Who is in here now aside from your group?

Keenan Wellar

There's 8 groups, there's ALSO which is a literacy group as well as People, Words & Change, and English Language Tutoring of Ottawa-Carleton, the Halifax Initiative, the Aphasia Centre of Ottawa-Carleton and...

Rita Celli

These are all groups that help people with some special needs?

Keenan Wellar

No actually, the bottom line is working with people, some deal with disabilities, some deal with literacy, a great variety of issues altogether.

Rita Celli

At first when things were first starting to go sour at the Bronson Centre and you thought how are we going to fix things here and then the idea came to set out...what are you hoping will be different for you folks now that you are in a new building?

Keenan Wellar

Well...it's just set up entirely differently! This is a self-managed community, the people who are running the building are the people who are in the building...we are doing this for ourselves and we are accountable to ourselves to make it work.

Rita Celli

Have you got an Exective Director here?

Keenan Wellar

We have a community coordinator who is Maureen Moloughney, formerly of the Bronson Centre, but we all work in a very collaborative sense and we do have a boardd that is made up of the ten founders, but we just had our first community meeting, the entire community attended to discuss some of the issues in the building and we will continue to do that and develop that model.

Rita Celli

Alright! Well thank you very much for your time this morning.

Keenan Wellar

My pleasure, thanks.

Rita Celli

So John, from down here at Heartwood House, which is just a little bit in off Rideau on Chapel street and as I mentioned from the outside, it looks like an ordinary school building but on the inside there's all this hub of activity starting.

John Lacharity

Hm. And sort of a strand of a story that has been kind of coming our way for more than a year.

Rita Celli

Thats right, out of frustration - I think you used the term - something new has started!

John Lacharity

Yeah, well, we'll follow it with interest, thanks for bringing it to us Rita. Rita was speaking with Keenan Wellar, he runs, as you heard, an organization for people with developmental disabilities, and is one of the founders of Heartwood House: au coeur de la vie.
