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Creative Collisions

Startup Edmonton turns a downtown icon into a high-tech hub *By Curtis Gillespie*

Cam Linke and Ken Bautista atop the Mercer Warehouse



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See some of our donors in action with photos from ECF events.



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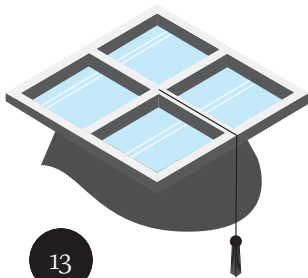
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Cam Linke and Ken Bautista were photographed atop the Mercer Warehouse by Terri Belley.



Edmonton
Community
Foundation



Message from the CEO


Since 2008, the Social Enterprise Fund, created in collaboration between ECF and the City of Edmonton, has provided financing for non-profit organizations and entrepreneurs. For instance, a loan to CKUA Radio helped to transform the restored Alberta Hotel on Jasper Avenue into the station's new home. Startup Edmonton, a business incubator operating out of the newly renovated Mercer Warehouse on 104th Street, also received financing for its rebirth this year (p. 6).

Along with SEF's work providing loans to non-profit organizations, ECF supports the charitable sector through its Community Grants Program. Several times a year, ECF Grants staff and members of advisory committees will review funding applications from not-for-profit organizations and make grant recommendations that fund a variety of emerging community projects. One such grant was to the Citadel Theatre. Retaining and growing audiences is a major focus for many arts organizations and an ECF grant is helping the theatre fund a consultant to examine how audiences are evolving. The goal is to develop strategies to reach a younger demographic — one that our largest theatre company will need in order to continue staging top-quality productions (p. 9).

None of our grants would be possible without donors. That's why in each issue we like to introduce people who generously support our community. Individuals and socially responsible companies want to make a difference. This time, we are delighted to feature All Weather Windows, a corporation that fulfilled a 10-year commitment to raise \$250,000 for its endowment fund (p. 13). We'll also tell you about a donor and volunteer who named ECF the beneficiary of his life insurance policy (p. 14).

ECF often partners with other groups to fund initiatives that are challenging to start and operate. Empower U is an example of one such collaboration. It aims to help women exit poverty by providing a matched savings program and financial literacy. Don't miss this inspiring story (p. 12).

Finally, if you're reading this in early October, it's WillPower Wills Week in Edmonton. Join ECF for a free public session held each year on the benefits of having a valid, up-to-date will. Presented by experts in the field, sessions are held in venues around the city. For more information, visit ECFoundation.org.

In fact, a visit to our website will reveal lots more about *your* community foundation — its people, projects, scholarships and grants. ECF folks are always eager to help you in person, too — just give us a call. 

Martin Garber-Conrad, CEO

Spotlight on Funds

Just four of the many donors who chose ECF to fulfil their giving needs

Whether for families or organizations, there are many types of endowment funds at Edmonton Community Foundation that are designed to match a donor's wishes for giving.

Endowment funds are invested over the long term and the annual return earned on funds can be allocated in a number of ways: Donors can support a specific cause or organization, year after year, or can provide advice annually to ECF so that their contributions are redirected to an emerging need or immediate project. These investments can also go to the Community Fund, which is administered by ECF Grants staff, or to agency funds established by local organizations to help with long-term financial stability.

Let's look at some examples.



John Slatter Memorial Fund

John Slatter (1919–2001), a career lawyer, was instrumental in re-launching ECF in 1989 and ensured that the foundation would provide broad community support and have ongoing viability. In addition to his work with ECF, Slatter was active in the development of many Edmonton landmarks such as the Westin Hotel, Telus Plaza and Edmonton City Centre, and in the establishment of the Old Strathcona Foundation.

This year, as a tribute to Mr. Slatter's contributions to ECF and the community, the John Slatter Memorial Fund was established to support emerging community priorities. Last year another initiative began in honour of John Slatter: the laneway where the ECF office is located was officially unveiled last month as Slatter Way.




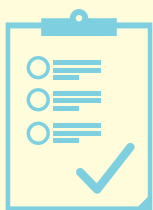
Bud & Laverna Salloum Family Fund and David & Linda Salloum Family Fund

Sometimes more than one generation establishes funds at the foundation. Bud and Laverna Salloum formed their family fund several years ago and, more recently, their son David and his wife Linda started their own, too. These are both donor advised funds, meaning the families give advice annually to ECF staff about the grants to be made. It also allows families to select a specific field of interest to fund, or they can participate in the Community Investment Partnership that offers the opportunity to invest in current community projects.



Film and Video Arts Society of Alberta

FAVA is a non-profit, charitable organization with a mission to support and facilitate the creation and exhibition of independent film and video. Arts and culture organizations that set up endowment funds at ECF can benefit from the Canada Cultural Investment Fund Endowment Incentives program, which is offered by Canadian Heritage and matches donations to these organizations. 



Duggan Family Centennial Fund

Celebrating 100 years since their family moved to Edmonton, the Duggans wanted to establish a centennial fund in their name. The family chose for their gift to support the Community Fund, which is administered by ECF Community Grants Program staff and approved by the board of directors. The Community Fund provides flexibility to respond to immediate needs and priorities. Organizations submit applications for funding that are reviewed by advisory panels made up of experts in ECF's funding areas.

HIGH POWER

Startup Edmonton
turns a downtown icon
into a high-tech hub

By Curtis Gillespie



To enter the Startup Edmonton offices, on the third floor of the newly renovated Mercer Warehouse at the corner of 104th Street and 104th Avenue, is to be instantly transported to Soho in New York City or the Mission District in San Francisco, places where the reality and the fantasy of entrepreneurial activity collide. Funky retro downtown building? Check. Large airy office spaces? Check. Brick walls and open beam ceilings? Check. Plenty of hip, attractive, young people sitting at desks looking somehow both purposeful and idle at the same time? Double check.

The young entrepreneurs who created Startup Edmonton, Ken Bautista and Cam Linke, could pinch themselves when they stop and look at it, or at least they might if they ever stopped. Both men are high-energy, high-ambition Edmontonians with one overarching aspiration.

“Startup is about staying home,” says the enthusiastic Bautista, 35. “We want to help create an entrepreneurial culture that allows people to say, ‘Hey, I don’t have to go somewhere else to make it.’ We want to be part of the growth of a real entrepreneurial culture.”

Linke — taller, younger, lankier, more laid-back — concurs. “Entrepreneurs shouldn’t need to have to leave Edmonton to grow, to make the most of their idea. They used to feel that way, but now they don’t have to. It’s an exciting time to be here.”

Linke and Bautista formally launched Startup in 2011 to fill what they saw as a clear gap in the city’s entrepreneurial scope. There was not, and never has been, a shortage of ideas flowing out of Edmonton (“You can see Edmonton’s DNA in businesses all over the world,” says Bautista) and there were many mature companies operating at a high standard in our community. But what was missing was the connective tissue, the tangible encouragement that allows fledgling companies to make the leap out of the bird’s nest of creative brainstorming and into the jungle of full-on business operations. In short, there was not enough mentoring and support.

“Entrepreneurs need investment and support at every stage of their development,” Linke says.

Of course, Startup itself didn’t arrive fully formed, or, more importantly, fully funded. They needed that early support themselves, and a substantial component of that support arrived in the form of the Social Enterprise Fund (SEF), which offered Startup a loan to help them, well, get started. They used the money to renovate their hip office space from a dilapidated century-old shell to the funky spot it is today, to furnish it and to consolidate their brand.

Jane Bisbee, executive director of SEF, isn’t surprised to see Startup having early success. In fact, she banked on it. Literally.

“As a matter of fact,” laughs Bisbee over coffee at the

Italian Centre, “I probably asked them tougher due-diligence questions than a bank loan officer might have.”

Though incubated largely by the Edmonton Community Foundation (in partnership with the City of Edmonton), SEF is a stand-alone operation that exists to offer loans to organizations that would otherwise have difficulty raising capital from standard sources, such as banks. The loan is often used to help build a new facility, cover start-up costs, or offer business development support. Many organizations in the Edmonton area have benefited from SEF delivering on their mandate (such as, among others, CKUA, the Metis Capital Housing Corporation and ArtsHab), the core of which is that the organization in question must be doing something expressly designed to help create a better community.

Bisbee herself views social enterprise funding in general as a rapidly growing phenomenon that might be best described as “business with a mission.”

And what is that mission?

“There aren’t really any set rules or set definitions at this point. Not with us, and not really at the broader level, either. There’s quite a bit of work going on right now across the country in which people are working to try and measure Social Return on Investment. There are conferences taking place, research being done. It’s still very much in flux. But for us, for the SEF, it’s pretty simple. We look at something and if we all have the same response — ‘Hey, that’s a good idea!’ — then we’ll probably help out if we can.”

There wasn’t much doubt at SEF that Startup was a good idea. Bautista and Linke opened their doors in the fall of 2011 and their immediate success demonstrated that a significant gap existed. Thousands of people have already taken advantage of their services, from their various membership levels (which offer desks, offices and mentorship) to their Demo Camps to the Hack-a-thon (wherein developers and designers share ideas and build apps in sprints) to the “Activate Your Startup” student program they ran at the University of Alberta in the spring of 2012.

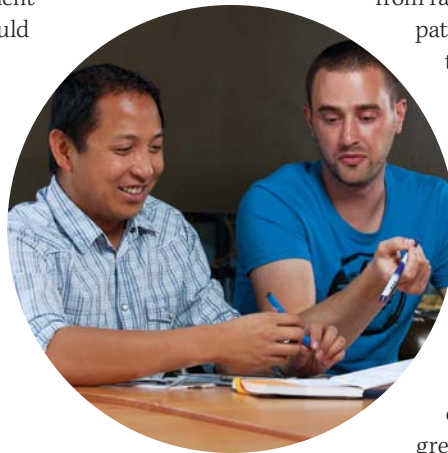
It’s off to a great start, but Bisbee recognizes the inherent irony that what Startup needed from SEF was essentially the same thing they envisioned as the core >



of their business: giving entrepreneurs the tools to go to the next level.

“We look at the business plan, revenue projections, customer analysis, the quality of the management team — all the things any potential funder would examine,” she says. “The only difference between us and a bank is who our clients are.”

An added advantage to offering financial support to Startup, though, was that not only was it engaged in essentially the same on-the-ground work as SEF, but that it resonated with the broader philosophical message of SEF and ECF. “We saw that what they were doing could be great not just for entrepreneurs, but for social entrepreneurs. They’re helping build community.”



coming out of places like the Massachusetts Institute of Technology over the last few decades were the direct result of disorganized work spaces in which people from radically different disciplines were forced to cross paths. This creative chaos model was so seductive (and productive) that Steve Jobs explicitly modelled his Apple campus on it.

If all this is news to Bautista and Linke in theory, it’s not in practice. To them, it’s obvious because they see the fruits of it every day. They are working hard to help foster something new in Edmonton, a culture in which great ideas are turned into great businesses here at home. The added benefit is that it builds community, builds capacity and builds reputations, all of which will contribute to one of Startup’s great dreams.

“What we really want to see,” says Bautista, “is for Edmonton to have multi-generational entrepreneurs, so that we have first, second and third-generation entrepreneurs working and being successful here in Edmonton. That way, new entrepreneurs will have role models and people to go to for advice, mentorship, possibly even investment.”

Startup Edmonton is woven into the strands of numerous trends converging at the same intersection in the Capital — a growing warehouse culture, a burgeoning and youth-driven high-tech industry and a social enterprise network that is taking an assertive and businesslike approach to community building. Startup and the Social Enterprise Fund are part of the same movement at heart, a movement that is deeply complex and yet quite simple at the same time. It’s about creating a new Edmonton based on the foundation of the old Edmonton. Our city is a frontier town of hard-working blue-collar people famous for their sense of participation and volunteerism, but that spirit is precisely what’s animating the new drive towards modernity and urban density.

“It’s not that complicated,” says Linke. “We’re just working hard at trying to become what it is we want to see around us.”

If you are starting up a business venture with a community-building purpose, and would like to be considered for funding, contact the Social Enterprise Fund by calling 780-756-0660.

The Mercer Warehouse and its idiosyncrasies were also a key component of the Startup plan. The Mercer is the kind of building we used to tear down in our rush to the future. Now that we’re here, it’s easy to see our folly and shake our heads at our past selves.

I first meet Linke and Bautista at Roast Coffeehouse + Wine Bar on the ground floor, which sits beside the Mercer Tavern.

“We loved the building right from the start,” Bautista tells me. “We had to scrape decades of gunky old paint off the walls to find the brick underneath, but eventually we did.”

More important than its bricks and mortar, however, is the philosophy and attitude they’re using to influence the tone of the building. It’s an open, casual environment where a code writer might run into a fabric designer, where a web designer might share coffee with a publisher. “There’s a vision around warehouse culture right now,” says Bautista. “You need some density, some random collisions. That’s starting to happen in downtown Edmonton and the Mercer’s a great example of it.”

The random collision theory is gaining traction. In a *New Yorker* article published in January 2012, the power of brainstorming was discussed relative to its formal or informal manifestations. Formal brainstorming, the article concluded, was considerably less fertile than the “random collisions” Bautista talks about. In fact, many of the groundbreaking theories and ideas

The Next Act

A grant from ECF to the Citadel Theatre proves that when it comes to supporting the arts in tough times, the show must go on

By Michael Hingston





Late last year, the Citadel Theatre found itself having to face some tough facts. Thanks to a groggy economy, as well as a growing gap between the theatre's old-fashioned marketing tactics (buying ads and waiting for the customers to roll in) and how people now access information, the number of subscribers for Edmonton's most prestigious playhouse had been in decline for several years.

Now, another theatre might've just sat back and watched how things worked themselves out. Maybe this was just a hiccup. Or maybe it was an omen of even worse things to come. Either way, says Joyce LaBriola, the Citadel's director of marketing and development, they couldn't afford to wait and find out. They needed "to stay with the curve, instead of chasing behind it."

LaBriola and her colleagues had recently heard about TRG, a Colorado-based arts consulting group. A Vancouver theatre company, the Arts Club, had hired TRG to help them

navigate problems similar to the Citadel's: aging audiences, changes in technology and a shrinking slice in the pie chart of entertainment options, to name a few.

The problem was that the bulk of TRG's fee would have to be paid up front — and the Citadel simply didn't have that kind of cash on hand. So they picked up the phone and called Edmonton Community Foundation.

Scott Graham picked up the other end. As ECF's director of community grants, he represents the first of three checkpoints a non-profit has to get through in order to qualify for funding. Second is a review by the relevant committee for the type of project being proposed (in the Citadel's case, this was the Arts, Culture and Heritage Advisory Committee). Third is the ECF board. "Our job is to make the community better," Graham says. "That's what we do here."

Graham worked with the Citadel to help refine their proposal, but he gives them major points for coming in the door with a goal that was clear and practical: to increase their subscriber base and to establish a new system of direct marketing aimed at the customers they already have. These are important factors for ensuring the board's approval, but also for Graham's responsibility to the people who've given ECF money in the first place. "Our ultimate scrutiny is our donors," he says. "We want to be seen as making good, effective grants in the community."

The amount of money the Citadel requested was \$20,000, which falls well within ECF's limits for community grants (they have an approximate top end of \$40,000 for any single project). Proposals for grant funding also need to demonstrate how they will benefit the city of Edmonton — and the wider impact they can have, obviously, the better.

Graham says this part of the decision-making process was easy.

"There's nobody who doesn't win out of a grant like this."

"Who *doesn't* benefit from having a great Citadel Theatre downtown?" he asks. "It's a great

benefit to all sorts of people... and it also strengthens the overall arts sector. There's nobody who doesn't win out of a grant like this."

The advisory committee and ECF board agreed. A cheque went out to the Citadel in May — just six months after that first phone call.

From there, the theatre was able to hire TRG and get to work right away. First, the consultants drew upon all of the Citadel's existing patron information: the thousands upon thousands of transactions the theatre has on file from previous seasons. This allowed TRG to create what they call "heat maps" for every single seat, showing how often each one gets filled and which areas contain "the hottest" seats in the house.

There were some surprising findings. In the past, LaBriola says, traditional theatre wisdom had it that

By Shauna Rudd
Photo: Andrew Paul



Culture Shock

Saturday nights were far and away the most popular; TRG's statistics, however, suggested that pretty much every night has a similar draw. It's tough to argue with numbers like these. TRG's program is doing for the Citadel what sabermetrics (the analysis of baseball statistics) did for Billy Beane's Oakland Athletics in *Moneyball*.

Armed with this new-found knowledge, the Citadel has replaced its single-price system with a new, three-tiered one that reflects their true demographics. This means that the most in-demand seats on TRG's heat maps have gone up in price but, LaBriola says, "by and large, our ticket prices are a little lower."

They've also used this wealth of patron data to circumvent traditional mass advertising, and instead, start speaking to their customers directly based on customer-centric research. Let's say you don't come to that many shows, but you're the first in line for every musical the Citadel puts on: now you've started getting personalized e-mails from LaBriola, offering you a discount on the latest musical if you buy a ticket within the week.

"The whole methodology is not getting you to buy a ticket once — to fix the short-term problem of getting you in the door — but rather building relationships with an emphasis on patron loyalty," LaBriola says. "By doing that, you make sure they come back over and over again. They become your lifeblood."

Final numbers have yet to be revealed, as the Citadel plans to continue working with TRG as part of a longer-term, five-year plan. But subscription numbers are already way up from last year, and the theatre and ECF alike are thrilled at what the Citadel has been able to accomplish so far.

"What I really appreciated about [TRG]," LaBriola says, "was they were able to be objective, and teach us a new way to read our data."

It helps that the city at large is supportive, too. "The nature of Edmonton in particular is lovely and collaborative, and completely non-territorial," adds Graham. "We've never had pushback from other agencies, saying, 'Why do they get a grant?'" Instead, he says, "everybody applauds." 🙌

If you're part of a non-profit with charitable status that could benefit from funding to help boost the community, contact ECF at 780-426-0015.

Made possible by a Youth Empowerment Program grant from ECF, and staged this summer at the Edmonton International Fringe Theatre Festival, *Magnetmonton* follows the trials of the Duke of Science, who floats above the city in his high-tech blimp lab as he attempts to understand the evil force that makes people *choose* to live in Edmonton. The Duke (actor and playwright Ben Gorodetsky), shares his insight.

Have you come any closer to understanding the evil force that draws people here?

In the beginning of my research, I knew for certain that Edmonton was hell on earth. The "force" makes people think that they can come here for a good education or economic opportunities, or for love — but they're all lying to themselves. This force prevents [humans] from seeing Edmonton for what it really is — this cold, flat, dark, murder capital of Canada — and makes them *like* eating donairs and walking around in snow.

When you bring your research subjects up to your blimp lab, are they completely oblivious to the fact that they're under an evil influence?

They are. Some of them begin to realize because they grew up elsewhere. I talked to a woman who grew up in Norway. She came here for a year in the '60s, and acknowledged that she was confused about how she was still here. But we worked through it together: She had found love, and community, and opportunity, and other great "unities."

What have you come to understand toward the end of your research?

I think I may have judged Edmonton too harshly. Edmontonian's community is deeper and more complex. The coldness is tempered by the warmth of the communities and the abundance of theatres and cafes and other enclosed spaces where people gather, out of the cold, and this in turn creates more rewarding interpersonal connections, which I of course have not experienced because I've been living in a blimp by myself for five years.



U-Turns

Empower U arms underprivileged women with financial savvy

As a single mother in the working class, Janelle Colbourne knows how hard it can be to make ends meet.

After a difficult pregnancy forced her to quit her construction job, and her subsequent position at a local flower shop, she was having trouble balancing her cheque book. “Formula’s not cheap; diapers aren’t cheap,” Colbourne says, adding that after rent she’s left with a pittance of \$134 per month for groceries and household expenses.

Things were looking grim until she saw a news segment about Empower U — a matched savings program that includes financial literacy training designed for women with low incomes. It’s an initiative of the Alberta Asset Building Collaborative and, so far, 85 women have completed the program with another 115 expected to go through it by the end of this year.

Colbourne registered for Empower U through the Elizabeth Fry Society in April and was accepted after a screening that identified her as a low-income woman who just needed a little support to get back on her feet.

Upon acceptance into the Empower U program, participants select a savings plan that lists the asset they’re purchasing and why. Colbourne’s financial goal is to save for her driver’s licence along with a driver education course that will help to lower the cost of her insurance — two things that she believes will open the door to better employment and training opportunities.

Currently, Colbourne relies on public transit to get around and to take her infant son to daycare while she looks for work. “Freezing in winter with a baby, sucks. I’ve had instances where there were three or four strollers on the bus so I couldn’t get on, and it made me late for my appointment. That was part of the difficulty with work. I had to get up so early to get him to the babysitter’s and then backtrack across the city to work.”

A driver’s licence is but one example of an asset


Empower U participants can save for. The savings, which are matched two-to-one, can be used to purchase things like RRSPs, RESPs, GICs, household appliances and home furnishings, or put toward education and job training.

Empower U, which has an annual budget of \$338,000, has a five-year commitment from various funders, says Joanne Currie, director of financial stability and independence for United Way of the Alberta Capital Region. “We’re looking at long-term sustainable dollars to have a long-term impact.”

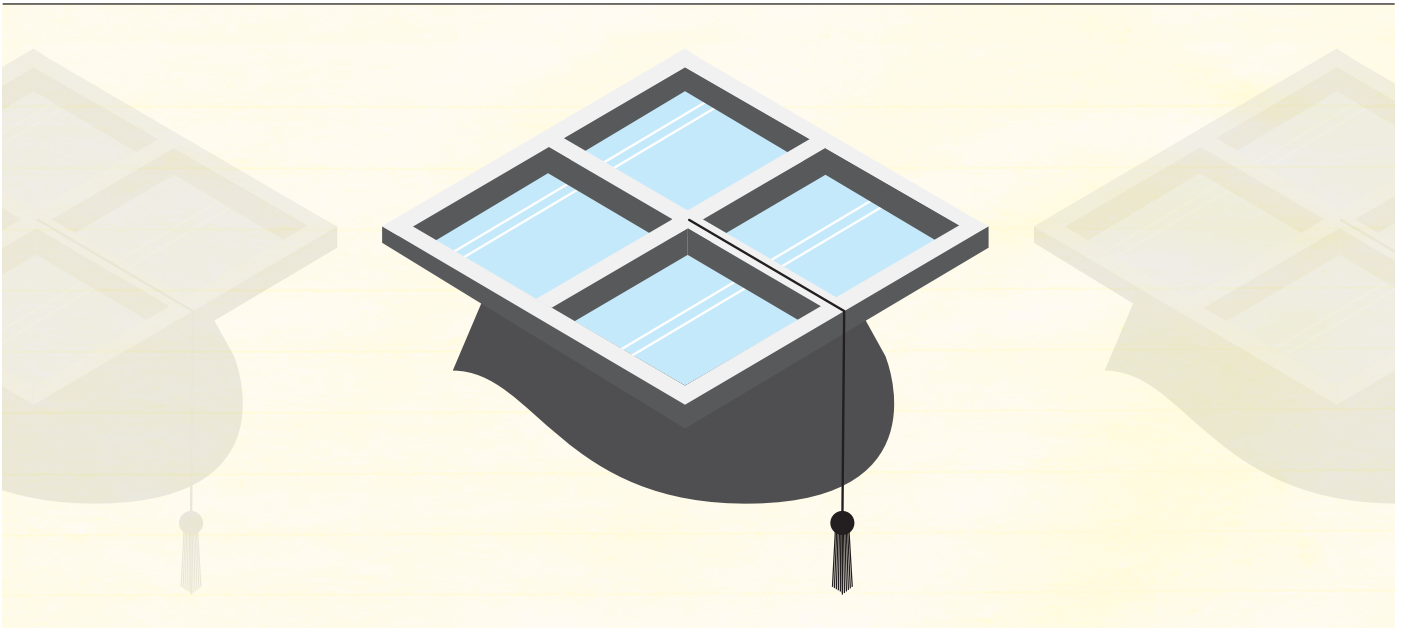
Currie started the program by grouping seven agencies together, including the Candora Society of Edmonton and Centre for Ending All Sexual Exploitation. It kicked off in January 2012 when the Stollery Charitable Foundation donated \$100,000 to the program. Since then, several other donors and partners have hopped on-board, including EPCOR, ATB Financial and Edmonton Community Foundation, which has committed to \$75,000 per year for the next three years.

Currie says the key to Empower U’s success is pairing the matched savings with financial literacy training. “It reinforces the behaviours that they’re learning and it provides hope for them to be able to save for something they might not have thought they could have achieved.”

As a corporate partner, ATB has tailored special bank accounts for the participants to make it easier for them to get started. This account is used for their personal savings while the matched savings are kept in a separate United Way account. Upon completion of the program, the matched savings are sent to the specific vendor selling the asset.

In Colbourne’s case, the vendor will be the Alberta Motor Association, and she thanks Empower U for shaping her new philosophy on money management. Before Empower U, *saving* meant “whatever change I had left in my pocket at the end of the day.” She adds, “I don’t know how I ever got by without some of the stuff I’ve learned in the classes.” 

If you, or someone you know, could benefit from Empower U, contact United Way of the Alberta Capital Region at 780-443-8326.



Windows of Opportunity

A scholarship fund from All Weather Windows gives students a brighter forecast

In 1978 Gord Wiebe quit his job as a Winnipeg locomotive engineer and moved to Edmonton at the behest of his uncle, who had just founded a small windows repair and installation business.

Though he was only 24 at the time, and loved the railroad, it wasn't something he wanted to do in his 50s and 60s, so Wiebe jumped at the opportunity to work for his uncle at All Weather Windows.

The company started in a modest 10,000 square foot facility, and as Wiebe worked his way up from sales manager to principal partner, the business expanded into nine Canadian cities from Vancouver to Atlantic Canada. In 2012, for the fourth year in a row, it received designation by Deloitte as one of Canada's 50 Best Managed Companies, and is now the largest privately owned window and door manufacturer in the country.

Now, as the corporation's CEO, Wiebe believes that one good turn deserves another, which is why he created a scholarship program through the Edmonton Community Foundation.

To mark its 25th anniversary in 2002, Wiebe started the All Weather Windows Scholarship Fund as a way to give back to the community that's helped his business reach the height of success it enjoys today. The company budgeted \$25,000 per year for 10 years to provide ongoing support for students' tuitions. Their \$250,000 goal was

reached earlier this year.

"We wanted to start the fund, [but] for us to administer it ourselves would be very cumbersome. So, someone suggested we contact ECF, and it's been a seamless partnership," says Wiebe.

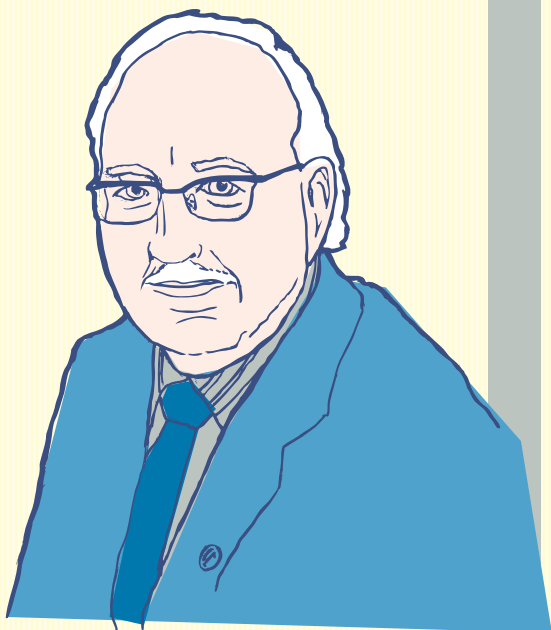
Initially, he wanted the scholarships to fund tuition to trade schools exclusively, but that mandate has changed slightly to include universities in order to accommodate the evolving needs of the industry. "We may be in the trades, but project managers and IT professionals play key roles within the industry too," he says.

Currently, the program provides annual funding towards NAIT, the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary — with a SAIT scholarship to come in the near future as the company continues to expand from the residential window market to the commercial market (SAIT is considered to be a leader in the commercial window field). To date, ECF has awarded more than \$36,000 in scholarships through the fund.

Wiebe points out that, in some cases, not only do the scholarships help students enter trade school, but they also have a reciprocal effect of helping to address the labour shortage of trained trades people in Alberta.

"This is a great city and you don't need to go elsewhere to have a wonderful life and career," Wiebe says. "I'm finding that many young people think Edmonton is a backwater town, but I think there are great things happening here, and the growth of this city has lots of opportunity." 🌊

For more information on starting a scholarship fund through ECF, please call 780-426-0015.



A Lasting Legacy

Tom Olenuk spent his life contributing to community organizing. When he died, his legacy continued with a life insurance donation.

When Brian Henderson met Tom Olenuk, the two men were at the start of their careers at Canada Post. It was the early 1980s, and Henderson had just arrived in Edmonton from Quebec; Olenuk was an Ontario transplant who'd arrived in the late 1970s.

From the beginning, Henderson was struck by how intelligent and caring his new colleague was, but it was their mutual interest in the labour movement that solidified a friendship.

"He was an outspoken individual who'd make his beliefs — or an organization's beliefs — heard among politicians," he says. "And he was a great writer. That man was unbelievable when it came to writing."

Olenuk was devoted to building a "fair and equitable" community, says Henderson. At the time the two men met, Olenuk was a grievance officer for the Edmonton branch of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW), advocating for his colleagues. Later, he served a term as union president and sat on the board of the Edmonton Community Foundation. He was also a fervent believer in the Edmonton arts scene and collected visual art by local artists. "He was very passionate about

the city," says Henderson.

When Olenuk mentioned that he'd planned to donate his life insurance to ECF, this didn't surprise his long-time friend one bit. "He wasn't a selfish person, that's for sure. He'd donate either his money or his time for a cause. He was always like that," says Henderson.

While many people aren't aware that life insurance can be donated, it's an easy and cost-effective way to contribute to a non-profit organization like ECF. "Signing on the line is a pretty small task, but the amounts tend to be quite large. These are gifts people generally can't afford to give during their lifetimes," says Kathy Hawkesworth, director of donor services at ECF.

Before his death in 2009, Olenuk approached the organization to discuss how the money would be spent. "We really encourage people to do this with us, and many do," she says. "We sit down and craft an agreement that describes their wishes, so they can be confident that when they're not here to look over our shoulders, we'll follow what was intended for the funds."

It's difficult to know how many people will be donating their life insurance to ECF in the near future, particularly since it's relatively young at 20 years of operation. But it's something that Hawkesworth wishes more people would consider, since

it needn't involve much of a financial sacrifice. After all, most people buy life insurance for their children, and when they've grown to adulthood realize it's no longer needed.

"Now, you have this policy that doesn't have the same purpose — but you can repurpose it," she says. It's also possible to have multiple beneficiaries, so a person could donate a portion to an organization and the rest to family members.

Just four months after his death, ECF received Olenuk's life insurance and invested it in an endowment fund. Each year, 3.5 per cent is available to support the organization in different ways. Rather than earmark the funds for a specific niche, Olenuk asked to have his gift support the Community Fund, to be used at the discretion of ECF.

The flexibility of this gift is enormously helpful, but Hawkesworth says donations that also reflect the donor's interests are just as valuable: "The nice thing is that we can really cover off a lot if we're all giving to our strengths and passions." Donating your life insurance to a non-profit organization such as ECF is one sure way to keep those passions alive. 🌊

If you would like to learn more about donating life insurance to ECF, call 780-426-0015.

How to Make a Fund

1.

Define Your Objective

Even if you have only a vague idea of where you want your money to go, give ECF a call, says Kathy Hawkesworth, director of donor services. The foundation will help you articulate exactly how your fund might work, and help you define how you can make a difference by matching your support with organizations whose goals most closely mirror your own.

ECF's only criterion is that the money be granted to a registered Canadian charity — so you're not limited to local causes. "Whatever they want to accomplish in the world, we'll talk to them about," Hawkesworth says.

2.

Make an Agreement

ECF prepares an agreement. This will explain, in writing, the goal of the fund and the extent of participation you want to have in allocating the money. It does not create an obligation for you, but instead provides assurance that ECF has understood your goals.

3.

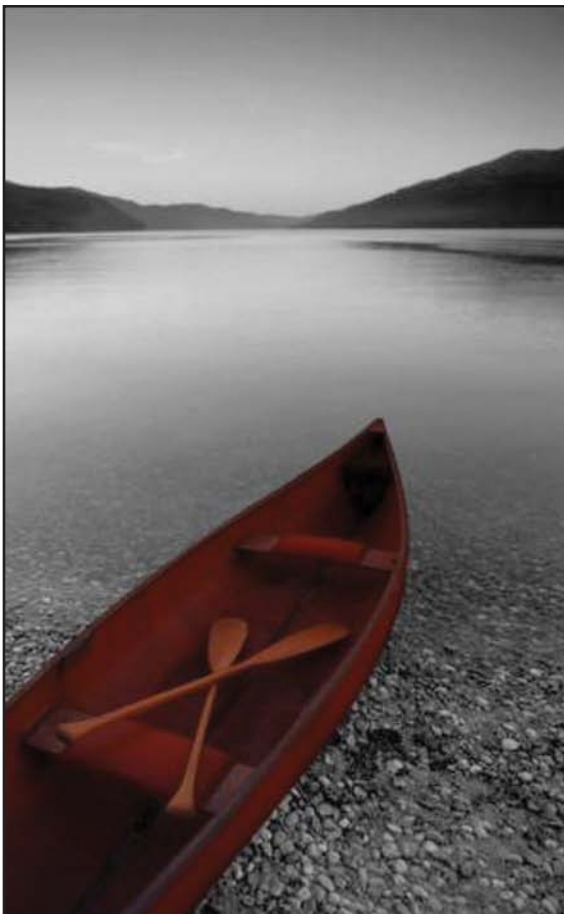
Get Started

A fund can be started with just \$10,000, which can be donated all at once or built up over a 10-year period. The money is not immediately allotted; it is invested and approximately 3.5 per cent is distributed annually. This means your fund will continue to support causes important to you, now and in the future.

4.

Maintenance

Once the fund reaches \$10,000 and is ready to grant, your level of involvement is your choice. Donors can choose to add to their fund's value, stay active in the annual charity selection process or, if they've left things up to the discretion of ECF, simply sit back and watch the good work happen.



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