

NEWS RELEASE

Wilfrid Laurier
University



Laurier invites public to tour historic St. Jerome's high school *Open house offers last opportunity to see building as it was the year it closed*

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Contact: Luke Fusco
Dean, Faculty of Social Work
(519) 884-0710 ext. 2315

or Deborah Currie
Manager, Cultural Affairs
(519) 884-0710 ext. 3800

WATERLOO – Alumni of St. Jerome's and St. Mary's high schools, along with members of the general public, are invited to learn how Wilfrid Laurier University will breathe new life into an educational landmark. The university will hold a St. Jerome's open house in downtown Kitchener from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, September 29.

Laurier will show how moving its faculty of social work into the historic building will continue a long tradition of providing a valued education. Visitors can learn more about the relocation, tour the building once more as it was when it closed in 1990, and see how the building will change to serve countless students and the community in the years to come.

"We are very excited about our move into Kitchener's downtown for a number of reasons," said Luke Fusco, dean of the faculty of social work. "One of those is, of course, the fact that we will be helping to preserve a legacy of educational service and adding a new chapter to that legacy."

The open house will begin with a reception, sponsored by Bingemans, in Kitchener's city hall rotunda. Guests will include St. Jerome's alumni, clergy and teaching staff, downtown and area business owners, and local dignitaries. Fusco, Kitchener Mayor Carl Zehr and Father Bernie Hayes, catholic priest with the Congregation of the Resurrection who taught at St. Jerome's in the 60s and 70s, will share their views on the importance of this project.

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Visitors can take a short tour of St. Jerome’s and will see architectural drawings of the planned renovations. The event will also recognize people who have already pledged significant support to the project. The faculty of social work is seeking to raise \$3 million for new initiatives, enhanced continuing education programs and an academic development fund.

When social work relocates to Kitchener by September 2006, it will bring 250 graduate students, many of them moving to Waterloo Region with families, into the downtown. More than 50 full- and part-time staff and faculty will also move to St. Jerome’s.

The relocation will generate an incremental economic benefit to the city estimated at \$1.48 million annually. Renovating the 40,000-square-foot facility will generate a temporary increase in income worth \$3.2 million in Waterloo Region, 40 person-years of employment and increased wages of \$2.3 million. The faculty’s annual operating budget, on its own, totals \$3.3 million.

Considered one of the best graduate faculties in Canada, Laurier’s faculty of social work has graduated more than 2,500 social workers since 1966. It provides more than 650,000 hours of yearly community practicum work. Students complete placements in more than 400 national and international community organizations and social service agencies.

Members of the public wanting more information about the open house should contact Deborah Currie, St. Mary’s alum and manager of cultural affairs at Laurier, at dcurrie@wlu.ca or (519) 884-0710 ext. 3800.