

Northern Exposure

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Hemmed In

Wendy Hagar's warehouse space is a modern-day treasure trove. Boxes of candy, toys, soap, shampoo, blankets, and clothes are packed to the rafters. Gift bags and backpacks fill every corner. Jam-packed metal shelves glisten with brightly-coloured goodies.

There are even bikes hanging from the ceiling. "They're for Haiti," says Hagar (pictured third from left with volunteers). "We've sent 31 bikes there - if you have a bike, you can work."

Hagar is the founder of [Sew on Fire Ministries](#), a

Burlington-based charity that sends hand-sewn gift bags and other items to over 70 countries including Canada. An army of volunteers works 600 hours a month to custom-fill the bags for schoolchildren, new mothers, seniors and others in need.

It all happens in one corner of the 5,000 square foot space owned by [Crossroads Missions Warehouse](#), another charity. Sew on Fire has been there 3 years and now sends out over 18,000 bags a year. It needs more space.



"We're squished," says Hagar, a relentlessly enthusiastic mother of two who 'hates sewing' and works four days a week as an executive assistant. "We keep moving up and we can't spread out any

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"Some of them have lost husbands or jobs, and doing good for others has really helped them," says Evelyn Molyneaux, Hagar's helper and close friend. "One woman was stringing bags for us when she was bedridden. It gave her a sense of purpose."

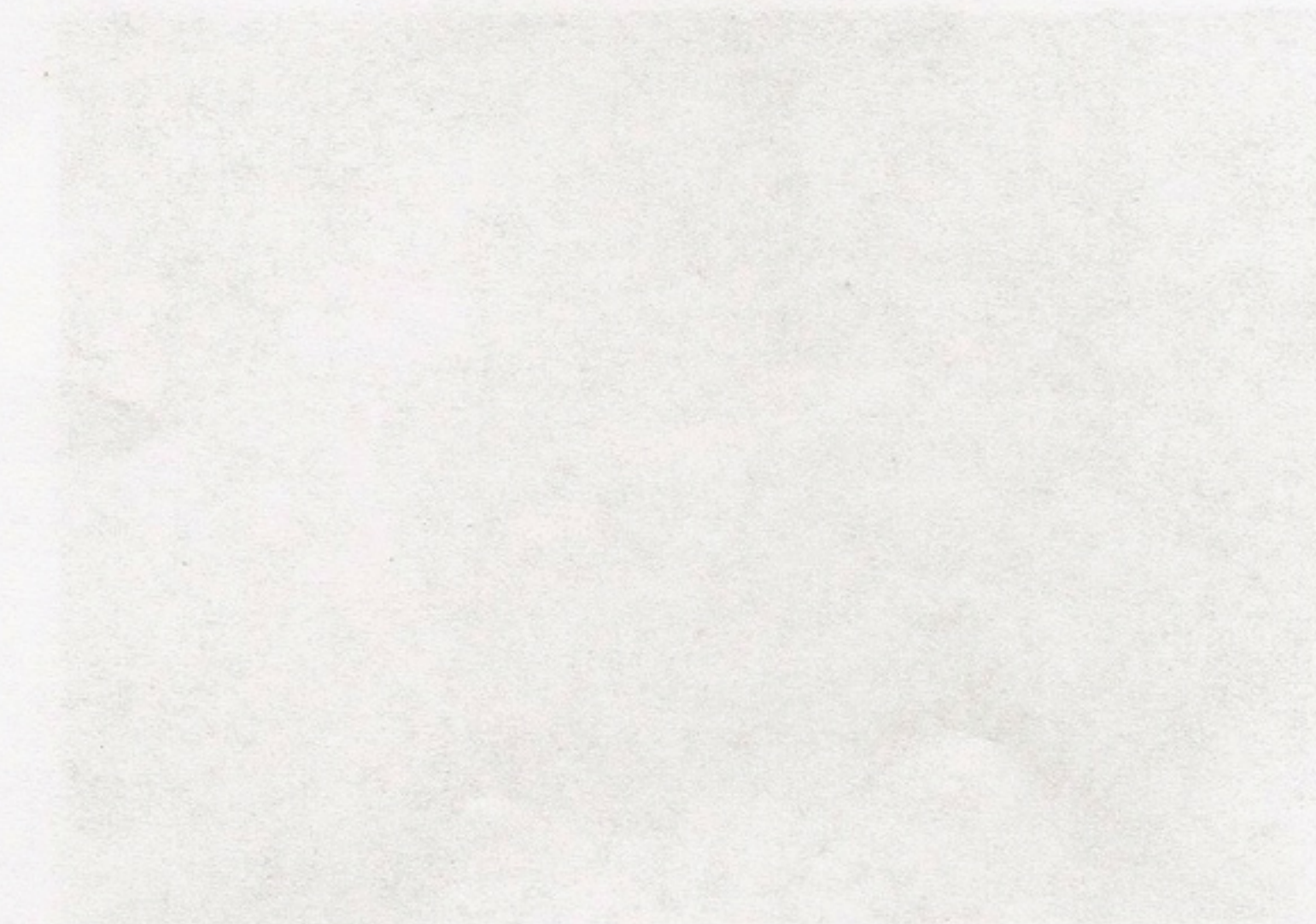
With Hagar's sister running a branch in Alberta and enough donations to keep the Burlington space bursting at the seams, Sew on Fire has grown beyond recognition from Hagar's original plan to make 100 bags for orphaned babies. Companies now donate skids of new products, and a local business is even giving all its liquidation stock.



"It's an entire store," Hagar says to Molyneaux excitedly. Then she takes a look around the crammed warehouse. "Where am I going to put it?"

To contact Wendy Hagar, call 905-333-5722 or visit www.sewonfire.com

Photos courtesy of www.sewonfire.blogspot.com



"We're stretched," says Hagar, a relentlessly enthusiastic partner of two who 'does sewing' and works full-time as an executive assistant. "We keep moving up and we can't spread out any

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more.”

Crossroads is also moving its warehouse to Brantford - and although Sew on Fire is invited to come, Hagar can't risk losing her volunteers. With no paid staff, they are all she has.

“We've got a strong volunteer base in Burlington, and they would come a lot less often,” says Hagar, who lives 2 minutes from the current location. “We're so grateful to Crossroads, though - without them, we'd spend all our funds on rent, heat and hydro.”

The dream is to find an alternative warehouse in Burlington, with more room and all expenses (about \$5,000 a month) paid. Hagar has no idea where this will come from - but that was the case three years ago when Sew on Fire operated out of her living room. Out of the blue, Crossroads offered to help.

And Hagar, a committed Christian, is convinced God will continue to use the six year old charity he called her to set up to help the poor and suffering.

“There's never been so much need,” she says. “We've helped in war-torn countries where people need to know that others want to make a difference in their lives.”

People like the Guatemalan widow who was offered a gift bag. She reached in, carefully selected a toothbrush, and said ‘thank you’. When she was told the whole two-pound bag was hers, she began to cry.



“They do tremendous work,” said Wilson Wells, coordinator of Crossroads Missions Warehouse. “They've really helped us out, making gift bags for our projects in Africa.”

Even the volunteers, including schools, seniors, and people from across Canada and the US, as well as the missions groups who bring the bags where they're needed, have had their lives changed.