

# KSM bidding adieu to an old friend

By Nathan Howes  
OAKVILLE BEAVER STAFF

**K**err Street Ministries (KSM) will see a changing of the guard on Monday with a new executive director.

For the past two years, Benjamin Ward has served the Oakville community, managing day-to-day operations for KSM, but has now decided to step down to pursue new employment as president and CEO of a publicly traded gold company in the United States, starting in October.

"I really had accomplished a lot of the things I set out to at Kerr Street (Ministries) and another opportunity came along to move in a different direction and it was just time to move forward," said Ward.

Officially he will be staying with the organization until Sept. 23, but his last day on-site will be July 28, after a 10-day transition period working with his replacement, David Di Sabatino, who has worked as a senior pastor at the Liberty International Church in Toronto.

Ward said his new job will be a bit different from his role at KSM, as he will be managing a "more complex organization and working within the publicly traded environment."

"My time here was definitely valuable and we took the organization from the place of providing great and well-meaning services, to providing them in a synthesized way that really helped the people who come through the front doors and really needed the support of the community," said Ward.

Since coming onboard with KSM in 2009, Ward said the biggest change he has seen has been in the lives of those who come to them for assistance.

"I've seen people who are foreign trained doctors who came to Canada to work who weren't able to, who became clients at our food bank that worked at



OAKVILLE BEAVER FILE PHOTO

**A NEW PATH:** Ben Ward, who has been heading up Kerr Street Ministries (KSM) in recent years, will be leaving to pursue a new role.

menial jobs and didn't have any hope," said Ward. "They came to us because they were hungry, but at the end of the day we were able to help them with much

more."

"It's the kids who come from difficult backgrounds and home environments and live in poverty who are going to post-sec-

ondary education with scholarships. I think that's the real difference that's been made," he added.

Ward said his most significant contributions to the organization have come in the way of providing staff members and volunteers with the tools they need to accomplish their jobs and help change people's lives.

Last May, KSM opened a \$6 billion, 19,000-square-foot Dream Centre to expand its services and programs, and experienced a drastic food shortage in August that saw their food banks nearly get wiped out.

"One of the challenges is creating awareness that poverty is in fact an issue that exists in Oakville. Many people still don't know over 13,000 people live below the poverty line in our community," said Ward. "Trying to make people aware of that and then to show them that Kerr Street Ministries helps these people by giving them the tools and the resources they need to pick themselves up and to move on.

"The biggest challenge (is) to let people know and to get people to donate so that a difference can be made in their lives," he added.

It is this challenge of making people aware of the poverty situation in the community that will remain for some time as Di Sabatino takes over as executive director, Ward said.

"Most people just have no idea that people live below the poverty line and struggle with the basic necessities in life," said Ward. "They have dreams (and) aspirations (and) want to succeed, and they just need the opportunity to do so."

"Kerr Street (Ministries) has grown significantly over the past two years and is now very well-positioned to move forward in the future, and I know that the community will continue to support him (Di Sabatino) and the people who are truly in need."

## De Sabatino taking over the helm at Kerr Street Ministries

David Di Sabatino will take over from Benjamin Ward as executive director of Kerr Street Ministries on July 18.

Di Sabatino completed his Bachelor of Religious Education degree in 2000 and since then, he has held several pastoral roles, most recently with the Liberty International Church in Toronto.

Assuming the role of senior pastor in 2003, Di Sabatino and his wife Jessica, worked hard to build this congregation from 20 to several hundred on a weekly basis.

In addition to providing traditional pastoral duties for his congregation, Di Sabatino recognized a number of practical physical needs existed for many members of the congregation.

As he and his wife set about dealing with these needs, they created an organization with numerous parallels to the services provided by KSM.

Di Sabatino has been successful in fund raising and has achieved leadership in resource management.

Under his leadership, Liberty has achieved

a weekly participation rate of more than 70 per cent of the full congregation.

In addition to his responsibilities at Liberty, Di Sabatino also serves on a number of boards, which have allowed him the opportunity to work with many CEOs of Fortune 500 companies throughout Canada and the United States.