

*How a dinner date led to co-operative housing*

### **Jane Rowan's Story**

Many years ago, I was a working single mom with two sons. Daycare was an ongoing issue until they grew older. As a single mom, I was looking for friends in a new neighbourhood, and discovered the One Parent Families Association. I signed up in the early 1980s and as of today, still have some of those friends, on Facebook.

During my involvement with this group, I happened to have a dinner date with one of the chapter's eligible bachelors. Turned out that he was not my dream date, so I spent most of the time chatting about the lack of childcare/housing and that we should push for this.

I managed to persuade about seven or eight of the One Parent Families members to join this quest. I approached CHFT, Co-operative Housing Federation of Toronto, to ask for their assistance in pulling this off. I always had an interest in co-op housing, but Lord knows how I had the gall to approach them. As luck would have it, they had land-lease property out on Kingston Road that might be available for us. We were incorporated as Orchard Grove Co-operative. CHFT was able to get federal funding to build this co-operative, and we jumped into the planning process.

One of our goals was to have nonprofit daycare, so I approached the province for funding to build and furnish the Daycare Co-op. The plan was that the parents would volunteer hours at the daycare to lower staffing costs. Unbelievably, we got the funding for our daycare!

After years of meetings, planning sessions, recruitment, and hiring staff we opened our Housing and Daycare Co-operatives. One member of our group did move into a two-bedroom townhouse and our paths in co-op housing sometimes crossed. One couple got married and moved out of town, and I was still a single mom with two growing teenaged boys who no longer needed their mommy.

After this adventure, I was asked to help with other developing co-ops, and finding that I loved meetings, was hired to manage a housing co-op in Scarborough. Not satisfied to sit still, I was recruited by a co-op developer called Lantana. My job was to train the board of directors. Unfortunately, the Federal Government stopped funding our programs and I moved into management of cooperatives until I retired.

Now I want to see a Tiny Village for seniors to live in.