



SHERYL NADLER, THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

Mike Sinden, unofficial caretaker of the Robert Land School, which is now a community resource centre.

## New life for a grand old school

BY WADE HEMSWORTH

Robert Land passed the torch to Eva Rothwell yesterday as a school became a community resource centre and a blighted Hamilton neighbourhood took a big step toward self-improvement.

Robert Land School on Wentworth Street North closed in June, 2004. Yesterday it officially became the Eva Rothwell Resource Centre, named for the mother of benefactor Edward Palonek. She attended Robert Land as a girl.

The 1914 building, two blocks south of Burlington Street, had always been much more than a school. It was the heart of a neigh-

bourhood that most of Hamilton ignored for generations, where strips of houses fill the spaces between scrap yards and factories.

That neighbourhood wouldn't let the building stay dark for long. With considerable help from corporate and community heavyweights and many individuals, the Keith neighbourhood took the building back for good yesterday when it turned over a \$330,000 cheque to the school board.

Among the dignitaries, philanthropists and community partners celebrating the handover yesterday was one whose interest in the school runs especially deep.

Everyone at the centre knows

Mike Sinden, the father of two Robert Land graduates and a member of the community association's board of directors — the group that organized the project. He lives just around the corner on Munroe Street, and he knows how badly his neighbourhood needs the place.

"We have no bus route here, we have no bank, no grocery store, nothing within blocks of here," he explains. "The community itself is like an island in an ocean. We seem to survive, but we're forgotten, too. Between Barton and Burlington and Victoria and Sherman, there's nothing. There's just factories. And we're sort of just forgotten."

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