

Manotick's all-volunteer restaurant serves up meals and community spirit

By Grace Bestard



Outside Miller's Oven. [photo by Grace Bestard]

Since 1983, the non-profit restaurant Miller's Oven has been bringing the Manotick community together. The inviting restaurant is run primarily by senior and student volunteers and donates tips to local charities and fundraisers.

Located in a heritage building in the heart of Manotick, the building has been a telegraph office, a barbershop, a public library, and, finally, a restaurant.

"It's the environment, it's good home cooking, it's not fancy," said Lynda Jenkins, the volunteer manager at Miller's Oven.

Jenkins has been volunteering at Miller's Oven for almost 21 years and has taken a managerial position, helping with scheduling, staff management, training, and serving tables.

"There's no money involved—we're not doing it because we're going to get rich," said Jenkins. "We operate as a non-profit, which we are, and then our tip fund we try and give back as much as we can."

The restaurant's earnings go toward repairs, ingredients, and salaries for a few paid employees. Meanwhile, tips are donated to middle school volunteers and charities like Manotick Food Cupboard and House of Lazarus.

Miller's Oven's commitment to giving back has helped build strong connections with the community, creating a space where customers consistently return.

Since childhood, long-time customer Amanda Ostapyk has been coming to Miller's Oven with her grandmother. "It was always a treat to go for us. We definitely enjoyed going out and spending the afternoon there," said Ostapyk.

Ostapyk highlights Miller's Oven's affordability, home-cooked meals, and importance to the community.

"Everybody that works there volunteers their time, and that's what makes it so special," said Ostapyk.

Ostapyk isn't alone in her appreciation for Miller's Oven. For the senior volunteers who keep the restaurant running, it's more than just a workplace.

"We've got a wonderful group," said Jenkins. "It's probably why we're still in business today."

The restaurant allows senior volunteers to connect with one another and the community. "It gives them a chance to get to know people, our customers, and it's good for their health and well-being," said Jenkins.



The Miller's Oven kitchen is open and inviting for customers to see inside. [photo by Grace Bestard]

In addition to senior volunteers, the restaurant accepts student volunteers as young as 12. Middle schoolers can earn up to \$40 in tips per shift, while high school students can earn their required volunteer hours.

“I think the important thing is good life skills,” said Jenkins. “The students are also very helpful for filling in in the summer when many of our volunteers want to take time away.”

Over time, the 41-year-old restaurant has adapted to the growing neighbourhood and new technology.

“For years, decades, we were cash only, and then of course you have to say, whoa, let’s get in the real world, we’re even on Facebook,” said Jenkins.

To keep up, Miller’s Oven hosts events throughout the year to interact with and connect with customers. They host high teas, Easter brunches, Thanksgiving meals, Christmas in July, and Valentine’s Day teas.

When visiting Miller’s Oven, it quickly becomes clear it isn’t just a restaurant. “The family of Miller’s Oven doesn’t just end at our volunteers and our staff. I mean, we call customers part of the family,” said Jenkins.

Sources

Lynda Jenkins, volunteer manager at Miller’s Oven

Interviewed in person on February 11, 2025

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Amanda Ostapyk, a long-time customer at Miller’s Oven

Interviewed over the phone on February 12, 2025

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