

# Shawky Fahel



Shawky Fahel started his business in 1979 with a \$1,000 loan and a car loaded with carpet samples and paint chips. It was a modest beginning for the charismatic contractor who, with an “astonishing amount of energy,” has built a successful business and a life helping those less fortunate.

Fahel, who sometimes works up to eighty hours a week has always found time to give back to the community in the form of volunteer time and fundraising.

“You do things not because you expect anything in return. I look at it as universal law. We as human beings have to give before we can receive,” he said once.

He arrived in Waterloo from Israel in 1968 to escape the turmoil in the Mideast and still maintains strong connections to the Arab community. A Christian Palestinian, Fahel has written extensively about improving relations between Palestinians and Israelis. He has helped establish two organizations – one that nurtures medical research ties between Canada and Palestine while the other distributes medical equipment to the developing world.

He met the late Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat on several occasions and after working tirelessly for the federal Liberal Party for many years, Fahel calls many high-ranking Canadian politicians his friends.

Fahel has served as an advisor to the department of External Affairs and International Trade on Middle Eastern matters and has been a business delegate to Israel, West Bank and Jordan on two occasions.

Born to a plumber with five sons, Fahel first tested his business acumen on the beaches of Tel Aviv-Jaffa selling bagels at the age of twelve.

After studying political science and Near Eastern Studies at the Waterloo Lutheran University (now Wilfrid Laurier), Fahel worked in San Diego and Miami in the construction industry for several years before returning to Waterloo to start his own renovation business.

Fahel started JG Contracting Ltd. in 1979 and the business prospered. He now owns several businesses under the umbrella name JG Group of Companies, and is based on Roger Street in Waterloo. He operates a bistro at this location as well as an import-export business called Kass International.

Soccer, skiing and fast boats balance a life filled with business, political and philanthropic obligations. He is married to Kathie and has two children.

Fahel has received the Father Thomas P. Brennan Humanitarian Award and the prestigious Paul Harris Fellowship Award. In 2001, he received the Kitchener-Waterloo Millennium Citizen of the year and has been twice awarded the Federal Liberal Party's Outstanding Volunteer Award.

He has given of his time to many organizations including the University of Waterloo, Catholic Family Counseling Centre, Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association and the Y.W.C.A.

Shawky Fahel says: "I enjoy helping a situation change from bad to better. Making a difference is a challenge that keeps me going."

*Photo courtesy of Shawky Fahel*