

Live longer: volunteer

According to a five-year study recently published in the American journal *Psychological Science*, those who help others are likely to live longer. Among the elderly couples surveyed, even when results were adjusted for such factors as health and psychological status, busy volunteers still had a 44 percent lower death rate than people who did not volunteer at all.

New national organization by fall

Merger of the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy and the National Voluntary Organization should be finalized soon. Following extensive cross-country consultations with their own members and with representatives of the voluntary sector at large, the organizations' boards have drawn up a basic framework for the new entity. Final plans will be completed this month; the official launch of the new entity is scheduled for the fall.

Canadians' charitable habits differ

Some recently released figures on Canadian charitable donors: In Quebec, 15 percent of charitable giving was done through religious organizations, an amount equaling the percentage collected by canvassers in shopping centres. But it was in New Brunswick that the religious donations were the highest – 66 percent. Ontario residents respond better to direct-mail solicitation and had the least rate of response to door-to-door canvassers. Only eight percent of Nova Scotians cite tax receipts as motivation to give money to charity, the lowest rate in the country.

Ethics self test available

The ePhilanthropy Foundation has developed a new test to assess an organization's online code of ethics. The foundation also offers resources and tools to help an organization to improve its online practice. For information: www.ephilanthropy.org/selftest.

In brief

Diane Borisov is acting associate executive director of The Montreal Children's Hospital.

Graham Bagnall was named chair of The Montreal Children's Hospital advisory committee.

Sheila Goldbloom has joined the board of Centraide of Greater Montreal.

Dr. **Victor Goldbloom** was elected chair of the board of directors of the *Agence de développement de réseaux locaux de service de santé et de services sociaux de Montréal*.

Pierre Marsan MNA has been appointed Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Health and Social Services.

Alan Ptack was appointed director of Social Services at the Jewish General Hospital.

Michael Shervin was appointed executive director of Project Genesis.

Dr. **Nicolas Steinmetz** is retiring at the end of June.

Kathleen Weil has joined the board of The Montreal Children's Hospital advisory committee.

Jonathan Wener and **Suzanne Savage** have joined the board of the Foundation of Greater Montreal.

The 2004 edition of the Directory of Community Services of Greater Montreal is now available, for \$59. For further information: 514 527 1375.

The Peter McGill Community Council has a new office: 1200 Atwater Ave., Suite 4, Montreal H3Z 1X4; telephone: 514 934 2280; fax: 514 934 1002.

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Mixed reaction to healthcare reforms

Now that the basic framework for restructuring Quebec's healthcare system has been set up, the position of the anglophone community's institutions has been clarified. Key to the new system are local health and social services networks that are to be formed by merging hospitals, CLSCs and long-term-care establishments (CHSLDs) in newly-defined territories. For many anglophone institutions, there would be a significant, but tolerable, change in their status; others are more than dissatisfied.

If recommendations by the new regional agencies are accepted, the Grace Dart-Extended Care CHSLD will be integrated into the MUHC; St. Mary's Hospital will be exempted from merging into a local network and will join a consortium with the MUHC and the Jewish General Hospital. Mount Sinai Hospital, Maimonides Geriatric Hospital and the Montreal Jewish CHSLD will merge under one board. Hospitals serving the Chinese, Polish and Italian communities will retain their autonomy.

In Quebec City, the Jeffrey Hale Hospital, Holland Centre and Saint Brigid's Home will be fused into one autonomous entity, separate from the new local network. However, the Father Dowd, St. Margaret's and St. Andrew's CHSLDs, which have served English-speaking Montrealers for a combined 300 years, will be merged into a local network, a proposal that is being strongly protested.

The government-appointed People's Forum has pointed out the "democratic deficit" resulting from mergers when the community no longer has direct participation in management of its institutions. It also cites the unwieldy structure of the new local networks that could affect client response time. There is general recognition of the need to retain regional admissions process for English services: were each of Montreal's 12 new local networks to become a separate point of entry, it could affect access to English services. It is hoped that during the "fine-tuning" period, before final legislation is tabled in the fall, these concerns will be addressed.

New English Council set up in Verdun

Several organizations working with the 11,000 anglophones in the Verdun area have formed the new Family Child Council of Verdun. They include the CLSC Verdun-Côte Saint-Paul, CCS, the Dawson Community Centre, the Salvation Army and Elizabeth House. The Council will provide a voice for the anglophone community in the planning and delivery of social services.

"It was actually the local CLSC that suggested setting up this new council," says **Carolyn Arsenault**, CCS community worker. "And it is providing funds for CCS to develop a resource manual listing the services available in English. This document is just the first step to improving accessibility. It will also point up the weak areas in the system that the Council needs to address."

Project Chance expanding

In time to celebrate its 15th anniversary, Project Chance has received funding to double its low-cost housing for student mothers. In addition to its first 22-unit apartment building, in downtown Montreal, the agency is renovating four attached buildings on the N.D.G Benny Farm site that will accommodate 23 more residents by year-end. Since it opened in June 1989, over 125 single mothers and 146 children have benefited from the Project Chance program.

"Our residents are very motivated women," says **Suan Cross**, executive director. "Not only do they have the challenge of being single mothers, but as full-time post-secondary students, they must also meet our criteria for academic achievement. The wonderful progress that so many of our graduates have made in their lives is testimony to the motto of Project Chance: 'education is the key to the future'."

Project Chance gives residents a lot of practical support: low rent, supplementary groceries, an after-school program and play areas for the children. They also have a voice: three sit on the agency's board of directors. For further information: 514 934 6199.

Seeking ways to detect elder abuse

An important study now under way could well provide a simple and effective way to detect abuse of the elderly. While collecting data on issues that affect seniors' lives, an investigative team led by Dr. **Mark Yaffe**, chief of Family Medicine at St. Mary's Hospital, has been developing a "tool" that could eventually be used to alert family physicians and healthcare workers of the possible presence of abusive behavior. Nearly 1,000 seniors, drawn from the community at large, participated in the study.

"Elder abuse is a relatively unresearched issue," Yaffe explains. "In fact, it was only in the '70s, as abuse of children became widely documented, that mistreatment of the elderly became a topic of scientific interest. This lack of knowledge can be attributed in part to the reluctance of seniors to report it, and to a general misunderstanding of what constitutes abuse."

Yaffe describes five basic types of elder abuse: physical, emotional, sexual, financial and deliberate neglectful treatment. "Any of these can have serious long-term effects," Yaffe affirms. "In fact, three years ago, a landmark study in the U.S. illustrated that seniors who are abused have much higher levels of mortality and morbidity than normal. And those results do not include the actual abuse."

The Montreal team has been sharing its findings with the World Health Organization Committee on Elder Abuse, which is conducting similar research. "We're now at the stage of validating our work," says Yaffe. "If our investigation indeed turns out the way we hope, it will have major implications in the field. At the same time, our study is giving us a lot of new descriptive information about the characteristics of those seniors who might be abused, as well as a profile of Montreal seniors in general."

The project is funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, and is being carried out at the CLSC René-Cassin Institute of Social Gerontology. For further information: 514 488 3673, local 1340.

Helping schools nurture volunteerism

The Volunteer Bureau of Montreal (VBM) is looking to recruit the next generation of volunteers. Its new training program for school animators is designed to assist them in helping students to have a positive volunteering experience in their community. The hope is that they would then want to continue volunteering as they enter adult life.

"More and more schools are making volunteering a requirement in the school curriculum," explains **Alison Stevens**, VBM coordinator of Training and Consultation. "Our concern is that without proper guidance and support, the students will get turned off by their volunteer activity. So we've developed workshops for the animators that provide them with tools to set up an effective volunteering program."

Stevens points out that successful and sustained student volunteering requires the support of both the school board and the school administration. "And a major element is partnering with local organizations to show them what the kids can do – they have so much to offer. They require a certain amount of structure, though, so the organizations need help in preparing to receive these young volunteers."

The VBM has conducted workshops for two major Montreal school boards so far, with other requests pending. For information: 514 842 3351.

MAB sets up new satellite service

The Montreal Association for the Blind has just opened a new satellite office on the West Island, in the Lac-Saint-Louis CLSC. This is the first time the estimated 800 blind or visually impaired residents there have had access to a full range of vision rehabilitation services in their own community.

The new facility provides specialized low-vision clinical evaluation, social services and counselling, orientation and mobility assistance, development of communication skills, and visual aids and devices. For further information: 514 489 8201, local 1067.

Women's Y to build low-cost housing

The Women's Y of Montreal has received \$2.9 million in federal funding to build a downtown residence for women in difficulty. It will provide low-cost housing for 20 women who are single and without children when it opens in October 2005.

"It is not a shelter," affirms **Claudette Demers-Godley**, executive director. "It is long-term affordable housing for women who have tackled their personal problems and are ready to reintegrate into society. We're designing studios and 2-1/2 room units to limit rents to no more than 30 percent of their incomes."

The Women's Y already operates a residence for less autonomous women with difficulties who follow an 18-month social reintegration program. "The problem," says Godley, "is that even when they've reorganized their lives and are ready to move on, the community isn't ready for them. The lack of affordable housing in Montreal is a disgrace"

The project is moving ahead quickly. The site has been chosen and negotiations for purchase have begun, as has the search for an architect. For further information: 514 866 9941, local 512.

Centraide offers training to agencies

Centraide of Greater Montreal has launched a new program to help its agencies improve their managerial and planning capabilities. Four nonprofit community organizations with expertise in the field have been commissioned by Centraide to conduct comprehensive training sessions for agency staff. Participation is voluntary, and they have the option of choosing a one- or two-year program.

"There is so much pressure on our agencies to meet the ever increasing demand for services," says **Lyse Brunet**, vice-president of Social Development. "We felt that many of them would benefit from having supplementary training in such areas as strategic planning, implementation and evaluation."

Parlour meetings helping parents

Once a month 40 groups of Montreal parents meet in each other's homes to discuss their mutual concerns about child raising and how to improve their parenting skills. These "parlour meetings" were the brainchild of **Barbara Victor**, director of School Services for Jewish Family Services (JFS). The 10-member groups are provided with professional animators specially trained and supervised by JFS.

"These are not parenting groups in the traditional sense," says Victor. "They are parent-driven support networks that continue over the years that their children are in school. Members come to rely on each other for support and friendship, sharing challenges and looking for solutions in their child rearing. In schools where there are a number of these groups in contact with each other, they are forming strong and mutually helpful communities." For further information: 514 342 8171, local 3430.

School shifts support strategy

The McGill School of Social Work Continuing Education program is modifying its approach to focus on providing support and professional development to graduate practitioners in the field. Along with its traditional programs, the School has been developing "travelling" courses that offer training on-site.

"Social work practitioners are so busy, it is often difficult for them to find time to leave their workplace for professional training," says **Sharon Bond**, chair of the Continuing Education Committee. "Our role is to provide our graduates with the most current developments in effective clinical practice and research. So we'll be taking the training to them."

The School has already begun workshops at the Douglas Hospital for supervisors of social work interns. A partnership project is now being organized with the CLSC René-Cassin to provide an educational program for social worker staff covering specific topics across the family life cycle.