

Centre gets new chair, new mission

Newly appointed to fill McGill's Fisher Chair* of Social Work, Dr. **Nico Trocmé** has taken on the challenge of changing the role of its affiliated Centre for Applied Family Studies. Re-named the Centre for Research on Children and Families, this department will now focus on children at risk.

"Our mandate is to study the plight of vulnerable children," says Trocmé, Centre director, "those who are maltreated or who suffer from chronic health problems. The children will be the lens through which we'll examine their immediate environment. And a significant part of our work will involve appraising the services available to these children and their families."

The Centre has already established a vital link with Batshaw Youth and Family Centres, where Trocmé has assumed the role of senior advisor for Research Integration. As a leading investigator of child neglect and abuse in Canada, Trocmé will be continuing his statistical and epidemiological studies on the subject at McGill. With Batshaw, however, he will introduce a new tactic. Says Trocmé: "We'll be going directly to the children and their families to ask about their experiences with the delivery of social services so that we can better evaluate the effectiveness of those services."

In another groundbreaking move, the Centre is taking a place in the province's Quebec's research community. "There's a very good – and very well funded – network of research and treatment centres throughout Quebec," says Trocmé. "But anglophone service providers have not been represented. Nor has McGill. I'm most pleased that the initial response from other centres to our participating in that network has been very positive. It's a critical link if we want to play a meaningful role in the long term." For further information: www.mcgill.ca/crcf.

*The Fisher Chair was endowed in 1986 by the Southam Foundation in honour of Philip S. Fisher, a founder of the McGill School of Social Work.

CSSSs to publicize planning

As the 12 CSSSs (health and social services centres) of the Montreal region work on finalizing their operational programs, they are also making arrangements to make those plans public. It is part of their mandate that they hold some form of public information meeting at least once a year. Some CSSSs are opening their board meetings to the general public, others are holding one or several general assemblies (see [In brief](#), page 4), but all are committed to creating a mechanism to tap into the needs and satisfaction of their communities.

Paralleling development of their individual local programs, the CSSS directors-general have been meeting twice monthly to discuss common issues. The application of many healthcare programs cuts across territories now, so that global planning has become crucial to their successful implementation. New "work groups" on healthcare issues have been set up that bring together the key players involved in each of the Ministry's designated fields of priority action. These are the elderly, mental health, frontline medical services, public health, youth in difficulty, physical health, the intellectually handicapped, the physically disabled and dependencies.

MUHC to expand mountain site

As plans for the \$1.2 billion redevelopment of the McGill University Health Centre (MUHC) move ahead, the Montreal General Hospital has been given a new mandate. Initially, the General was to serve as a secondary hospital to the new mega-hospital in N.D.G. Now it has been designated to play an equal role. And with that decision has come a proposal for expanding what is called "the Mountain Campus".

The Mountain Campus is to support a range of adult medical and surgical activities. These include trauma, intensive/coronary care, emergency room, general medicine, neurology/neurosurgery, mental health, orthopedics, oral and maxillo-facial surgery and general surgery, as well as the MUHC Research Institute and Montreal Neurological Hospital.

COCo champions community sector

When it started up five years ago, the Centre for Community Organizations (COCo) introduced a much needed new source of training for Quebec's community sector. It has since become a focal point for collaborative exchanges not only among anglophone and ethnocultural organizations, but also between them and their francophone counterparts. COCo has now adopted an even broader mandate: to raise and enhance the profile and health of the charitable sector in Quebec society.

Michael Stephens is a co-founder, and current managing director, of COCo. "I think that nonprofits undervalue, in a significant way, their contribution to society. But they're responsible for seven per cent (\$57.5 billion) of Canada's GDP. And Canadian volunteer hours are worth \$14 billion annually. Just imagine the situation if all of Quebec's 46,000 nonprofits – from soccer clubs to social services organizations – stopped their services at once.

"We need to challenge the status quo. So COCo is going to help stimulate reflection on the community sector, its value to the broader community and its role for the future. Of course, an essential part of that exercise will be to determine how the sector should be funded.

"We're very proud of what COCo has achieved so far. Training and support programs – to over 250 organizations last year. Bridge building between the linguistic communities. An e-bulletin that channels ideas and information exchange to 1,500 subscribers.

"Now we're starting two exciting new projects. One, funded through the Quebec Community Groups Network, is designed to increase the visibility and participation of the English-speaking population in Quebec society. The second is a training and mobilization program for the Community Health and Social Services Network that will help anglophone groups in all regions to understand recent health and social service reforms and to participate in the decision-making process."

Volunteer managing the modern way

The Volunteer Bureau of Montreal (VBM) has introduced some strategic new elements to its workshops on volunteer management. Reflecting changes that have been taking place in the field, the VBM has sharpened its focus on the professionalism and structure required in today's volunteer office.

"We've retained many of the tried and true principles that have served us over the past 15 years," says **Alison Stevens**, VBM coordinator, training and consultation. "But, we've incorporated the latest research and practices into our new program. For example, the volunteer managers can be – in fact, have to be – more selective now. They have to choose the right person for the right job and fire people who don't work out – something unheard of before. So supervision and evaluation have become very important responsibilities.

"The number of organizations trying to recruit volunteers is continuously rising," Alison continues, "but they're not all taking advantage of the training available to them. Our workshops not only provide managers with tools and resources they can apply to their work, they also offer the opportunity to exchange ideas and best practices with their peers. They can't get all that on the Internet". The VBM workshops start on October 25. For further information: 514 842 3351.

One-stop shopping at Women's Centre

With the expansion and redesign of its original premises completed, the Women's Centre of Montreal was able to bring all its services together under one roof. "It means that we can address the problems of a client in a single streamlined process," explains **Johanne Bélisle**, executive director. "For example, a woman with a food emergency can be directed to our collective kitchen, to psychosocial services, to job search counselling. The number of women affected by poverty, violence, ageing, and immigration is still rising. Our one-stop, multi-service program can make a tremendous difference."

VON starts new cancer support group

The West Island branch of the Victorian Order of Nurses (VON) has established a new support group for cancer patients that is different from traditional groups. This one is not specific to a particular cancer, but is generic in scope. And it welcomes caregivers and friends as well as patients. There is no charge for the sessions. For further information: 514 695 8335.

New life for old church

When Little Burgundy's St. Anthony of Padua church was facing closure last year, the Roman Catholic diocese of Montreal made a daring decision. It turned the premises over to a lay social activist to develop a centre for interfaith spirituality and create a new resource for the community. The Padua Spirituality Centre has been making major strides on both fronts.

"It's been an active and very fulfilling year," says **Steve Sims**, Centre director. "We've welcomed people of different spiritual traditions from all over Montreal for both eastern and western meditation sessions and classes. There were over 20 workshops on subjects ranging from homelessness to aboriginal medicine and a series of discussions on such topics as ecology, compassion and Tibetan teachings on dying. Our ultimate goal here is to promote inner and interpersonal harmony."

From the community action perspective, the focus is on youth. The CCS is sponsoring a youth worker to conduct leadership workshops every week at the Centre for local teens. This summer the Centre hosted a youth cooperative designed to awaken their entrepreneurial skills and their involvement in serving the community. This group has launched a campaign to restore the long-closed Negro Community Centre. "My mandate is based on the conviction that the Church has to redefine itself so as to actually speak to the conditions of modern life," says Sims. "We're trying to meet that challenge." For further information: 514 313 7137.

Delivering healthcare from a distance

Two new initiatives to improve healthcare for anglophones in Quebec's rural regions are now under way. One is to provide English-speaking health professionals in remote areas with ongoing education and professional support. The other will bring healthcare information and services to English-speaking communities via video-conferencing. Funded by the Department of Canadian Heritage, the programs are coordinated by the McGill University Health Centre (MUHC) and the Community Health and Social Services Network (CHSSN).

The new "distance community support" program stems from the success of CHSSN pilot projects that proved the feasibility of video link-ups between remote communities and MUHC health experts. "We're individualizing the program to respond to each community's needs," says coordinator **Jo-Ann Jones**. "I'll be helping them to organize local participation in the information sessions. At the end of the three-year program, they'll do it on their own."

The "distance professional support" program is part of the McGill project on language training and human resources development. Its goal is to encourage anglophone professionals to work in the regions. "We're working with regional educational institutions that train professionals and the MUHC hospitals network on this," explains **Mireille Marcil**, program coordinator "Together they will define the activities that should be part of our distance-learning program and determine which groups of professionals should be involved."

East End project an eye-opener

When representatives from East End CSSSs and community groups serving anglophones in the area met recently, most did not know each other or what their organizations did. "But our being all in the same room exchanging information created an interesting synergy," says **Francois Benoit**, project manager for CSSS Bout-de-l'île. "Everyone is very enthusiastic now about improving English services."

How the gardens grow!

A community group in N.D.G. has been garnering attention for its network of collective gardens that provide healthful food to the needy. Modelled after the vegetable gardens that flourished during the Second World War, the first of Action Communitaire's Victory Gardens was begun in 1997. Since then, nine large gardens and a varying number of smaller ones have come into bloom.

Over 150 people participate directly in the food-growing project every year. They use about 60 percent of the harvest, while the rest is shared with other community organizations. Workshops provide an important educational component to this gardening activity. The Victory Gardens received this year's Agnes C. Higgins Award, created by Centraide of Greater Montreal to recognize initiative and creativity by one of its supported agencies.

Various views on the voluntary sector

The whole voluntary sector can now benefit from an innovative program that provided advanced training to leaders in nonprofit organizations. The McGill-McConnell Program, which ran from 1999 to 2003, was a joint initiative of the J.W. McConnell Foundation and the McGill Faculty of Management. At the end of their training, the 120 participants from across Canada prepared papers on leadership challenges in the sector. These address a range of topics, including board-staff relations, youth participation in philanthropy, volunteerism and the application of complexity science to organizational dynamics. The Voluntary Perspectives from the McGill-McConnell Program are now available online at: www.cvsrd.org/eng/mmp.

More time for depression awareness

AMI-Quebec is holding a Depression Awareness Week, from October 3 to 10. Participating CLSCs, CGEPs, universities and community organizations will be offering the public information, screening tests and referrals. For information: 514 486 1448.

In brief

Sylvie Castonguay has been elected board chair of the Women's Centre of Montreal.

Rev. Dr. **Patricia Kirkpatrick** was elected chair of the board of l'Auberge Madeleine.

Dr. **Wendy Thomson** has been appointed Director of the McGill School of Social Work.

AMI-Quebec has changed its office number to Suite 200, still at the 5253 Decarie Blvd. address.

The Volunteer Bureau of Montreal has a new Web site address: www.cabm.net.

Volunteer West Island has moved to 1, rue de l'Église, Ste-Anne-de-Bellevue, QC H9X 1W4.

CSSS Côte-des-Neiges, Métro, Parc Extension has applied to change its name to CSSS de la Montagne. It will hold a public information assembly at the Hotel Maritime, 1155 Guy Street, on October 11.

CSSS René-Cassin, N.D.G., Montreal West has changed its name to CSSS Cavendish. A public assembly will be held at the CSSS on November 7.

CSSS Verdun/Côte-Saint-Paul, Saint-Henri, Pointe-Saint-Charles has applied to change its name to CSSS Sudouest-Verdun. A public information assembly will be held in October.

CSSS Hochelaga-Maisonneuve, Olivier-Guimond, Rosemont has applied to change its name to CSSS Lucille-Teasdale. A public information assembly will be held in October.

Volunteer Canada has produced a new manual on Youth Volunteering. See: www.volunteer.ca.

The editor welcomes story ideas: 514 937 4309.

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