

## Anglos access to health care uneven

There are striking differences in the delivery of healthcare services to anglophones across Quebec. A CROP survey commissioned by the Community Health and Social Services Network (CHSSN) has revealed considerable disparity between urban Montreal and the province's rural regions. It also brings to light important differences in healthcare accessibility within the Montreal region itself.

Less than half of English-speaking respondents were satisfied with their access to health and social services. For example, 65 percent of anglophone Quebecers overall did receive services in English at their CLSCs, but that figure dropped to as low as 35 percent in some of the outlying regions. And while over 80 percent of Montreal's western anglophones did receive CLSC services in English, nearly 60 percent of East End anglophones did not.

There are even more service inequalities within the Montreal region. Over 80 percent in the west received Info-Santé service in English; just under 50 percent in the east did. With respect to hospital emergency or outpatient clinics and services offered in a more prolonged hospital stay, those living in west Montreal are much more likely than those in the east to have access in English.

Access to health and social services in English depends on the availability of information, but it is in short supply in Montreal. Around 30 percent of anglophone respondents in the west received some information from public health and social services institutions; under 20 percent of those living in central and eastern Montreal did so.

"Language is a key issue in quality health care," says **Joanne Pocock**, CHSSN researcher. "But not only are many healthcare services not being delivered in English, we found that nearly 20 percent of anglophone respondents felt uncomfortable in asking for services in their language."

(Survey results are available at: [www.chssn.org](http://www.chssn.org) .)

## Mackay and MAB to merge

Two of English Montreal's oldest institutions are officially joining forces. The boards of the Mackay Rehabilitation Centre and the Montreal Association for the Blind (MAB) voted in January to merge the two centres. Government approval is expected soon.

The Mackay opened as an educational centre for the deaf in 1869. Today it provides rehabilitation services to children with language and motor disabilities, and to deaf or hard of hearing children and adults. The MAB, which opened in 1908, serves the blind and visually impaired and operates a 59-bed nursing home and a day centre for seniors.

The two institutions have long had a close relationship. "We've cooperated on administration and on clinical matters, particularly when dealing with multiply-impaired children," says **Christine Boyle**, executive director of Mackay. "So we often have clients in common. While we were discussing ways of improving services to our clients, a merger seemed to be the most logical step."

The new MAB-Mackay Rehabilitation Centre will have one board of directors and one administration. For now, the partner establishments will continue to operate on their separate sites.

## New home for Family Medicine

The MUHC's Family Medicine Unit is moving into the Queen Elizabeth Health Complex. Family practitioners from the General and Royal Victoria Hospitals, now serving 30,000 patients annually, will open their new ambulatory care service in April.

"This move will benefit everyone in the community," says **Irene Tchernamor**, Complex executive director. "And it's pivotal for us. Since we opened eight years ago, the scope and number of our healthcare services, which include both traditional medicine and non-traditional therapies, have been growing steadily. With Family Medicine here, we're working on a formal affiliation with the MUHC."

## Referral Centre celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup>

The Information and Referral Centre of Greater Montreal turns 50 this year. With roots dating back to the Red Feather Federation of social agencies, the Centre was created by the merger of existing English and French referral services in 1969. It has long been the prime source of information on, and referral to, community resources in Greater Montreal.

Last year, the Centre handled over 98,000 inquiries on the full range of social issues. "Our major challenge has always been to provide the most accurate information and to always be up to date," says **Lorraine Bilocq-Lebeau**, executive director. "We're now broadening our data bank to serve people of other cultural communities. And we're also preparing for the introduction of 211 as the general community services number in Montreal."

## QCGN launches research on anglos

The Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN) has developed a research and information program that will provide English-speaking Quebecers with the demographic data and resources basic to the future development and well being of their communities. The ultimate goal is to help them to maintain a collective sense of identity, build on their assets and thrive within Quebec.

"First of all, we've developed an online network for researchers interested in the English-speaking community to connect with each other and share their findings," says **Martin Murphy**, QCGN president. "Now we're setting up an online 'virtual' resource base that will provide demographic profiles, documentation, information on approaches to community development and on issues that can, and do, affect our communities."

The QCGN is also designing a study on the vitality of anglophone communities and the factors that have influenced change. "This will help us to develop scenarios for future development," Murphy affirms. For further information: 514 937 2301.

## Foster to expand services in East End

Pavillon Foster will soon be opening an out-patient site in Montreal's East End to improve access to addiction treatment services for the area's anglophones and allophones. Founded in the Eastern Townships over 40 years ago, Foster has been present on the island of Montreal since 1994 providing drug, alcohol and problem gambling services for English-speaking youth, adults and family members. It now operates out of two sites, in N.D.G. and the West Island.

"Many of our clients live in the eastern part of the Island," says **John Topp**, Foster's executive director. "Accessibility has always been a problem because of the distance involved, and this is especially problematic for youth and their families. Our aim is to establish a permanent part-time site in the area to serve youth and their parents. Eventually we hope to serve the entire adult population."

## Caregiver support network expanding

A telephone-conferencing program that provides mutual sharing and support for Montreal caregivers has met with resounding success. Sponsored by the Foundation for Vital Aging, and managed by the CLSC René-Cassin, this special service has drawn over 700 participants since its June 2004 launch. The "Care-ring Voice" concept has also been expanding in scope and in content.

"So many callers were asking for immediate assistance," says project manager **Mark Stolor**, "that we set up a toll free referral line (1 866 396 2433) to direct them to available resources. We then began holding workshops run by professionals with special expertise on issues concerning caregivers' needs. We've just provided technology and training for the Alzheimer's Society and the Multiple Sclerosis Society to host their own telephone conferencing projects. With the interest that other health service organizations have shown, we'll soon have a Care-ring Voice Network right across the province." For information: 514 488 9163 ext. 1474.

## Meals-on-Wheels turns 40

It was thanks to four dedicated women from St. Matthias' Church in Westmount that Meals-on-Wheels was introduced to Canada in January, 1966. (The program originated in England some 20 years earlier.) The small group delivered its first hot noonday meals to 18 shut-ins living in Little Burgundy, charging 25 cents a meal. The Victorian Order of Nurses had recommended those in need from among their home visit clients.

Today there are over a million meals delivered daily throughout Quebec. Says **Marjorie Northrup**, coordinator of Food Services for the Volunteer Bureau of Montreal: "Without wonderful volunteers it wouldn't be possible."

## Partners focus on child neglect

Batshaw Youth and Family Services, along with the CSSS LaSalle-Vieux Lachine, two local schools and four community organizations, are tackling a serious problem of child neglect in southwestern Montreal. Their new remedial program is focused on Duff Court, a low-cost housing complex in Lachine where there has been an inordinately high number of anglophone families under youth protection.

"There is an obvious need for direct services to children experiencing the effects of parental neglect," says **John Denham**, Batshaw caseworker with Family Preservation. "At the same time, the parents need assistance with their social problems that create this situation. But until now, there haven't been any services for anglophones in this region."

The partners have developed activities that will respond to the families' most pressing needs. So far they have set up an after-school homework project for elementary-school children, a parent support group, and a series of parent-child stimulation workshops. More projects are to follow. The hope is that eventually this pilot program will serve as a model for other communities. For further information: 514 937 9581, ext. 125.

## HIPPY is here to help at home

An internationally successful, home-based education program has just begun in Montreal. Developed in Israel in 1969, the Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Children program (HIPPY), is being delivered to families in Côte-des-Neiges and N.D.G. It is a joint effort of the Salvation Army, the Centre for Literacy and Elizabeth House. Funding is from the Fondation Lucie et André Chagnon.

"HIPPY is aimed at low-income, immigrant and refugee families," explains **Jennifer Symansky**, program coordinator. "Its goal is to help parents prepare their children for success in school, and beyond. The key is to help them see that they are their children's first – and their best – teachers. We provide them with the tools and the guidance to understand how the home can be a very productive learning environment."

The program runs for 30 weeks. HIPPY-trained "home visitors", themselves parents from the same milieu, work with participants on an easy-to-use package of early-learning activities. To date, 47 families are enrolled in the program, which is offered in both English and French. The plan is to double that number each year. For further information: 514 766 2155, ext. 224.

## Senior transportation a CCS priority

A recently completed pilot project by CCS (Catholic Community Services) has more than proven that there are seniors who need transportation assistance. At the agency's three seniors' centres – the Teapot, the Good Shepherd and Almage – volunteer, taxi and minibus transportation was provided to ferry seniors to their medical, personal and social activities.

"The demand was absolutely overwhelming," says **Zenny Bryniawsky**, CCS executive director. "What is necessary now is more funding and more community programming to broaden this service to all seniors who need it. That's our priority."

## **Gazette cuts volunteer notices**

The Montreal *Gazette* has decided to limit its coverage of the Volunteer Bureau of Montreal (VBM) and Volunteer West Island recruitment notices. Instead of providing these groups with their traditional weekly space, the paper will print their public service announcements only monthly. (Weekly announcements will still be made available online.) The paper had planned to eliminate all print listings, but conceded a monthly space after protests were lodged on VBM's behalf.

"The VBM has been making a weekly newspaper appeal for volunteers for decades," says **Kevin Cohalan**, VBM executive director. "With this free publicity, we've been able to recruit thousands of volunteers for Montreal's nonprofit community organizations. We're hoping that eventually the *Gazette* will reconsider this decision."

The newspaper had also intended to remove the weekly child for adoption notice submitted by Batshaw Youth and Family Services but, after some discussion, has re-instated this service.

## **Health Commissioner to be named**

The legislation reforming Quebec's health system that was introduced last year included creation of a new position within the Ministry. It is that of Health and Welfare Commissioner, in effect an overseer of the efficiency and effectiveness of the system. The open competition closed in January. The successful applicant is yet to be named.

## **Quebec spends the least on health care**

Quebec is still the province spending the least on health care. According to the Canadian Institute on Health Information, in 2004-2005, Quebec's per capita expenditure was \$2,375, below the Canadian average of \$2,673. It was markedly less than that of Alberta, which spent \$2,949. The province allots 31.2 % of its budget to health, compared with the Canadian average of 38.7%, and Ontario's 44.4%.

## **In brief**

**Edith Low-Beer** has been honoured for her philanthropy by the Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health.

**Rose Mary Silletta** has been appointed manager of the Good Shepherd Community Centre.

**Scott Simons** is the new coordinator of Youth Services for CCS.

Dr. **Wendy Thomson**, Director of the McGill School of Social Work, was named to the new board of Montreal's health and social services Agency.

The Benny Farm Task Force won a 2006 Leadership Award from the Canadian Urban Institute.

Quebec City's St. Brigid's Home is celebrating its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year.

The Foundation of the Reddy Memorial Hospital, which was closed in 1997, has dissolved and has granted a sum of \$155,000 to the Douglas Hospital.

Volunteer Week will run from April 23 to 29, under the theme Volunteering for all tastes!

The Care-ring Voice Network is holding free workshops for caregivers on March 23, 27, 28 and 29. For information: 514 485 7374.

The Centre for Literacy is holding a workshop, But do they understand? Communicating with the Users and Caregivers, for service providers on May 5. Fee is \$95.00. For information: 514 931 8731, ext. 1415.

The Council on Palliative Care is holding workshops on caring for a person with a terminal illness on March 21, 28 and April 4. Call: 514 499 0345.

The editor welcomes story ideas: 514 937 4309.

Legal deposit:  
National Library of Canada ISSN 1709 092X  
Bibliothèque nationale du Québec