

MUHC given green light

Having finally received government approval to move ahead on its redevelopment project, the MUHC has now called for tenders for the first phase of construction. This involves the building of a new Montreal Children's Hospital at the Glen site and expansion of the Montreal General Hospital. Contracts are scheduled to be awarded before the end of the summer 2006.

This first phase of the \$1.6 billion project will be constructed as a conventional public infrastructure. For the later phases, including adult care pavilions and research facilities, the MUHC will be examining the potential for public-private partnerships. Target date for completion remains at 2010-11.

Committee wants anglos to participate

The provincial advisory committee on accessibility to English-language services is calling upon anglophones to participate in upcoming health and social services initiatives. Elections and designation of members for boards of directors of public institutions will be held this fall. Revision of access plans for services in English is under way.

The committee has been consulting with community organizations to prepare its advisory to the Ministry on soliciting anglophone participation in the election process. It is also encouraging them to participate fully in the updating of access programs. For further information: **Ron McNeil** 514 873 2292.

Health Commissioner named

Robert Salois has been named to the newly created post of Health and Welfare Commissioner. His mandate is to monitor and evaluate the functioning of the healthcare system and to address the ethical issues concerning citizens' health. The Commissioner will publish an annual report, much in the manner of the auditor-general. He plans to set up a Citizens' Forum that will review his reports before they are submitted to government.

Local VONs leave national body

The Montreal, West Island and Hudson branches of the Victorian Order of Nurses (VON) have broken away from the national VON organization and will operate under a different name, yet to be chosen. Cause for the split is the national office's decision to centralize all VON operations and financial controls.

"This was not acceptable to our board," says **Marla Berard**, executive director of VON Montreal Inc. "We feel strongly that local concerns are best addressed at the local level. And that monies raised locally should be spent here."

Montreal's VON dates back to 1898. It was one of the four founding branches of the service in Canada. (Toronto, Halifax and Vancouver were the others.) The West Island branch is 95 years old; the Hudson branch is 70.

"It was a wrenching decision," says Berard. "But what is important now is that we will continue to provide services to our community. These include home support services for the frail elderly, palliative care, respite for parents of pre-school children with special needs, footcare clinics and lifestyle management programs in the workplace. The three branches will remain autonomous, but we will continue to work together toward common goals."

Catholics looking for new home

A decision by the Catholic Community Services Foundation to sell its downtown heritage building has caused no little consternation among its tenants as well as the broader Irish Catholic community. At issue is the negative impact that dispersal of its organizations to a myriad of different new locations would have on the cohesiveness of the community.

"We've set up a task force to study the rationale for establishing a new Catholic Centre in downtown Montreal," says **Martin Murphy**, executive director of the English-speaking Catholic Council. "They'll be giving their report in September."

Improving child welfare services

An important new research project that aims to considerably improve services delivery in the child welfare field has just been launched. Dr. **Nico Trocmé**, director of McGill's Centre for Research on Children and Families, heads the project's trans-institutional working group. The \$600,000 initiative is funded jointly by the federal Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, McGill and the participating youth care agencies.

"The basic objective of the project," explains Trocmé, "is to improve the way managers in the child welfare system use information so that they make better decisions about policies and services. There is an enormous amount of administrative data and clinical expertise in the child welfare agencies, but they aren't always harnessed effectively. And managers usually have neither the time nor the tools to keep abreast of current research or programs in other jurisdictions. We're addressing those issues."

The first phase of the three-year project focuses mainly on Batshaw Youth and Family Services. That agency is being provided with special research assistants to help implement the new knowledge information strategy on a day to day basis. "But we're not operating in isolation," says Trocmé. "We'll be sharing our Batshaw experience with other agencies, in Quebec and across the country."

East End CSSSs to partner with anglos

The four CSSSs responsible for health and social services in East End Montreal have formally joined the network of local community organizations to ensure access to English-language services. Each has assigned a senior staff member to the network.

"This is extremely important news for us," affirms **Fatiha Gatre-Guermiri**, coordinator of CCS's Cultivating Roots project, a key player in the network. "Now we're setting up a timetable together for various programs and services that will meet the community's needs."

Portage's mother and child program

The Portage drug abuse treatment centre has a new program for young women with children in downtown Montreal. An offshoot of its residential program in the Laurentians, this service is designed for pregnant addicts and drug-dependent mothers with children up to eight years old. It is funded by Portage, the Montreal health and social services Agency and the Fondation Lucie et André Chagnon.

"We realized that there were women who wanted treatment but didn't want to leave their children," says **Kimberley Thibodeau**, director of the new program. "This way, they can maintain guardianship while receiving therapy. And the children continue to bond with their mothers."

This comprehensive treatment program includes high school curriculum courses for the mothers, schooling or daycare for the children, and support services for the fathers and other family members. An outpatient program following treatment helps mothers and children adjust to life in the community.

"Locating this program in downtown Montreal was a strategic move," affirms Thibodeau. "We're close to the health and social services these women and children would need. They can start building links in the community right away instead of after they leave treatment. This advantage will go a long way towards helping them to reintegrate." For further information: 514 935 3152, local 30.

Anglos missing out on funding

Although there is significant provincial funding available for volunteer organizations, not everyone in the English-speaking community is aware of its scope. The Centre for Community Organizations (COCO) cites a few sources for health and social services: Secrétariat à l'action communautaire autonome du Québec; Programme soutien pour les organismes communautaires; Santé publique, for health promotion projects; and local CSSSs, for specific projects and service agreements.

Adolescents talk about mental health

Thousands of Quebec young people are getting a better idea of mental health and mental illness thanks to a program being delivered to them by other young people. Youth Net is a preventive program that sponsors university students to meet and discuss mental health with high school students. It is coordinated by committees of local education and public health professionals and community service organizations. Launched in Ontario in 1995, it has since been adopted across the country.

“We introduced Youth Net in Quebec in 2001 at École Henri-Bourassa and the LaSalle Community Comprehensive High School,” says **Margaret Ann Smith**, a founding member. “The Clubs Richelieu and the Children’s and Sainte-Justine Hospitals led the way; local CLSCs and the schools came on board enthusiastically. The program is now in 10 Quebec schools, reaching over 1,000 kids a year.”

Key to the program’s success are the specially trained students who meet with the high-schoolers. “Because they’re closer in age,” says Smith, “the adolescents feel more at ease with them. They can talk openly about what is often considered a taboo subject. That’s positive, and it’s healthy. And it doesn’t cost the taxpayer a cent: the Clubs Richelieu raise funds to pay for program expenses.” For further information: 514 273 7251.

More anglos readied to staff regions

McGill has launched a project aimed at boosting the participation of English-speaking professionals in the province’s health and social services system. It centres on creating internships in the regions for anglophone graduates in social work and nursing and other healthcare specialties. Once there, they will be offered distance support and professional development activities. The idea is to attract anglophone healthcare professionals to the regions and to encourage them to stay there. Over 100 field placements have been created. **Estelle Hopmeyer**, of the School of Social Work, is project coordinator.

Network helps young families adjust

Several community organizations in downtown Montreal have joined forces to help vulnerable young families living in the area. Funded by Santé publique, and coordinated by the CLSC Métro, this Downtown Family Network has developed a multi-faceted program of free activities designed to support and nurture families with children up to five years of age.

“We have a specific clientele in mind,” says **Sara Sultan**, program coordinator. “We’re interested in families that have immigrated to Canada in the last five years, parents who have low education and income and mothers under 20 years old.”

The program has two components: recreational and educational activities for the children and their parents, and workshops for the parents. They can choose from among swimming and games at the Downtown Y; reading and storytelling at the Montreal Children’s Library; fitness and yoga at Milton Park Centre. Parents are offered courses in healthful cooking at the Montreal Diet Dispensary and in parenting skills at the Women’s Centre. They are offered respite daycare at the Greene Centre; and accompaniment to appointments from all centres.

“Over 250 families, mostly recent immigrants, signed up for activities this year,” says Sultan. “The overall response was so positive, I’d like to see that figure double when we open again in September.” For information: theyellowarrow@yahoo.co.uk .

Aid in dealing with homosexuality

A resource kit on sexual orientation, part of a training program developed by the Montreal Santé publique, is now available in English. It was designed to help youth workers and educators handle the issue of homosexuality. Studies have shown that young people having issues with their sexuality are at high risk for depression – their suicide rate is six times that of the general population. For information: www.santepub-mtl.qc.ca .

Centraide names award winners

Centraide of Greater Montreal recently presented its annual awards of distinction. The Agnes C. Higgins Award for outstanding initiative by a Centraide-supported agency went to Santropol Roulant, a meals-on-wheels service in the Plateau district. The Gilles Cousineau Award honouring the work of a Centraide agency employee went to **Johanne Bélisle**, executive director of the Women's Centre of Montreal. **Juliette Noël**, volunteer at the Projet communautaire de Pierrefonds, received the Antoinette Robidoux Award for outstanding volunteer working in a Centraide agency.

Code of ethics coming

The Minister of l'Emploi et de la Solidarité will be introducing a code of ethics concerning volunteers working in Quebec's public and parapublic institutions. The new code will clarify the roles and duties of each party and ensure that the volunteers are not assigned duties usually handled by salaried staff.

Rent help available for nonprofits

The City of Montreal has introduced a new policy of rental assistance for non-profit organizations in its territory. Any volunteer group operating out of a privately owned, non-residential building can apply for a subsidy equal to 11 percent of its rent. For information: <http://ville.montreal.qc.ca/portal/page>.

Complaints procedure changed

As of April 2006, complaints lodged by Quebecers about their healthcare system will have a different arbiter. There is no longer a health system complaints office per se; le protecteur du citoyen now has the mandate to intervene when the rights of the users are not respected. In an emergency situation, intervention will be immediate but general complaints will proceed up the usual chain of command. For further information: www.protecteurducitoyen.qc.ca/en/domaines/reseau_santé.

In brief

Christine Boyle, executive director of the Mackay Rehabilitation Centre, has been named interim executive director of the Montreal Association for the Blind.

John Bradley has been appointed executive director of the N.D.G. Community Council.

Dr. **Victor Goldbloom** has been elected board chair of the Montreal health and social services Agency.

Dr. **Richard Levin** was appointed vice-principal (Health Affairs) of McGill University and dean of its Faculty of Medicine.

Remi Marcoux, board chair of Transcontinental Inc., and **Michael J. Sabia**, president and CEO of Bell Canada Enterprises, are co-chairs of the 2006 Centraide of Greater Montreal campaign.

Michèle Thibodeau-DeGuire received an honorary doctoral degree from Concordia University.

The new name for the CSSS LaSalle et du Vieux Lachine is CSSS Dorval-Lachine-LaSalle.

The Old Brewery Mission, founded in 1889, has turned over its archives to the McCord Museum.

The Gazette has restored its weekly listings for the Volunteer Bureau of Montreal.

Imagine Canada is to host the first national forum on "Insurance solutions for the voluntary sector" in late 2006 or early 2007.

The International Federation of Aging, a UN agency, will hold its ninth world conference on aging and design in Montreal in June 2008.

The editor welcomes story ideas: 514 937 4309

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