

Mission making major changes

Montreal's Old Brewery Mission (OBM), marking its 120th birthday this year, has taken a dramatic new direction for its future. The Mission was founded in 1889 to provide emergency shelter and meals for the city's indigent men. (Women were included 10 years ago.) It has now shifted its emphasis to reconfigure its program of services and to develop social housing for the homeless on a major scale.

"We're completely reversing our mandate," says **Matthew Pearce**, executive director. "We're going to downscale our emergency services to a scale much like those in a hospital's ER. We'll analyze clients' needs quickly and offer shelter as required, but eligible people will be quickly ushered through another door to transitional and permanent housing. There will be fewer people lining up for shelter and, for those that do, the line will be much shorter."

The OBM currently houses 400 people a night, and serves 750 meals a day. It receives over 1500 new clients a year, their average age having dropped over the past 10 years from 55 to 37. "That's a startling statistic for our society and for what that implies," says Pearce.

Five years ago, the OBM introduced a housing program to help its clients get out of the homelessness trap. It provides 120 transitional apartments where they are coached on integrating back into society. They can then move on to one of the OBM's supervised apartments, and from there to its small network of independent apartments for people who have demonstrated that they are ready to handle that degree of autonomy. They all continue to receive counselling and support as needed.

The next step is a full-fledged program of social housing. "The vision that we have of homelessness is not like anyone else's here," Pearce affirms. "I'm confident that with our approach, homelessness will no longer be considered normal in Montreal. So social housing is the fastest growing element of our program. It's the OBM's future."

QCGN marks milestone

The Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN) is celebrating its 15th anniversary this year as a leader in promoting the vitality of the English-speaking community of Quebec. It is recognized as the official representative of this province's anglophone community in negotiating federal minority-language funding. And it is a principal advocate for English-minority rights in Canada.

The QCGN has moved forward on several fronts to assist both its members and the broader anglophone community. Province-wide committees were assembled to tackle the problems facing English-speaking seniors and youth. The Greater Montreal Community Development Initiative was created to identify and address the challenges that the various anglophone communities of this region face. An important new research program was set up to compile demographic data on English-speaking communities. And the QCGN has just opened Qescan, an action-oriented website for anglophone Quebecers involved in community development.

"We've made significant progress," says **Robert Donnelly**, QCGN president. "But there's still much more to be done. We're now broadening our membership base, and encouraging everyone to benefit from the networking that the QCGN makes possible." For further information: www.qcgn.ca.

Goldbloom Award winners named

The first Sheila and Victor Goldbloom Distinguished Community Service Awards have been announced. The new award was established by the QCGN to recognize individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the vitality of Quebec's English-speaking community. Winners are **Casper Bloom**, prominent labour lawyer renowned for his promotion of linguistic and equality rights; **Jack Jedwab**, well-known Canadian demographer, responsible for pivotal research on Quebec's English-speaking communities; and **Marjorie Goodfellow**, healthcare advocate and community leader who has long worked on bridging the gap between anglophone and francophone Quebecers.

Toxi-Stop turns ten

Toxi-Stop, an addiction assistance centre in Montreal's East End, is celebrating its tenth year of operation this month. Founded by three friends, all former substance abusers, the centre has received over 4500 addicts since it opened in 1999. While most clients are Montrealers, many are from out of province, including an increasing number of Americans referred by their healthcare providers.

"We wanted to provide more respectful and compassionate care than that being offered to addicts here," says **Gerry Tullio**, one of the co-founders. "When you're dealing with addicts, you're also dealing with their underlying issues, such as conjugal violence, mental illness and homelessness. We provide them with counselling, referral to other organizations when needed, and programs to help them get back on track."

Prevention is another concern of Toxi-Stop. Tullio has been leading a very successful drug awareness program in eastern Montreal schools. He spoke to over 2000 students last year. "I've lived on the street," says Tullio, "I've got a lot to tell them."

Toxi-Stop operates out of two buildings, one a residence dedicated to an intensive 15-day program for detoxification. "We're really in the front line of withdrawal management," explains Tullio. The other is a "sober living" residence that provides a controlled environment for up to 22 people for three to six months. A permanent staff of four is bolstered by a small army of volunteers, most of whom are former addicts. For information: 514 327 6017.

Centraide on the march

Centraide of Greater Montreal is calling on its supporters to take to the streets on Thursday, October 1, to mark the launch of its annual fund-raising campaign. The March of 1,000 umbrellas starts at 11:30 a.m. at the corner of McGill College Avenue and St. Catherine Street West. Theme of this year's campaign is Centraide, more than ever. Last year, donations reached a record \$54 million.

Giving is the goal

Following in the tradition of his philanthropic family, **John Hallward** has come up with a novel way to encourage people to give to others. The goal of his new non-profit organization, called GIV3, is to get Canadians to donate at least three percent of their income to charity and to do volunteer work for at least three hours a month. How did he arrive at that number?

"I commissioned Ipsos-Reid to do a survey and discovered that nine out of 10 Canadians had no idea how much they should be giving to charity," says Hallward. "The Canadian average now is less than one percent of income. But respondents did indicate that three percent would be fair. So I chose that as the base number."

To make it easy for people to determine what their three percent would be, the GIV3 website boasts a simple charity calculator. It also describes GIV3's Great Canadian Charity Contest, inviting Canadian adults to submit brief descriptions of their three favourite charities. The winning charities will receive grants from GIV3. (The next draw closes on October 31.)

The GIV3 website also provides links to nonprofit organizations that wish to partner in the project. "It gives them some extra publicity," says Hallward. "We hope that it will attract donations to their cause." For information: www.giv3.org.

Seniors setting the scene for action

The Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN) is compiling information on the needs and priorities of the province's English-speaking seniors. The work has been carried out with the assistance of an advisory committee representing seniors from across the province. By November, the QCGN will have created a database accessible to seniors' organizations and community planners. The first goal is to develop an action plan to address outstanding issues. Next on the agenda is creation of a permanent coalition of anglophone seniors.

Community Foundation flourishing

The Foundation of Greater Montreal (FGM) has attained significant stature since its founding in 1999. From modest start-up funding*, the FGM today has pooled assets of over \$85 million. It now manages 270 funds – three-quarters are those of nonprofit organizations, the remainder from individuals and families, corporations, and bequests.

“Our basic purpose is to build endowment funds that will generate revenue to support charitable work in the community,” explains **Marina Boulos-Winton**, newly appointed president and CEO. “Our professional advisors help direct investments of these pooled funds to attain optimum returns. Clients can choose to direct their revenues to specific fields or charities, or into our community fund from which the Foundation allots grants to deserving nonprofits that don’t have their own foundations to raise money for them.”

To sustain – and increase – its momentum, the FGM has a parallel goal of promoting philanthropy in the community. Greater Montreal’s Vital Signs, its annual report on the quality of life in the region, is designed to inform and guide potential donors on how to support local needs. To develop a new generation of philanthropists the Foundation, with CBC-TV, has introduced a Youth and Philanthropy program in two English Montreal schools. Solicitation of new clients is an ongoing challenge.

“One of my major concerns is to increase the Foundation’s visibility,” affirms Boulos-Winton. “Much of the public is not certain about what we do, and how we can help them to help others. We need to get that message out. Part of that task is to broaden the understanding of philanthropy and how vital it is to the well being of our community. We’re looking at several ways to make that happen.” For further information: 514 866 0808.

**The Red Feather Foundation was one of the founding members of the FGM, and the first to create an endowment fund, the Red Feather Fund, within that foundation.*

What is volunteering worth?

That is the question that Volunteer Canada is encouraging the volunteer sector to address. “The current economic situation has effectively moved the role of volunteering to the centre of the policy and political agenda,” says **Karl Nerenberg**, manager, Public Policy. “There is an opportunity now for the sector to better illustrate its importance.”

It will not be easy. “The challenge is to demonstrate the full social and economic value of the volunteer contribution to society,” Nerenberg says. “Many tools have been developed to measure its economic value, but its social impact on society – and on the volunteer – are not as easily quantified.”

To stimulate participation from the sector, Volunteer Canada will be distributing a discussion paper later this year outlining possible themes to be considered. “We’re not taking a position for or against the evaluation of volunteering,” Nerenberg affirms. “We do, though, want to facilitate thoughtful deliberation of the issue by those most concerned – nonprofits, policy makers, practitioners and researchers. Contact: knerenberg@volunteer.ca.

Art alleviates isolation

Art is bringing people together in Little Burgundy. A CCS project aptly named Drawing the Community Together, has passed the pilot stage with flying colours and, with adequate funding, will expand into other areas. The project centres around art classes given in social housing units and at CCS’ St Antoine 50+ community centre by local artist Richard Dorais. It is designed to alleviate the isolation often felt among the poor and the elderly.

“It’s a huge success,” says **Carolyn Arsenault**, CCS community development worker. “People have set up mini social networks, and they’re feeling good about themselves. We’re now setting up a training program for Richard to pass his teaching technique on to others. We’ll teach people for free,” says Arsenault, “but we expect them to volunteer some time.” For information: 514 937 5351, ext. 246.

Canadians afraid of mental illness

A national survey conducted by Ipsos-Reid for the Canadian Medical Association highlights some startling attitudes among Canadians towards mental illness. Nearly half of the respondents believe that mental illness is a cop-out for bad behaviour and personal weakness. One in four is afraid to be around someone who is seriously mentally ill. Half the respondents said they would avoid socializing with or marrying someone with mental illness.

At the same time, increasing numbers of Canadians are being diagnosed with some form of mental illness. For example, in 2007, 27.4 million prescriptions worth \$1.2 billion were filled for anti-depressants, up from 23.4 million two years earlier. Quebec showed the highest increase during that time, a rise of 19 percent.

Why don't Canadians volunteer?

Only 10 percent of the population are responsible for 80 percent of volunteer hours served annually by Canadians. Why don't more Canadians volunteer? In one of its last studies on the issue, the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy reported that 38 percent prefer to give money rather than time; 37 percent had not been asked; 24 percent cited health concerns; 22 percent had already contributed significant hours in the past; 20 percent did not know how to get involved in a volunteer role; and 19 percent were deterred by the costs associated with volunteering.

CRA issues new fundraising guidelines

The Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) has issued a revised and final version of its [Guide on Fundraising by Registered Charities](#). The document provides information on the current treatment of fundraising under the Income Tax Act and under common law. It covers definitions, prohibited fundraising conduct, directives on fundraising activities and best practices indicators. It is available at www.cra-arc.gc.ca, reference number CPS-028.

In brief

Jean Bernier, president of Ultramar, and **Jacques Baillargeon**, executive director of Auberge du coeur l'Escalier, are co-chairs of the 2009 fund-raising campaign of Centraide of Greater Montreal.

Marina Boulos-Winton has been appointed new president and CEO of the Foundation of Greater Montreal.

Marcel Côté has been named chair of the board of the Foundation of Greater Montreal.

Robert Donnelly has been re-elected president of the Quebec Community Groups Network.

The 2009 Low Beer Lecture, entitled [An unexpected gift: how a mental illness enriched my life](#), will be delivered by Charles Barber on Thursday, October 14, at 7:30 p.m. at Oscar Peterson Hall, 7141 Sherbrooke Street, West. Contact: 514 486 1448.

As a new fund-raising tool, Centraide will be selling [CENT vedettes](#), a compilation of recipes from 100 Quebec arts and show business personalities. It will be distributed across the province in October. For every book sold, \$2 will go to Centraide.

The first [Montreal walks for Mental Health](#) event will take place on Sunday, October 18, at 11 a.m. The 5-km hike begins and ends at Pierre Elliot Trudeau Park at 6975 Mackle Road, Côte St-Luc. For information: 514 735 7721.

The Canadian Virtual Hospice provides online support for people dealing with a life-threatening illness at www.virtualhospice.ca/.

Montreal women's shelter Auberge Madeleine has opened a new website: www.aubergemadeleine.org.

The editor welcomes story ideas: 514 937 4309

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