

Auberge celebrates its 25th

Auberge Madeleine, an emergency shelter for women in difficulty, was opened in 1984 by a group of inter-church parishioners concerned about the plight of homeless women. Many of today's clients are fleeing domestic violence, or suffer from mental illness or substance abuse. Their average age is 40 to 50. Women in their 80s are now coming to the door.

And a new clientele has emerged. "The current economic crisis means that many women in their 50s are losing their jobs," says **Micheline Cyr**, executive director. "At that age, they're not finding new work, and many are landing on the street. And coming to us for help."

It is a small facility, currently housing up to 19 residents, who stay an average of four weeks. They, along with drop-in clients, receive counselling and participate in a variety of activities and support sessions. Many participate in a weekly webcast radio program produced entirely by Auberge clients. "We've also extended our services to ex-residents for whom we've found low-cost lodging, and whom we continue to help with their day to day living."

Cyr would like a bigger Auberge. "We could use a larger house to accommodate the number of women who need emergency aid," she affirms. "A bigger budget would enable us to expand our outreach services over the long term."

Cyr and most of her 25-member team have been at the Auberge for over 20 years. Many of the 40 volunteers are former residents. "We're very much a family," says Cyr. "Our clients appreciate that; they know they can count on us." For information: www.aubergemadeleine.com.

Canada Post supports AMI-Quebec

AMI-Quebec has been awarded one of the first grants made by the Canada Post Foundation for Mental Health. The Foundation gave over \$1 million to Canadian organizations providing direct support to people affected by mental illness.

Lethbridge leads in chronic pain

There is new hope for Quebecers suffering from chronic pain. The province's integrated university health networks (RUIS) have each been asked by the Health Ministry to create a Centre of Excellence for diagnosis and treatment of this debilitating syndrome. The McGill RUIS, the MUHC and the Constance Lethbridge Rehabilitation Centre have formed a consortium to address the issue.

"Lethbridge and the Montreal General's chronic pain clinic have been collaborating on improvement of services for some time," says **Ghislaine Prata**, executive director of Lethbridge and co-chair of the consortium's planning committee. "We've now brought onboard institutions involved in primary and secondary care as well as a patient representative. We've tabled a three-year plan with the Ministry, and we've already started to work on it."

The focus is on four key areas: the most advanced level of care and treatment, research on improving treatment methods, teaching and transferring knowledge into the field for medical practitioners, and the evaluation of technology.

"We're placing a huge emphasis on prevention," says Prata. "With proper pain management from the outset, we believe that chronic cases can be reduced by at least 50 percent. So we're proposing a reorganization and improvement of services to ensure strong support at the primary level and to maintain a continuum of care for the patient."

Community foundation gives grants

The Foundation of Greater Montreal has resumed its grants program, this year distributing \$1.2 million to 70 local nonprofit organizations. Over half went to the health and social services sector; others were in the fields of arts and culture, education and the environment. "We are really proud to be a growing foundation despite the economic downturn," says **Marina Boulos**, president/CEO. The Foundation now has 257 endowed funds – up by 47 during the past year – for a total value of over \$94 million.

Laval anglos seeking services

The Youth and Parents AGAPE Association in Laval faces a unique challenge. It is in the fastest growing region in the province, with the fastest growing English-speaking community. There is also an extraordinary lack of healthcare services in English in the region. So AGAPE is organizing with other community organizations to form a healthcare network that will seek to improve the situation.

“The anglophones here are so disconnected from the system,” explains **Luigi Morabito**, network coordinator. “Our CSSS website is totally in French so they don’t know who or where to call for services. The problem is that no one complains – they go to Montreal for their health care. We really need to change all that.”

AGAPE has been active in the territory for many years, but recent surveys of the community have triggered the push for a network. “We’re busy prioritizing needs and priming partners,” says Morabito. “We’re setting up strategic alliances and we’ll eventually be doing a lot of communicating to and with our community.”

Chinese volunteers rewarded

Chinese Family Services of Greater Montreal set up a scholarship program for student volunteers 10 years ago to recognize their contribution and to encourage others to join in. Now adults and new immigrant volunteers are eligible to receive grants to further their education.

“Most of our Chinese newcomers used to come from Hong Kong,” explains **Xixi Li**, executive director. “Recently, though, there has been a surge in immigrants from the Republic of China who have neither English or French nor familiarity with western customs. It’s a big challenge for them to tackle everything at the same time. By volunteering with us, they ease a bit more quickly into the community, and the grants we offer help them to pursue their language studies. In return, we hope to add many more volunteers to our roster.”

Batshaw new program for foster kids

Batshaw Youth and Family Centres has introduced a new childcare monitoring program into its foster family network. Studied in a five-year research project here, Looking after Children is based on a system introduced in Britain in 1987. Batshaw was one of five youth centres invited by Quebec to participate in the research project.

“Initial results are very good,” says **Hedy Taylor**, program manager. “We conducted our research with 250 kids and their foster families. They, and the social workers, responded so positively that there was no question of not implementing the program. Now all of our childcare workers have been trained in the method so that it can be applied to the rest of our foster children in long-term placement.”

The system is very thorough. It relies on an assessment procedure that provides a comprehensive profile of the child’s growth and development and highlights where additional support might be needed. It is a procedure that Batshaw intends to continue when the children return to their family.

“We’re developing another tool than can be used in their own home,” Taylor says. “Their needs and attributes have already been identified. It just makes sense that we continue to help them find the resources they need to continue their development. And, by contributing to good parenting, it benefits the whole family.” For information: 514 989 1885, extension 1709.

MAB closing pavilion

The MAB-Mackay Rehabilitation Centre will be closing its Gilman Pavilion for the visually impaired in the New Year. “It’s part of the government’s reorganization of services for seniors,” explains **Christine Boyle**, executive director. “The health Agency stopped our admissions two years ago, so through attrition, and improvements in home care, the number of residents has dropped to 16. They will be moving elsewhere. In the meantime, we’re looking at the future vocation of our two sites.”

CCS ups activity in southwest

CCS is assembling community organizations in southwest Montreal to create a new healthcare network. The population served by the CSSS Dorval, Lachine, LaSalle is over 40 percent English-speaking, but services in English are sparse. CCS is rallying both anglophones and francophones to work together to improve services for all.

“We have a lot of work to do in sensitizing the community,” affirms **Diane Doonan**, community development worker. “A recent public consultation on revitalizing the area was done entirely in French. The anglophones feel left out and the francophones aren’t aware of their needs or concerns.”

As part of its strategy to improve this situation, CCS is setting up a new seniors’ centre in LaSalle where, as well as English activities, it will offer French classes. “There’s a huge language barrier there,” says Doonan, particularly for the area’s 8,000 anglophone seniors. The centre will also give us a forum for reaching out to the community and be a site of information on accessing health and social services.” For information: 514 937 5351.

AMI addresses kids’ anxiety

A recent government study shows that over 15 percent of preschool youngsters in Quebec suffer from high levels of anxiety and depression. AMI-Quebec is sponsoring the training of teachers in how to detect and better cope with these disorders.

“We’ve introduced them to a very effective childhood anxiety prevention and intervention program called FRIENDS for life,” says **Ella Amir**, executive director. “It’s been successfully used for over 12 years and is endorsed by the World Health Organization. And it has an 80 percent success rate.”

AMI is operating the program in partnership with the English Montreal School Board and the East End network for English-language services. It starts in January, for 165 kindergarten and grade one children in two East End schools.

Seniors in the spotlight

Quebec’s burgeoning population of seniors is finally attracting enough attention to warrant action from both community organizations and government departments. A plethora of programs are being developed. Two that are directed specifically at English-speaking seniors have recently taken shape.

QCGN creates seniors’ database

The Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN) has launched a new database on services available in English for Quebec seniors. The information was compiled through surveying regional organizations and institutions that do provide such services. A volunteer committee of seniors from across the province is providing guidance and strategic direction in development of an action plan for the future.

“We reached 55 organizations,” says **Nina Kim**, project manager. “It’s a good start, but we want to include all the others, both English and French, that provide services in English and haven’t been contacted. It’s an opportunity for them to promote what they offer. They can apply online at www.quebecseniors.info.

“One of our goals,” Kim explains, “was to identify English-speaking seniors’ key priorities. The final report isn’t out yet, but some common issues did emerge from the survey, such as the need for day centres, respite for caregivers, and transportation in the regions. One recommendation that will surely be in the final report is that a provincial network of seniors be created.”

Seniors symposium scheduled

Jeffrey Hale Community Partners, a coalition of organizations in Quebec City, and the Cummings Jewish Centre for Seniors in Montreal are organizing a provincial symposium on health promotion and disease prevention for seniors. It will be held at the Centre in March. Information will be available in January at: www.cummingscentre.org.

Desserts for diabetics

Diabetic customers of the Volunteer Bureau of Montreal's Meals-on-Wheels groups now have an extra treat on their plates, thanks to **Marjorie Northrup**, Coordinator of Volunteer Food Services. When she heard about Nutrium, a University of Montreal group that helps community organizations provide nutritional meals, Northrup asked them to develop nutritiously correct desserts for diabetics.

"Over 50 percent of our clients are diabetics," says Northrup, "And fruit salads can get boring after a while. Nutrium came up with 40 medically acceptable recipes that we packaged into a publication, Hooray for Desserts, and distributed to all our groups. For information: 514 843 3351.

Cummings programs help afflicted

The Cummings Jewish Centre for Seniors has developed special new programs for members suffering from two tragic age-related diseases, Alzheimer's and Parkinson's. Both are designed to help people in the early stages of affliction to extend their flexibility and sense of well being. Both include physical exercise in the Centre's open wellness area to minimize their sense of isolation.

"In our program for Alzheimer's clients, each has an individual service plan adapted to their needs," says **Harriet Tobman**, director of the Programs Department. "They're all involved in group discussions, cognitive inter-activity and learning coping mechanisms. We've introduced drama and music as well: drumming has had an amazingly popular response. We're also preparing a program to help their caregivers."

"We try to help our Parkinson's clients to maintain their physical well being for as long as possible through adapted exercises," explains **Elaine Shapiro**, director of Support Services. "Boxing is very popular as a way to vent their frustration. It makes a difference that they are in a social setting and can interact with each other, rather in a medical locale." For information: 514 342 1234.

In brief

The following appointments have been made to the Montreal regional advisory committee on access to health and social services in English: **John Brkich, Carol Common, Sheri McLeod, Germain Tullio, and Gary H. Waxman.**

Tony Maciocia, program coordinator, Residential Treatment Services for Adolescents at Batshaw Youth and Family Centres, is winner of this year's Ruth and Manny Batshaw Award of Excellence.

Chantal Ménard is new executive director of the West Island Volunteer Bureau.

Patricia Murphy has been appointed executive director of Tyndale-St. George's Community Centre.

Jeffrey Orr, president and CEO of Power Corporation, and **Réal Raymond**, corporate director, are co-chairs of the 2009 fund-raising campaign of Centraide of Greater Montreal.

Nicole René has been appointed executive director of the Réseau de l'action bénévole du Québec.

The New Hope Senior Citizens' Centre in N.D.G. is celebrating its 30th anniversary.

The Volunteer Bureau of Montreal has set up a new page on its website especially for new immigrants interesting in volunteering at www.cabm.net/en/new.

The 2009 Directory of food resources for low income people of Greater Montreal is now available. For information: www.info-reference.qc.ca.

AMI-Quebec is conducting teleworkshops on mental health issues from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. on January 20, February 24 and March 24. For information and to register: www.careringvoice.com.

The editor welcomes story ideas: 514 937 4309

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