

A breakthrough in patient care

A pilot project now testing a new approach to delivering patient care could bring significant – and very beneficial – changes to the delivery of first-line health services. The CSSS de la Montagne, which oversees health and social services in Côte-des-Neiges/NDG and downtown Montreal, has partnered with the Jewish General Hospital and McGill to develop what is called a Centre réseau intégré universitaire (CRIU). The first phase of the demonstration centre, a walk-in clinic, opened in April. Over the next three years other components will be added and its operation fine-tuned. The Montreal Health and Social Services Agency intends to set up 60 such clinics in the region by 2015.

“Our holistic approach makes this clinical centre different,” says **Isobel Caron**, nursing director at the Jewish and project coordinator. “We’ll eventually have a full team of doctors, nurse practitioners, nurses, multi-disciplinary specialists and interns to provide comprehensive care for our patients.”

Underlying the government’s push for this type of healthcare centre is the growing number of people with a chronic illness, which places a heavy burden on the present system. The Centre will be developing clinical procedures that provide these patients with a continuum of care. “There will be a complete follow-through on each patient,” says Caron, “to ensure that they’re getting the right testing and effective treatment.

“We also aim to pull in the emergency room ‘frequent flyers,’” Caron says. “These are mostly elderly people, so we’ll have a geriatric team to look after them. Another target is people with multiple illnesses who have medical files all over town.”

The walk-in clinic, open 12 hours a day, seven days a week, is already attracting up to 50 patients a day. “And we’re very patient friendly,” Caron affirms. “If you have to wait for more than an hour, we give you a pager so you can leave and be called when the doctor is available.” The Centre is located at 5858 Côte-des-Neiges, suite 500.

McGill starts new project

McGill University has signed a \$19 million agreement with Health Canada for a project designed to improve access to health and social services in English in Quebec. The McGill Training and Retention Project involves second language training for both anglophone and francophone healthcare professionals as well as internships for health and social services students. The project, which continues through 2013, succeeds a similar, highly successful program completed in 2009.

“The goal is to provide francophone professionals with the appropriate terminology and understanding to deal with anglophone clients’ healthcare issues,” says **Mireille Marcil**, Project coordinator. “And, at the same time, we want to provide anglophone professionals with sufficient fluency in French to feel comfortable working in Quebec healthcare institutions. By placing our students – who come from all health and social services disciplines – in regional healthcare settings, we’re hoping to encourage them to stay in Quebec following their graduation.”

By project’s end, some 6,000 francophone and 3,300 anglophone professionals will have followed the special language courses. A total of 275 students will have been interned at regional institutions.

More money for aiding elderly

The Minister responsible for Quebec’s aging population, **Marguerite Blais**, has announced a \$16 million increase in funding over the next five years for community organizations providing seniors support services. The Ministry seniors aid program, SIRA, will be allotted \$4 million of new annual funding over the next three years, half of which is designated for helping caregivers. For the following two years, the annual increase will be \$2 million. In addition, the Government has increased tax credits for home care by \$5 million. Adding these new monies to those budgeted since 2007, Quebec’s seniors care package will total \$2.4 billion by 2015.

Poverty the focus for Centraide

There is one underlying goal in the new five-year strategic plan just launched by Centraide of Greater Montreal: to improve the lot of Montrealers who are living in poverty – they now number over half a million. The Centraide approach is twofold: to help young people who can to get out of poverty, and to nurture support networks for people who, because of their personal circumstances, cannot.

“If we can reach the younger generation and give them the tools they need to cope, they could come out of the poverty cycle,” says **Michèle Thibodeau-DeGuire**, Centraide president and executive director. “And for those who are trapped in it because of their unemployability, more can be done to alleviate their social exclusion.”

Before drawing up its new strategies, Centraide commissioned a study on poverty in the city and consulted with a broad cross section of community representatives and its own agencies. “We concluded that our major focus should be on neighbourhoods,” Thibodeau-DeGuire explains. “There are many local organizations working on issues related to poverty. We need to get them to work together, to maximize the resources that do exist. That’s a role for our agencies and we’re going to help them.

“There are pockets of poverty all over the city,” says Thibodeau-DeGuire, “and that makes finding solutions more complex. We’re relying on our agencies to read and assess the situation particular to their own neighbourhoods.”

Centraide is also eyeing new opportunities for funding. “We have plans to increase our campaign goal to \$75 million in five years,” says Thibodeau-DeGuire, “a 50-percent increase from 10 years ago.”

Thibodeau-DeGuire is happy to be celebrating her 20th year at the Centraide helm. “I’m very proud to see us linking so many people together from different walks of life,” she affirms. “Our new motto is ‘Coming together to help, helping to come together’. That’s what Centraide is all about.”

New house will help

Families of intellectually handicapped children with severe physical or behavioural problems are to be offered some much-needed respite. The West Montreal Readaptation Centre (WMRC) will be servicing a new facility in Beaconsfield in the fall that will welcome the children into a homelike setting for short periods away from home. It will be named the Eleanor Côté House, after a generous donor and life-long advocate for disabled persons.

“There are now 40 children requiring such special attention that there is no place that can accommodate them,” says **Ron Creary**, WMRC acting executive director. “This situation has been causing severe stress on the parents and on their family life. I think we’ve come up with an optimum solution.”

It was the Taylor-Birks Foundation that raised the money – a million dollars – to build the new facility. The WMRC, a public institution, donated the land and will provide the respite services. The Centre Marc-Vanier, which operates 29 group homes for clients of the WMRC, is the builder, owner and manager of the site. “This is one of the best examples I’ve seen of a private/public partnership,” Creary affirms.

Volunteering on the rise

The Volunteer Bureau of Montreal (VBM) reports a steady increase both in the number of requests for volunteers and the number of people volunteering. The VBM now has 1,066 organizations registered for its recruitment service, 82 of which are new clients. It received over 2,000 requests for its 550 volunteers during the past year, the greatest number for activities involving seniors, followed by those involving women and women in distress.

Women volunteers continue to outnumber men: they made up two-thirds of the total last year. Over 60 percent of those volunteering were under 35 years old. Forty-five percent of VBM’s volunteers have a mother tongue other than English or French.

Tyndale-St Georges refocuses

The Tyndale-St Georges Community Centre in Little Burgundy has taken on a new orientation. During her first year as executive director, **Patricia Murphy** has been shifting emphasis to concentrate on key programs that speak to the needs of the community. “We were spreading our resources too far afield,” she explains. “We’re going to zero in on what’s needed right here.”

Prime attention is being given to early childhood programs; children, youth and family programs; and adult development. “We’re also putting a lot of energy into boosting our volunteer operations,” says Murphy. “And we’ve begun forging new partnerships to help realize some of our goals.”

Murphy points to one collaborative venture with McGill, an innovative after school program called ‘Camp Discovery’. “Its purpose is to provide our young people with hands-on experience in learning math and science,” Murphy explains. “In a similar vein, students from the National Society of Black Engineers are working with them on projects that help them understand engineering concepts. This kind of exposure shows the kids that they have options in life.”

Adults are benefiting from the same concept. In a new entrepreneurship program with the John Molson School of Business, the Centre was able to provide an opportunity for people to develop their own businesses. “Eleven came up with a viable idea,” says Murphy, “and Molson teachers came to the community and worked with them on their business plans, coaching them to the point of being ready to seek financing. So far we have a couple of B and Bs, an online bookstore specializing in Black history and culture, and a dog droppings pickup business.”

Tyndale is also involved in a new collective community project in which local organizations are developing plans for early childhood programs. “We work with the anglophone population,” says Murphy, “but there are many common needs we can address together with our francophone neighbours.”

Ministry moves on climate change

The Ministry of Health and Social Services has been directing funds into communities for projects designed to counteract the adverse health effects of climate change. Eco-Quartier Peter-McGill, in downtown Montreal, has just received a grant of \$973,000, a sum augmented to \$2.1 million by grants from the CSSS de la Montagne and the Montreal School Commission. The basic goal is to improve air quality and reduce smog incidents by increasing vegetation in general, and developing shady areas to protect citizens from exposure to ultraviolet rays.

Spreading the word in church

The East Island Network for English Language Services (REISA) has come up with a new approach to reaching parents on the issue of drug abuse prevention. In church. Meetings have been held with local church representatives about adding the topic to Sunday school sessions.

“We’ve had a successful drug awareness program in high schools here and have introduced a self-awareness program at the elementary level,” says **Fatiha Gatrie-Guermiri**, REISA coordinator. “We had hoped to reach parents at school meetings but so very few attend that we decided to look for another way to try to get them involved.”

Agency has plans for the future

The Montreal Health and Social Services Agency has drawn up its priorities for delivery of healthcare services in the region for the next five years. First on the agenda is to ensure that basic primary health care is easily and rapidly accessible. It is aiming for better management of chronic illnesses, and more timely assistance for young children, youth and their families. Developing the capacity of individuals and communities to act on the factors that affect health is another goal. And it will complete implementation of its action plans for the care of elderly persons who have lost autonomy and on mental health services.

Trusteeship affects anglo disabled

The Centre de Réadaptation Lisette-Dupras in Lachine was placed under government trusteeship in May. For the past 10 years this facility for the intellectually handicapped has had an arrangement with the West Montreal Readaptation Centre to handle English-speaking clients from its territory, but that arrangement was unilaterally terminated by the Lachine institution last fall. There are currently 50 disabled anglophones on a waiting list to receive services from the WMRC, but the Ministry has yet to decide where these people, or future anglophone clients, must go for the services they need.

Library service for shut-ins

The Atwater Library and Computer Centre has introduced a home delivery service in the Peter McGill district for downtowners who are confined to quarters because of age or illness. Launched in March, the service has attracted 15 customers, so far all elderly, and seven young volunteers.

“This is not just book delivery,” affirms **Beth Symansky**, project director. “Our volunteers spend at least half an hour with their customers, to make it a real visit. An important aspect of the program is to foster intergenerational relationships, and it’s really working.” For further information: 514 935 7344.

New hospitals planned

The Minister of Health and Social Services has announced plans to construct two new hospitals in the Greater Montreal region in the next five to seven years. One will be in the east end of the city where 300 beds are lacking; the other is in the Soulanges-Vaudreuil area, which is short 225 beds.

The winds of change...

New legislation that will bring major changes to the public healthcare system, especially in the area of governance, is expected in the fall.

In brief

Warren Allmand has been named president of the Thomas More Institute.

Ron Creary has been appointed acting executive director of the West Montreal Readaptation Centre.

Sheila Goldbloom O.C. received an honorary doctorate from her alma mater, Mount Holyoke College, in South Hadley, Massachusetts.

Patrick Murphy has been appointed new executive director of the Constance Lethbridge Rehabilitation Centre.

Centraide of Greater Montreal presented its annual agency awards in April:

The **Agnes C. Higgins** Award went to both Projet 80, a homework help program for disadvantaged youth, and to PROMIS, for its program of aiding isolated South Asian women.

The **Gilles Cousineau** Award went to Daniel Vézina, for his innovative work with handicapped persons.

The **Antoinette Robidoux** Award was received by Steven Roy, a young volunteer at Santropol Roulant.

Birthdays galore: the Montreal Chinese Hospital is 90 years old; Head and Hands, the NDG-based nonprofit youth assistance agency, is celebrating its 40 years; Santropol Roulant is 15 years old; the Foundation of Greater Montreal is celebrating its 10th anniversary; the Community Health and Social Services Network (CHSSN) also is 10 years old.

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