

## CCS opens new senior centre

English-speaking seniors in LaSalle now have a meeting place to call their own. The new CCS LaSalle 50+ Community Centre, opened in November at St. Jean de Brebeuf Church, is designed to fill a serious void for the 8,000 older anglophones living in that area of the city. Language barriers affect their access to health and social services, and the dearth of dedicated community activities creates a chronic sense of isolation.

“To say that these seniors have been lacking services is a gross understatement,” says **Diane Doonan**, CCS community development worker who is the centre coordinator. “And their level of isolation, even in their own community, is striking.”

The LaSalle facility is starting out as a weekly drop-in day centre, serving as an information and referral site as well as a meeting place. “The most immediate need is for social activities that will both stimulate the participants and provide them with a sense of belonging,” says Doonan. “Local seniors are eager to develop their own program of activities; people were volunteering even before the opening.” For further information: 514 937 5351, ext. 237.

## Young Blacks benefit

Eight young men in Little Burgundy are getting a chance to develop their employability skills, and help their community, thanks to a recent grant from the federal Skills for Living and Learning program. The Padua Centre, a multi-faith mediation centre, and home to the local Black Youth Network, is overseeing the project.

“It’s a multi-pronged program,” says **Anna Lee-Popham**, development coordinator. “We give group and individual workshops, French classes, job search preparation, and coaching to help them develop their self-confidence. And this program is also geared to community service, so participants are working with local youth and senior organizations as part of their training.” For further information: 514 932 7597.

## Students start on safety program

A pilot project just begun in Montreal’s East End should go a long way to reducing young deaths on Quebec roadways. That is the goal of Quebec Students against Impaired Driving (QSAID), launched at Laurier-MacDonald High School (L-Mac) in October. The first such venture in this province, QSAID is to be introduced in English across the province, with a view to subsequently having it adopted into the French schools as well. A province-wide network of QSAIDs is the goal.

“Seven other provinces already have this kind of program,” says **Gerry Tullio**, promoter of the QSAID project and co-founder of Toxic-Stop, an addiction assistance centre. “They’re really eager to have Quebec on board: the Alberta network is going to share its promotional program with us and New Brunswick is letting us use their bilingual material.”

Any improvement in the sad statistics of young drivers will be welcome. In 2009, Quebec drivers between the ages of 16 and 24, who represent 10 percent of license holders, were involved in 25 percent of accidents resulting in bodily injury. Between 2001 and 2005, 43 percent of drivers that age killed on Quebec roads had consumed alcohol.

The QSAID concept is essentially student-run. Each participating school will have its own chapter, with student members planning and promoting its activities. Staff advisors provide guidance and support. As part of a provincial network, they will be able to share resources and information. “We’ll be using the teleconferencing facilities at L-Mac’s Community Learning Centre to link up with the regions and, eventually, with other provinces,” says Tullio. “We’ve received federal seed money to start up, but hope to eventually become self-sustaining.”

Tullio is a substance abuse counsellor at L-Mac. “What really moved me to initiate this project,” he explains, “was kids saying that they drive better after smoking a joint, that texting isn’t a problem. That’s why we use ‘impaired’ instead of ‘drunk’ driving in the name.” For further information: 514 327 6017.

## Deaf School celebrates its 60th

The Montreal Oral School for the Deaf was established in 1950 by a group of parents who wanted their hearing-impaired children to talk and to attend regular schools. The School is the only such institution for anglophone children in Quebec. Today some 220 children are under its wing, with 40 following the regular school curriculum in-house, receiving the therapeutic and clinical services they require. Staff specialists continue to closely monitor those who have integrated into mainstream schools and also provide pertinent training to their teachers.

“A major part of our program is working with parents,” says **Martha Perusse**, School principal. “They have to be the child’s advocate. We help them deal with the emotional and cognitive needs of their children. We give them lots of support.” For further information: 514 488 4946.

## Concordia coaching volunteers

Students at Concordia University who are interested in volunteer work now have a special resource site on campus. In June, the University opened its Leadership, Initiative and Volunteer Engagement (LIVE) Centre. **Valerie Millette** is the LIVE Centre coordinator.

“We promote volunteerism through organized group events, one-on-one counselling and publicity online and around the campus,” explains Millette. “We provide workshops to acquaint students with volunteering and to help them find volunteer opportunities in their area of interest. I coach them on developing or honing their skills.

“We’re definitely not trying to build up a bank of volunteers for people to ask us for their services,” affirms Millette. “We do liaison work with community organizations the students could be interested in, so we’d be happy to receive information material from those that recruit volunteers to stock our resource centre.” For further information: 514 848 2424, ext. 5573.

## GIV3 is growing

Since its arrival on the philanthropic scene last year, an innovative program encouraging Canadians to be more generous has been making its mark. GIV3, a non-profit organization launched last year by Montreal businessman **John Hallward**, aims to convince Canadians to donate at least three percent of their income to charity and to do volunteer work for at least three hours a month. Over 100 charitable organizations have so far signed on as GIV3 partners in its Coalition for Caring to reach that goal.

“We give our partners visibility on our website,” says Hallward, “and they promote our message in their work. Together we have a much greater chance of improving Canadians’ charitable behaviour.”

GIV3 spreads the word in a variety of ways. It has a donation calculator on its website that measures an individual’s three-percent donation target. Its Great Canadian Charity Contest invites people to submit a promotional description of their favourite charities, with winners selected twice a year. The most recent were from Montreal: End Poverty Now, the Old Brewery Mission and Head & Hands each received \$1,000. (Deadline for the next contest is April 30, 2011.)

GIV3 will also be direct-mail marketing through partners’ fund raising campaigns, has launched a Facebook page, and is now shooting its first public service announcement for TV. In January, GIV3 will be launching a Group Giving campaign, which will provide a way for individuals to match pledges made by corporations, foundations or other supporters.

Hallward is particularly concerned about the poor giving habits of wealthier Canadians: “On average, they donate less than 0.73 percent of their income to charity. If we could boost that figure to 0.8 percent, it would mean a billion dollars more. And if other Canadians would raise their average donations from 0.73 to one percent, that’s between 2.5 and 3 billion dollars. I think it’s doable. Just imagine what it would mean to our country if three percent became the norm.” For information: [www.GIV3.ca](http://www.GIV3.ca).

## Foster families are few

Batshaw Youth and Family Centres has put out the call: more foster families are needed – now. At any given time, Batshaw has around 450 children in foster care, with up to 25 in emergency care or group homes waiting for placement. But there are fewer and fewer places for them to go.

“Society has changed over the years,” explains **Marion Leroux**, Resources coordinator. “Not only is the age of children needing foster care getting younger, but now there are fewer families with a caregiver at home during the day. So it’s become very difficult to place babies and the youngest children who need someone at home after school.”

Another contributing factor to the current dilemma is the shrinking size of the anglophone population. “It was already small,” says Leroux, “but now more people are moving to the suburbs. That has had a major impact on placing children who attend inner-city schools.

“It takes a very special kind of family to look after these often troubled children and keep the lines open to the biological family,” Leroux affirms, “They can, and do, play a tremendous role in the well being of the child. We have some wonderful foster families in our program, but they’re getting older. One has fostered for over 50 years!” For further information contact: **Annie Alexander**, 514 932 7161, ext. 1139.

## Homeless plans proliferate

The mayor of Montreal tabled an action plan in October aimed at helping the city’s homeless. Among the 11 measures he is proposing are 750 more housing units; a “dry-out” centre for intoxicated individuals, who otherwise would not be accepted into shelters; and elimination of “social profiling” and harassment by police. At the same time, the Old Brewery Mission has offered one of its buildings for use as a permanent medical clinic for the homeless.

## Seniors plan now under way

To raise awareness and promote advocacy on issues affecting English-speaking seniors, the Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN) is now taking action on two key fronts: establishing a provincial seniors network, and compiling a comprehensive data base on available services.

The first stage in setting up a provincial network was to get seniors involved at the grass roots level. “We’re polling individuals and local organizations in Montreal, the Outaouais, and the Townships on their concerns and ideas,” explains **Valerie Glover-Drolet**, project coordinator. “In April, we’ll be surveying the other regions. We also have an online survey on the QCGN website that anyone can access to add their own comments and suggestions.”

QCGN’s database on services available for seniors has so far been built up to 65 entries. “Senior issues are more than just health and social services,” affirms Glover-Drolet. “We’re working toward as broad a base as possible to develop partnerships that interconnect people and share information on the many aspects of the senior community’s needs.”

A steering committee is now organizing a forum to be held in February where anglophone seniors from across the province will come together to pool ideas, exchange best practices, develop a long term vision for the seniors network, and choose its top three priorities. “My big goal,” says Glover-Drolet, “is that by next national Seniors Day, October 1, we will have a functioning network to speak to the government on behalf of all our English-speaking seniors.” For information: [www.qcgn.ca](http://www.qcgn.ca).

## More senior friendly

There are now 177 municipalities across Quebec committed to adopting policies and services to improve the quality of life of their senior citizens. The Ministry of Family and Seniors is funding the initiative to encourage active aging and to effect more seniors’ participation in their community.

## REISA and refugees

The East Island Network for English-language Services (REISA) has formed a new partnership, with the Scalabrini Centre of Montreal for Refugees and Immigrants. Initially set up to assist Italian immigrants adapt and integrate into society, the Centre has extended its services to cover immigrants from other countries as well. Its services include legal aid, language classes, pre-employment counselling, workshops and conferences. It offers accommodation for women and children and operates a food bank for the needy.

## New diabetic centres announced

The Montreal Health and Social Services Agency has announced that diabetic information centres are to be introduced at all CSSSs in Greater Montreal by the end of March. Multi-disciplinary professional teams will provide structured programs for diabetic patients to enable them to better understand and control their illness. The plan is to provide the same approach to other chronic illnesses, such as lung disease, depression, hypertension and chronic pain.

## At risk kids

A landmark Ontario initiative has shown that children from low income, high risk neighbourhoods are more likely to excel in school and less likely to commit crime if they become involved with such programs as tutoring assistance and breakfast clubs at a young age. This was determined by a Queen's University research team that evaluated the project called Better Beginnings, Better Futures. For information: [www.queensu.ca](http://www.queensu.ca).

## Appetite for food banks growing

A record number of 86,350 Montrealers received grocery bags from food banks last March, a rise of 39 percent over March 2009. A record 140,697 received some form of food handout. The increase for all of Canada was nine percent, also a record.

## In brief

**Howard Berger** has been named to the Montreal regional health and social services access committee.

**Marie-France Bodet** has been appointed executive director of the Grace Dart Extended Care Centre.

**Elsa Bolem, Alex Paterson and Richard Walling** were this year's winners of the Sheila and Victor Goldbloom Distinguished Community Service Award.

**Dominic D'Abate** was elected chair of the first board of directors of REISA.

The Old Brewery Mission has received an Award of Excellence from the Ministry of Health and Social Services in the category of support for vulnerable persons and groups.

The East Island Network for English language Services (REISA) has opened a new website: [www.REISA.ca](http://www.REISA.ca).

The Palliative Care Council has made available a series of lectures and workshops on its website at [www.council-on-palliative-care.org](http://www.council-on-palliative-care.org).

AMI Quebec is presenting a series of telephone workshops in early 2011 on mental illness and sexuality, depression, hoarding, bipolar disorders and schizophrenia. For information and to register: [www.careringvoice.com](http://www.careringvoice.com).

The Volunteer Bureau of Montreal is offering workshops on training, recruitment, screening, and supervision. For information: 514 842 8997.

Volunteer Week 2011 is being held during April 10-16 under the theme Passion. Action. Impact.

The editor welcomes story ideas: 514 937 4309

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