

Forum enters 25th year

The Red Feather Forum was launched in December, 1986, to provide a communication link among people interested in social services in Montreal's English-speaking community. The quarterly newsletter was sponsored by the Red Feather Foundation, successor to United Red Feather Services (URFS) which, from 1922 until 1974, supported up to 100 welfare and social services agencies in the Protestant and non-sectarian communities of Montreal. In 1974, those agencies became part of the new Centraide of Greater Montreal, which was co-founded by URFS. The Foundation was then created to manage the URFS endowments and assets.

In 2002, the Red Feather Foundation merged with Centraide's Foundation, and transferred its assets there to be managed as the Red Feather Fund. The *Forum* is published from those monies.

Abuse awareness ads pay off

The province's \$20 million, five-year program to sensitize seniors, professionals and the general public about abuse to which many elderly Quebecers are subjected is striking a cord. The Senior Aware program, launched last October with TV ads by personalities Bill Haugland and Yvon Deschamps, has garnered twice as many calls as expected on its telephone help line. Designed to receive 3000 calls a year, the service had already drawn close to 2500 after only five months of operation.

The calls, 16 a day on average, are coming from victims themselves as well as family members or neighbours who have witnessed their abuse. The reports cover financial, physical and psychological mistreatment. Responders refer cases to the local CLSC, the public curator or the local police.

This help line service is bilingual. Operating out of the Cavendish CSSS, seven social workers are on call seven days a week from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. The number for the Montreal area is 514 489 2287.

Lindsay decision due

There is soon to be a decision as to whether the former Lindsay Rehabilitation Hospital will continue to be designated a bilingual institution. Until its merger in 2008 with the Institut de réadaptation de Montréal, the Lindsay had maintained official bilingual status, serving its mainly English-speaking patients. With creation of the Institut de réadaptation Grenier-Lindsay de Montréal (IRGLM), that status came under pressure, particularly from the St. Jean-Baptiste Society of Montreal. The IRGLM has requested that the Office québécois de la langue française take a position on the issue. Its opinion is expected to come down in mid-May.

The Lindsay has long been an important provider of health services for Montreal's anglophone community. It was founded in 1913 as the 12-bed Loyola Convalescent Home, by a group of Irish Catholic women, to care for sailors who were sick and stranded. By 1933, it had progressed to a 104-bed convalescent home thanks to the philanthropy of Sir Charles Lindsay, a local piano manufacturer. In 1997 the facility, then a renowned rehabilitation hospital, was named in his honour.

While the IRGLM continues to be affiliated with the Université de Montréal teaching hospital, its Lindsay pavilion has long-standing partnerships with the Lethbridge Rehabilitation Centre and other anglophone health networks.

Lethbridge adopts Cheshire

The Lethbridge Rehabilitation Centre has taken on the management of a small group home for physically disabled adults in Dollard-des-Ormeaux. The Cheshire Home was established in 1981 to house six autonomous adults who receive physical rehabilitation and skills training to prepare them for independent living. It had been part of a 250-member international network founded in England in 1948 by an ex-RAF pilot to treat wounded veterans. A second Cheshire home, for six permanently disabled people, is still privately run.

Cummings has unique approach

The Cummings Jewish Centre for Seniors has expanded its reputed day program for individuals with early diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease or cognitive impairment due to dementia. It also caters to seniors who are socially isolated, with loss of autonomy, but who are still cognitively intact.

"Our program is unique because of the individual attention each participant receives," says **Tanya Nemiroff**, coordinator of the Day Services Program. "It's a very structured package that includes physical fitness, art, brain games, discussions and drama therapy. The key is that there is a ratio of three or four participants to each staff member, so that the activities can be tailored to their needs."

The Cummings approach seems to be effective. "We can't change the fact of their condition," says Nemiroff, "but we can try to change the individual expectations of what people with dementia are capable of. With the stimulation and socialization inherent in this program, we've seen a stability in their condition among the early diagnosed. That's very rewarding, because we want to maintain them in the community for as long as possible." For further information: 514 342 1234.

School setting up seminars

As part of its continuing education mandate, the McGill School of Social Work is developing a series of seminars and workshops on issues affecting practitioners in relationship-based professions, such as social work, education and nursing. Coping with anxiety, managing groups and strategies to prevent burnout are among the topics to be addressed at the sessions, which are starting this summer.

"We're aiming to keep professionals up to date on best practices that will complement their existing skills," says **Lisa Courte**, training and development consultant. "And we're asking for their suggestions as to what issues are of most interest to them. They can contact me at lisa.courte@mail.mcgill.ca."

Northern children in need

Troubled Inuit children from the Nunavik region of northern Quebec are currently being provided with a highly specialized program of care at a dedicated facility in northeast Montreal. The Boscoville project, in Rivière des Prairies, began in May last year, and will continue for another year while youth protection residential facilities in the north are developed. While Inuit staff, with their families, have been brought to the pastoral site, additional staffing and management assistance comes from Batshaw Youth and Family Centres.

"It's really a research and development project," explains **Gérald Savoie**, advisor to Batshaw's executive director. "The goal is to explore and develop treatment strategies that would be best suited to these kids, and the highly challenging circumstances of their home life. The problems are enormous, and many of these youth need intensive support. So each resident at Boscoville undergoes an in-depth evaluation to facilitate development of a personalized treatment plan. And the Inuit staff will return with state-of-the-art intervention practices."

"The more we learn from this project, the better off these children will be," says Savoie "It won't solve everything, but it's a huge breakthrough."

Report proves anglophones poor

The Community Health and Social Services Network (CHSSN) has released a major new report on poverty among anglophone Quebecers. [Socio-economic Profiles of Quebec's English-speaking Communities](#) is a comprehensive study that pinpoints vulnerable anglophone communities for each of the province's 16 health regions and 95 CSSS territories. It provides comparisons between the economic situation of anglophone communities and that of the majority population, and the growing disparity between them. It illustrates the income inequality across Quebec's anglophone population and its effect on health. The full report is available at: www.chssn.org.

Grandmothers getting attention

They are forgotten no more. The growing number of grandmothers who have taken on the role of primary caregivers for their grandchildren has become a focus of attention at the Tyndale-St. George's Community Centre in Little Burgundy. With a small grant from the Ministry for Seniors, the Centre is drafting a program of action to assist them.

"We've long been involved with children," says **Maria Panova**, director of the Early Childhood department. "Now we're seeing a steady increase in the number of grandmothers participating in our programs. They're a very impressive group of women and wonderful caregivers, but many are struggling and they don't have a voice."

The Centre will be evaluating the grandmothers' most pressing needs and has put out a call for suggestions from the community. It will nurture the building of a grandmothers' network. There are plans to offer pastoral counselling to those who are feeling isolated and in need of spiritual support. There will be drop-in activities and information sessions, and even baby-sitting to provide some respite time. For further information: 514 931 6265.

OBM to create campus

The Old Brewery Mission (OBM) will be broadening its range of services for Montreal's homeless by leasing space in an abandoned building next to its existing shelter. The new annex will eventually house a medical clinic, a day centre and short-term accommodation. The new amenities will be gradually introduced as staffing funding is found.

"It's a campus concept," says **Matthew Pearce**, OBM executive director. "The day centre will be used for training and workshops for staff and transitional residents, and will provide our regular clients a place to go during the day. The temporary housing is for first time arrivals to bypass the shelter and not identify themselves as homeless, so that we can help them return quickly to the community."

Dentists welcome at Welcome

The free dental clinic set up by the McGill School of Dentistry at Montreal's Welcome Hall Mission has proven to be a resounding success. Since it opened in November, homeless and low-income Montrealers have been flocking to the Jim Lund Dental Clinic. (The clinic is named after a former dean who started the School's outreach program.)

"We now have a three-month backlog," says **Cyril Morgan**, Mission executive director. "We've had to hire someone to handle all the calls. The operational budget was supposed to run around \$60,000. It's going to be double."

The clinic opened with two dental chairs, with up to 30 patients being treated by McGill faculty and students three days a week. To meet demand, a third chair will be installed by the end of April, and clinic hours extended to five days a week.

"It's really a great initiative," says Morgan. "It illustrates just how badly a service like this was needed." For further information: 514 523 5288.

Focus on volunteerism

There have been some significant developments in the field of volunteerism in recent years. Two studies just released address the challenges facing professionals in the field, and their response to the changing face of the volunteer population. [Bridging the Gap – Enriching the Volunteer Experience to Build a Better Future for our Communities](#), produced by Volunteer Canada, is available at www.volunteer.ca. [Bénévoles nouveaux, approches nouvelles](#) is available from the Réseau d'action bénévoles du Québec at www.rabq.ca.

The RABQ has also conducted an analysis of the profession of volunteer management, also available on its website. "This is essential reading for anyone working in an organization that engages volunteers," says **Alison Stevens**, executive director of the Volunteer Bureau of Montreal.

Montreal, the senior's friend

The City of Montreal has been awarded a grant of \$300,000 from the Ministry for Seniors to adopt policies and services that will improve the quality of life of its older citizens. Municipalité amie des aînés (MADA) is a funding initiative by the Ministry to encourage active aging and to effect more seniors' participation in the community. There are now 177 municipalities in the program across Quebec.

Montreal is matching the province's funding with another \$300,000 to develop an action plan for the autumn of 2012. Such issues as improved street lighting, exercise areas, public benches and gardens and safer traffic flow will be examined.

Senators hear from anglophones

No longer the forgotten minority? When the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages held hearings in Montreal in September, it marked the first time that the English-speaking community in Quebec was invited to appear. The Community Health and Social Service Network (CHSSN) was one of the several community networks that "witnessed" at the hearing. **Jennifer Johnson**, the CHSSN's executive director, provided the senators with a "myth-busting" overview of the community and the efforts anglophones were making to improve the delivery of health and social services in English.

It would seem to have been worthwhile. In its March 9 report, The Vitality of Quebec's English-speaking Community: From Myth to Reality, the Committee called upon the federal government to do a better job of protecting the rights of Quebec's anglophone minority. The report is available at <http://senate-senat.ca/ol-lo-e.asp>.

Volunteer matchmaking

Volunteer Canada and Manulife Financial have launched a new interactive website that links potential volunteers with opportunities most suited to their interests. It is at www.get.involved.ca.

In brief

Lynda Barrette is new director of the West Island Volunteer Bureau.

Bill Ryan of the McGill School of Social Work has been named one of Canada's top ten researchers in the last ten years in the field of gender and health.

Sheila Woodhouse has been appointed director of Nazareth House.

AMI-Quebec has moved to Suite 300, 6875 Decarie Blvd., Montreal QC H3W 3E4. Other coordinates remain the same.

To commemorate Queen Elizabeth's Diamond Jubilee next year, Canada has launched a medal to recognize volunteerism and public service. A formal call for nominations will be made this spring.

Nominations for a series of new Canadian awards for volunteerism will be called for in April.

AMI-Quebec has prepared a document outlining financial and legal considerations for persons having to plan for an ill relative's future security. It is available online at www.amiquebec.org.

The Council on Palliative Care is presenting two free workshops: The ABCs of Palliative Care on April 5 and A Caregiver's Journey on April 12. Both are at 6 p.m., at Mount Sinai Hospital, Room 103-105, 590 Cavendish Blvd. To register: 514 499 0345.

The publication Private Retirement Residences for Self-sufficient Seniors is available for \$20 from the Information and Referral Centre of Greater Montreal. To order: 514 527 1375.

Volunteer Week is from April 10 –16.

The editor welcomes story ideas: 514 937 4309

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National Library of Canada ISSN 1709 092X

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