

## Goldbloom awards announced

The Quebec Community Groups Network has selected three outstanding members of the province's English-speaking community to receive the 2013 Sheila and Victor Goldbloom Distinguished Community Service Awards. They will be presented on October 17.

**Robina Goodwin** was founding president of the Council for Anglophone Magdalen Islanders. She has been cited for her success in reaching out to francophone Islanders to work together for the betterment of both communities. **Judy Martin**, board chair of Batshaw Youth and Family Services, has a long history of volunteer and professional service in support of children. She has been particularly active in fundraising and raising public awareness for children with special needs. Famous for his bilingual blockbuster *Bon Cop, Bad Cop*, film maker **Kevin Tierney** is known in the broader community as a leader and mentor. He is cited for his contribution to breaking down stereotypes and fostering better understanding between anglophones and francophones.

## Lachine Hospital 100 years old

The Lachine Hospital is celebrating its centenary as an expanding partner in the McGill University Hospital Centre (MUHC) network. Founded in 1913 as l'Hôpital St-Joseph, it was run by the Sisters of Providence until 1974, when it was brought under provincial government jurisdiction. Five years ago, it was officially designated as the Lachine Campus of the MUHC.

The next five years will see extensive renovation and steady expansion of the hospital's facilities. The number of beds will be doubled – to 79 – all in private rooms. Emergency room workspace will triple in size to accommodate some 25,000 patients annually. Infrastructure is being modernized to service the hospital's specialized fields of geriatric medicine, bariatric surgery (one of only two such centres in Quebec) and ophthalmology.

## New health care for OBM clients

The Old Brewery Mission (OBM) is adding to its mandate by providing new healthcare services for homeless people suffering from mental or physical illness. A walk-in clinic will open in October. Beds for mentally ill patients requiring long-term care are already being filled.

“Over 50 percent of homeless people suffer from some form of mental illness,” says **Matthew Pearce**, OBM executive director. “Many end up being hospitalized just because they can't handle medication on their own. We're emptying some of those needed hospital beds by offering the homeless patients care and treatment with us. It's the first time that this type of service is being offered.”

The new quarters provide accommodation for ten patients. Psychiatric staff from the CHUM (Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal) is providing medical attention. A full-time psychiatric social worker is in attendance. Counsellors from the OBM's transition program are on hand to work with the patients on integration back into the community.

“This is a pilot project with an end date,” says Pearce. “We hope to convince the government that this kind of approach is valid and effective, and economically viable. We're saving them money right now.”

The new clinic will operate for two hours a day, at the start, with a nurse and social worker from the local CSSS in attendance.

## Centraide campaign kicks off

Centraide of Greater Montreal launched its 2013 fund-raising campaign on October 1 with its annual “march of 1,000 umbrellas”. The colourful assembly, which set off at noon from St. Catherine Street West and McGill College Avenue, gathered some 20,000 representatives of Centraide agencies and supporters. Centraide's 2012 campaign garnered \$58.2 million; this year the goal is \$58.5 million.

## Care for caregivers coming

Long left out of the loop of public services delivery for mentally ill persons, family members have become the focus of a national effort to include them in service plans for their relatives. The Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) has issued a comprehensive set of guidelines aimed at improving the capacity of caregivers to provide the best possible care to adults with mental illness while tending to their own wellbeing.

“This document is of major importance,” says **Ella Amir**, executive director of AMI-Quebec. “It recommends integrating family support into basic mental health services, special training and support for service providers, as well as taking concrete action to influence legislative and policy changes.

“The beauty of this document,” Amir affirms, “is that it’s not an all or nothing approach. It can be viewed as a modular plan, with different spheres of action implemented in different phases over time. It’s now up to family associations like ours to make sure the recommendations are implemented. There are nearly 400 of us across Canada, 40 in Quebec. And we’re all eager to get started.

“AMI is going to be spreading the word here,” explains Amir. “We’ll be organizing conferences this autumn, and I’ll even be conducting grand rounds at the General and Jewish hospitals. We’ll be developing small working groups to negotiate with service providers and policy makers to bring the recommendations to life. The biggest likelihood for implementation is if we work together reviewing the programs in place and identifying what might need to be improved or added. Another important goal of ours is that we’ll be tackling the issue of financial help for family caregivers of the mentally ill.”

According to the MHCC, there are more than five million such caregivers in Canada. Their unpaid care and support provides a major contribution to the national health and social services systems which, it is estimated, spend close to \$4 billion annually caring for people with mental illness.

## Batshaw building at Beaconsfield

Ground has finally been broken for the new campus of Batshaw Youth and Family Services in Beaconsfield. A nine-unit, open, facility for 108 young people requiring residential care will eventually replace the agency’s Prévost campus, which is over 100 years old. Construction has now begun on the first two 12-bed units, scheduled for completion in early 2015.

“This project has been in the planning stage for 12 years,” says **Linda Corbeil**, director of Finance and Administrative Services. “There have been a few hurdles to jump, including some objection from the community. But we’re very pleased that recent meetings with the City Council and the citizens association were able to resolve outstanding issues.”

The new facility will take up only 17 percent of the Batshaw property, the rest to remain forested. The buildings are to be set into the greenery – back from the road – and painted grey instead of white.

The advantages to the young residents and their families are significant. “Being back in their home community means that we’ll be able to provide even better care to English-speaking families on the West Island,” says Corbeil.

Construction of the Beaconsfield facility means that Batshaw’s long-term plan to consolidate its five residential operations onto one geographic location will finally be realized.

## Chinese volunteers rewarded

Chinese Family Services of Greater Montreal recently awarded bursaries to 14 student volunteers. The awards are to recognize the contribution volunteers make to the agency’s programs and to encourage others to join in. Originally designed for younger participants, the grants are now also available to adults and recent immigrants wishing to further their education. An added bonus for them is learning about their new community.

## Social Work degree a first

The McGill School of Social Work has received approval to launch a new Master's program in Couple and Family Therapy. This graduate program is the first of its kind to be offered in a Canadian school of Social Work. Graduates will be qualified for the psychotherapy license as well as the couple and family therapy license.

The new degree will be offered in partnership with the Department of Psychiatry at the Jewish General Hospital. This collaboration will allow students to acquire experience in research development as well as clinical expertise.

## Addressing ethnic elder abuse

Interactive workshops on elder abuse are now being offered to volunteers and professionals working with Montreal ethno-cultural communities. ACCESSS (Alliance des communautés culturelles pour égalité dans la santé et les services sociaux) has been providing training on a broad range of topics for nearly 30 years. This most recent service springs from a perceived need in the immigrant community.

"We know there are many forms of elder abuse," says **Pascual Delgado**, ACCESSS community organizer. "While physical or psychological abuse might be more generally understood, it would seem that financial abuse is less so. That's what we've covered in our first few workshops, but we do address many other topics that assist volunteers and staff in helping the ethnic elderly."

ACCESSS lists many workshops on health-related issues, including nutrition, medications, disease prevention and accessibility. "Because there are significant differences in customs and tradition among the many cultural groups," explains Delgado, "we tailor each workshop to their specific needs."

The workshops are free for member organizations and offered to non-members on a sliding scale. For further information: 514 287 1106, local 26.

## New programs at Saint Columba

Saint Columba House, in Point St. Charles, is introducing two new outreach programs to improve quality of life for members of its community. One is designed to help isolated seniors develop self-assurance and cultivate friendships; the other, to aid vulnerable families coping with children in crisis. "We've been observing deterioration in personal wellbeing among these two groups for a while," says Rev. **Patricia Lisson**, director. "Fortunately, we've obtained funding to address these issues."

The Building Family Assets program is aimed at young families living in poverty whose children are at risk. "The stress associated with the combined burden of low income and substandard housing aggravates an already precarious situation," says Lisson. "The behavior patterns and school dropout rate among these children are really worrisome."

This new program provides workshops and discussions that will lead to relation-building activities and improved communication among family members. Fifteen families were selected to participate in the first series, which carries through to June of next year.

The seniors program, called The Connection, will bring 20 seniors together with volunteer mentors to design and carry out programs and activities that will bring them into contact with others while building their self-confidence. "What is unique about this approach," explains Lisson, "is that the seniors will be encouraged to become developers of the program as well as receivers. We want to give a voice to those who have been sidelined by poverty or ill health. We anticipate that relationships established during these activities will lead them into a strong community network." This program will run from March 2014 to June 2015.

"We have a skilled multidisciplinary staff to support both these projects," affirms Lisson, "as well as assistance from McGill students in Social Work. "What we do need now are more volunteers." For further information: 514 932 6202.

## Volunteering is healthy

Another study says that volunteering is good for the health. According to the June issue of Psychology and Aging, not only does it make you feel better emotionally but also physically.

Researchers tracked 1,654 older American adults for four years, and found that, on average, those who spent four hours a week volunteering were 40 percent less likely to develop high blood pressure compared with those who never volunteered.

## More grants to nonprofits?

The board of the Montreal Health and Social Services Agency is obviously in favour of government increasing its support of community organizations operating in health and social services. Citing the “importance” of these organizations, the board had recommended an increase in financial aid in March 2009 and, again, in April 2012.

In a resolution unanimously passed in June this year, the board professed its support of committees that have now been set up by the Health Ministry to handle the issue, and expressed the wish that concrete results would ensue. In the greater Montreal region, some 553 organizations annually receive \$103 million.

## Join a study on language

A group of researchers attached to Concordia and Bishop's Universities is conducting a study on people's experience and feelings about communicating in English and French in health settings. This study, which has been fully approved by Concordia's research ethics board, is part of a larger program of research looking at language barriers in the delivery of health services.

The study, which the authors affirm is guaranteed confidential, takes about 45 minutes to complete. Entrants are eligible for a \$100 prize. It is accessible online, at <http://cielmontreal.ca/healthsurvey>.

## In brief

A new provincial advisory committee on delivery of health and social services in English has been named: **Gilbert Bourgeois** (Lanaudière), **Heather Clarke** (Montreal), **Danielle Fortin** (Outaouais), **Cynthia Dow** (Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine), **Norma Husk** (Estrie), **Frederick Jensen** (Montreal), **Sylvain Racette** (Montérégie), **Ann Marie Powell** (Chaudière-Appalaches), **Jean Robert** and **Angèle Dubé** (Capitale Nationale), and **Lionel Roberts** (Côte-Nord).

**Ella Amir** was elected board chair of REISA, the East Island Network for English Language Services.

**Jean-Claude Benita** was elected president of the board of AMI-Quebec.

**Erica Botner** has been named manager, Community Development, at CCS.

**Pierrette Gagné** is new executive director of the Information and Referral Centre of Greater Montreal. **Lorraine Bilog** had held that post for over 40 years.

**Judy Martin** has been returned as board chair of Batshaw Youth and Family Services.

The 2013 Edith and John Hans Low-Beer Memorial Lecture will be held on Thursday, November 7, at 7 p.m. at the Oscar Peterson concert hall, 7141 Sherbrooke St., West. **Dr. Xavier Amador's** topic is “I am not sick, I don't need help!” Admission is free.

Montreal Walks for Mental Health will be held on October 20. To register: 514 935 5770.

A Directory of Self-Help and Support Groups is available from the Information and Referral Centre of Greater Montreal. Call: 514 527 1375.

The editor welcomes story ideas: 514 937 4309

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