

OBM has been busy

Last year was a busy one for the Old Brewery Mission (OBM). In its 2012-2013 round-up, the OBM reports delivery of over 269,000 meals and distribution of 33,593 articles of clothing. Some 118,000 overnight stays in its emergency shelters and transition units were provided to the homeless. There were 636 clients who successfully passed through OBM's transition programs to be re-integrated into the community. In May, the Mission opened Canada's first treatment centre for homeless patients diagnosed with Hepatitis C. A walk-in medical clinic was opened in October.

Invited to remember

The Atwater Library and Computer Centre has launched a new project to help people with memory loss make a digital record of significant things in their life. The material can include memories of bygone years in such forms as family photos or yearbook pictures, music selections or video clips. The end product will be a CD as a "virtual memory box" celebrating the person's life. The hope is that the CD will later trigger memories and stimulate conversation. Contact: liz@atwaterlibrary.ca.

Foundation grants available

The Foundation of Greater Montreal is inviting community organizations involved in improving the quality of life in Greater Montreal to apply for a 2014 grant. Over 300 organizations applied last year; fifty were selected to share in the Foundation's \$1.5 million of disbursements. Applications must be made between April 15 and May 30. Directions will be posted in early April at www.fgm.org.

Incorporation changes

Not-for-profit organizations that are incorporated or those that wish to become so will be subject to an altered Canada Corporations Act as of October 17. For information: www.corporationscanada.ic.gc.ca.

In brief

Cynthia Dow was elected president of the provincial English-language advisory committee.

Linton Garner is the new manager of Community Development for CCS.

Patricia Gauthier has been named new president/director general of the Montreal Health and Social Services Agency.

Yvan Gauthier was named president/executive director of the Foundation of Greater Montreal.

Lesley Hill was appointed new executive director of Batshaw Youth and Family Services.

Dr. **Lawrence Rosenberg** was appointed director of the Jewish General Hospital.

The Old Brewery Mission has been awarded the Prix d'Excellence for its transition program for the homeless, Le Pont, by the Ministry of Health and Social Services.

Post-Secondary Student Mental Health, a guide for faculty members and healthcare professionals, is available from the Canadian Association of College and University Students at www.cacuss.ca.

Seniors Action Quebec has a new address: 1857 de Maisonneuve West, 2nd floor, Montreal H3H 1J9. New telephone number: 514 937 5351, ext 248.

McGill has opened a new \$18 million clinic for people without dental insurance.

Volunteer Week is April 6-12.

This year the Royal Victoria Hospital will be 140 years old; the Children's, 110; St. Mary's, 90.

The editor welcomes story ideas: 514 937 4309

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Partnering to protect Black youth

Batshaw Youth Protection Services and the African-Canadian Development and Prevention Network (ACDPN) have joined forces to help Black families better cope with their at-risk children. In the new Positive Disciplining project, the agencies are tackling together the vexing problem of young people being flagged for youth protection because of inappropriate disciplinary methods used at home.

"Often, when schools dealing with problem kids find discipline problems at home, they feel they have no other recourse but to signal Youth Protection for physical abuse," says **Leith Hamilton**, ACDPN executive director. "But unreasonable disciplinary methods can be culturally based and stress related, so Youth Protection intervention is not always the most effective solution. The aim of this project is to offer other options."

What opened the door to a new approach is the Strengthening Black Families program so successfully operated by the ACDPN over the past three years. "That program provides us with a fine framework to introduce positive parenting strategies to handle disciplinary issues," affirms **Harley Schwartz**, assistant director of Batshaw Youth Protection Services. "And this partnership is a promising way to dispel the fears that many in the Black community have about Youth Protection."

The 6-week pilot project will begin in April in LaSalle. Lessons learned will be applied to more sessions, scheduled to start in September.

GG launches giving campaign

His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnston, Governor-General of Canada, has launched a national campaign, My Giving Moment, to encourage Canadians to give back to their communities, neighbours, charities and causes. To participate, Canadians can visit the website at www.mygivingmoment.ca to share their personal giving moments or to browse for giving ideas.

Anglo seniors stats coming in

There are 267,000 anglophone seniors in Quebec, a population larger than the province of Prince Edward Island, and the Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN) has just finished studying who they are and what they think. Socioeconomic and sociocultural data combined with in depth interviews are providing a credible knowledge base that could influence policies and practices in the future.

"This investigation gives us a pan-provincial statistical portrait of Quebec anglophone seniors," says **Céline Cooper**, project director. "It's a first. And data were compiled with 2011 statistics, so this is the most up to date information available."

Some highlights of the study:

- Seniors make up over 25 percent of the province's English-speaking community
- They live in very diverse circumstances
- Low levels of bilingualism is a major factor affecting access to health and social services
- Disparities in income and education levels, both affecting health status, are particularly problematic in the Greater Montreal region

"The information we garnered in the field will bolster the statistical report," affirms Cooper. "We'd hoped to interest at least 400 seniors to take part in our survey; we got 800. So we have an incredible data pool to work with now. The next step is to translate these findings into action. That will be the focus of discussion at a major provincial conference in the Fall." (Full report available at www.qcgn.ca.)

The Lindsay is 100

The Lindsay Rehabilitation Hospital, the first of its kind in North America, dates back to 1914 when a group of Irish Catholic women set up the 12-bed Loyola Convalescent Home. It was eventually named after its major benefactor, Sir Charles Lindsay. A much renowned institution, the 200-bed Lindsay now operates within l'Institut de réadaptation Grenier-Lindsay de Montréal.

Young carers a valuable resource

Once known as the “invisible caregivers”, young people who give significant amounts of ongoing care to family members are now publicly acknowledged in many countries. Australia estimates that the labour of young “carers” saves its healthcare system \$18 billion annually. Canada is still very much lagging behind in recognizing the value – and the needs – of this country’s young carers.

It would seem, though, that their numbers warrant attention. In a province-wide survey just completed by the University of British Columbia School of Social Work, up to 20 percent of high school students were identified as young caregivers. The report points out that “these young Canadians play an increasingly essential role in the maintenance of family and community wellbeing”.

Some recognition of that fact has begun. One effort is led by Hospice Toronto, a nonprofit that has developed programs to promote awareness of the caregiving role young people play, to provide them with mentorship and peer support, and to relieve their stress and isolation. A tool kit with best practices and standards to help other agencies set up young carer programs will soon be available. For information: www.hospicetoronto.ca.

New mental standard at work

A National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace has been introduced by the federal government. It is to help companies identify potential hazards to mental health in the workplace and where they can improve their policies and practices. It is timely: mental illness is the fastest growing reason for short- and long-term disability claims in Canada; in 2011 it cost business \$6 billion in lost productivity and absenteeism.

“There are more caregivers of the mentally-ill being affected by this than mentally-ill workers,” says **Ella Amir**, executive director of AMI-Quebec. “They’ll benefit from the new standard as well.”

At fifty, Foster has new program

In 1964, a retired sea captain and long-time member of AA opened a small treatment centre for English-speaking alcoholics in Foster, Quebec. What later became known as Pavillon Foster continued to expand its range of services to accommodate young and adult anglophones suffering from substance abuse and gambling addiction. Now known as the Centre de réadaptation Foster, it operates four out-patient treatment sites in Montreal and the Montérégie, and a 24-bed adult residence in St-Philippe on the South Shore.

“We serve over 2,000 clients a year,” says **John Topp**, executive director. “And that number will rise significantly with the many clients being referred to us through the provincial Hospital Liaison program that we’ve now joined.”

Under that program, people going to the ER at the Montreal General or St. Mary’s Hospitals who are observed to have alcohol or drug problems are flagged to nurses specifically assigned to Foster. They offer those patients on-site attention and invite them to consider further treatment at Foster. Many have accepted.

“We’ve received 250 new clients through this program in the past year,” says Topp. “What’s interesting is that, for most of these individuals, it’s the first time they’ve ever been offered treatment for their addiction. They’ve been in a revolving door process, in and out of ERs, often for an addiction-related condition. And many have mental health issues as well.

“This program has been in the French system for a while,” says Topp, “but it’s a real breakthrough for us. It is based in the ER, but we’re getting referrals from other hospital departments now too. And also from French hospital ERs treating anglophones.

“It’s a good program,” Topp affirms. “Province-wide, literally tens of thousands of people have been helped by it. And it takes lot of strain off the ERs.”

Ste. Anne’s now has dual role

The last federally-owned veterans’ hospital in Canada has been transferred to provincial jurisdiction. While its mandate to serve Canadian veterans will continue, 94-year-old Ste. Anne’s Hospital will become a specialized centre for geriatric care for the general population within Quebec’s Ministry of Health and Social Services. It will, however, remain a free-standing institution, not integrated into a CSSS or university health centre.

The basic reason for this change is that the number of Canadian veterans has been steadily falling in recent years. With accommodation for 446 patients, over 100 beds are empty. And its stellar reputation for delivering high standards of geriatric care make Ste. Anne’s an important resource to help meet the needs of Quebec’s aging population.

The hospital’s traditional vocation, serving veterans, is not being diminished. In fact, with a new, younger generation of veterans arriving on the scene, the hospital has become a national leader in treating pain management and operational stress injury (OSI) also known as post-traumatic stress disorder. Ste. Anne’s is the only hospital in Canada to offer residential treatment of OSI.

What do we think of charities?

According to a national survey sponsored by the Alberta-based Muttart Foundation, Canadians are losing some faith in their charitable institutions. Talking about Charities 2013 is the fifth such survey since 2000. While results show that 93 percent of Canadians believe charities are important, there has been decline on some fronts: trust in charities varies from a high of 86 percent for hospitals to a low of 41 percent for religious organizations (other than places of worship); strong trust in charity leaders has dropped by 10 percent; belief in the honesty of charities as to how they use donations has decreased by 14 percent since 2000; and Canadians continue to give low ratings to charities for the degree to which they report on how donations are used.

Networking the way to go

It has already been proven in many English-speaking communities in Quebec. The best way to ensure or improve access to health and social services in English is to form partnerships among community organizations and healthcare institutions – to network. There are now 20 such networks across the province, parented by the Community Health and Social Service Network (CHSSN).

A new one is in the bud in Verdun, where a day-long forum, Community in Movement, recently brought together local organizations to exchange ideas on healthcare services for its anglophone population. It was hosted by the Verdun Anglo Family Council.

“We’re just starting to flex our muscles,” says **David Lefneski**, Council chair. “Although we’re based in Verdun, we have been very much concerned with the delivery of healthcare services to anglophones throughout the southwest portion of the city. We all share three major issues: the vulnerability of our seniors, affordable housing and, the major one, youth at risk.”

Farther north, anglophone community groups in the Lanaudière region have been gathering facts and friends in their region to improve access to healthcare services there. The English Community Organization of Lanaudière (ECOL) is in the process of establishing a network of stakeholders and public partners. “We’ll be doing full appraisal of what services are available now and where gaps are that need to be filled,” says **Roland Gilbert**, ECOL executive director.

While the 12,400 English-speakers in the region account for only 2.6 percent of the total population, their numbers have risen by 40 percent in the past 15 years, especially in the northern part of the territory around Rawdon. There are about 1,800 anglophone seniors in this large region, many living below the poverty level, for whom access to healthcare services is problematic because of distances from English-service health facilities.