

Hospitals on the agenda

On April 1, **Ste. Anne's Veterans Hospital** will be officially transferred from federal to provincial jurisdiction. That venerable facility will then come under the jurisdiction of the Montreal West Island Integrated University Health and Social Services Centre (CIUSSS). The Centre is currently recruiting additional professional staff to fill the hospital's new role in serving a larger client base. In welcoming Ste. Anne's to the fold, CIUSSS President and CEO **Benoit Morin** asserts that: "Ste. Anne's has proudly served veterans who have greatly contributed to the history of our country and other nations for the last 100 years ... and we will ensure that veterans will continue to receive care and services in both English and French". (There is still discussion as to whether patients from Grace Dart Extended Care in the East End will be moved to this West Island location.)

The **Montreal Neurological Hospital** is to be moved to the Glen site of the McGill University Health Centre. Construction of a new pavilion to house that facility must await approval of clinical plans, and it is estimated that it will take another five to seven years for the move to occur. Future use of the current Neuro buildings, which belong to McGill University, has yet to be determined.

The **Alan Memorial Institute** will be closing its doors as part of the Ministry's new mental health mandate. The Montreal General Hospital will be taking on responsibility for its day patients, although space allocation has yet to be finalized. No decision has been made as to future use of the Institute buildings and site and/or their potential sale.

The **Royal Victoria Hospital** premises have been designated as a first response medical treatment centre for arriving Syrian refugees.

Discussions continue on possible public uses for the **Montreal Children's Hospital** site, which was purchased by a private developer. Several downtown organizations, led by the Peter McGill Community Council, have been calling for community-directed activities to be included in any future development.

Meals-on-Wheels turns 50

It was thanks to four dedicated women from St. Matthias' Church in Westmount that Meals-on-Wheels (MoW) was introduced to Canada in January 1966. (The program originated in England some 20 years earlier.) That small group delivered its first hot noonday meals to 18 shut-ins living in Little Burgundy, charging 25 cents a meal. Today there are some 250 MoW groups across the province, serving several million meals a year to house-bound clients.

"I think of Meals-on-Wheels as 'food plus'," says **Marjorie Northrop**, coordinator of Food Services at the Volunteer Bureau of Montreal, and president of the provincial association of MoWs. "Yes, we do provide healthful meals for people who are experiencing a lack of mobility. But they're also getting visits from a friendly person who cares."

Volunteers on MoW delivery teams are often the only social contact that some clients have. They are trained to observe any negative changes in behaviour or lifestyle that should be reported to a professional or personal contact who might need to intervene. So they indeed perform a doubly valuable service.

Back at St. Matthias, **Bob Laxton**, who has been involved in the MoW program for over 35 years, is now coordinator of its historic program. "We have 40 volunteers serving about 24 clients," says Laxton. "They're mostly seniors, but there are also other clients who need help on a temporary basis. So we're always eager to welcome more volunteers. What strikes me now is the number of new immigrants calling us who haven't yet found a job but who want to do something in the community. We appreciate that."

And MoWs in the next 50 years? According to Northrop: "It's about society establishing priorities. If we want people to be able to stay at home as long as possible, everybody has to pitch in, government and individuals alike. Remember, the Canadian Citizenship Act stipulates that Canadian citizens have a responsibility to volunteer. Meals-on-Wheels provides them with an excellent opportunity."

Firsts for the Bureau

The Volunteer Bureau of Montreal is exploring two new avenues for soliciting and training volunteers. Inclusion of handicapped persons in the volunteer milieu and longer-distance training for volunteer management show strong possibilities.

In March, the Bureau hosted a symposium that brought together handicapped persons already involved in volunteering and representatives of organizations that engage handicapped employees or volunteers to share their experience with attendees from other nonprofits. "It was very revealing," says **Alison Stevens**, Bureau executive director. "This is a whole new volunteer sector to be approached; there are some tremendous skills out there. We all need to do more to attract them."

Another experiment very likely to lead to a wider scope for the Bureau was a training session recently held for the Sept-Îles volunteer centre via Skype. "It's so expensive for groups in the outer regions to send staff here for training," says Stevens. "But that session was so successful we're now looking at expanding our reach via other electronic means."

More Chinese using services

Chinese Family Services of Greater Montreal will be marking its 40th birthday by moving to new quarters by the end of this year. Its present locale, old and inefficient, has limited space and resources to meet the growing demands for assistance.

"Integration of new arrivals has been a principle activity of ours from the beginning," says **Xixi Li**, executive director. "But in recent years their numbers have been soaring – at least 3,000 international students a year now. We are their sole port of entry and they're asking for a lot."

The Chinese government is going to help – with monies for a new information package and 24-hour hotline on the host community and, in particular, its education and health and social services systems.

Batshaw program a winner

An alternative educational program for high-risk young offenders, introduced last year at Batshaw Youth and Family Centres, is receiving very positive response. Funded by Justice Canada, the three-year project is designed for young offenders involved in gangs or at risk of gang involvement. It is based on offering them experience in activities that will help them improve their attitudes and life skills.

"It's a two-pronged approach," explains **Jason Vickers**, program manager. "We're helping them to move away from negative value systems, and at the same time, to develop new interests to open new horizons. And that's starting to happen."

Participation is voluntary. Professional animators cover different topics with small groups of six to eight youths at a time. Most are serving four to six months, so each session is free standing rather than sequential. Additional one-on-one sessions are frequently asked for, and provided.

There has been strong participation in sessions led by LOVE, (Leave Out Violence). "They've adapted their program to meet our population's needs," says Vickers. "It's very personalized: they discuss the negative issues the kids are dealing with and what they need to do to overcome them."

Cooking classes also have proven popular and effective. "Some kids are now asking to help out in our regular kitchen to apply what they're learning," says Vickers. "Others plan to study cooking when they're released from custody. The art classes have uncovered some interesting talent. And we're now getting into music and computer literacy.

"We're also setting up links with community organizations," says Vickers, "so that when these kids leave on probation or to do community work they can continue to progress. It's all preventive. If we can give them just one moment where they can think of things differently and feel a little more confident about skills they have or could develop: that's what's exciting about these programs."

Welcome Hall is welcoming

One of the chief recommendations contained in the March 7 coroner's report on Montreal police handling of mentally-ill homeless people in crisis is that urban medical clinics be established to provide early detection and treatment for such people. That important step had already been taken by the Welcome Hall Mission last September.

"We received a large private grant to expand our medical program," says **Jessica Sherman**, Health Services coordinator. "Part of that funding allows us to now have a psychiatrist onsite five days a week. The idea is to help people when they are in such a vulnerable state that waiting to get help from the healthcare system could be dangerously long. Our goal is to stabilize them and get them to a healthier place personally. Then we help them to navigate the system to access the care they need longer-term."

The Mission's clients obviously feel comfortable accessing this new service within the organization they know. Between September and December, 21 patients were treated and 73 evaluations made. Numbers have since been growing steadily, as has a waiting list.

Benefits of this program go beyond the Mission. "We consider this a giant research project," says Sherman. "We want to illustrate to the Ministry the positive long-term impact of having this type of service available onsite at a very early stage. We're thankful to our private donor, but this is something the government should be paying for, everywhere."

The non-denominational Mission was founded in 1892 by Thomas Macauley, who later became president of Sun Life Company. He and a small group of young religious businessmen joined forces to do Christian welfare work in the poverty-ridden southwest Montreal district. The Mission has since mushroomed into a complex serving thousands of Montrealers every year, with shelter and recovery programs for transient men; mothers' and children's services; youth counselling programs and the largest family food bank in the city.

Dispensary broadens scope

The Montreal Diet Dispensary, for 137 years the nationally and internationally known pioneer in pre- and post-natal nutritional care, is entering a new phase. It is joining forces with other like-minded organizations to promote the health and wellbeing of families living in the downtown area. They have come together under the aegis of the Peter McGill Community Council to meet the long-neglected needs of an isolated, transitory population.

"The Dispensary has been re-positioning itself over the past year," explains **Jackie Demers**, executive director. "We wanted to be more involved in the community's needs and interact with other organizations that complement what we do. We have a huge impact on young families, but only within a small time-frame. By joining with these other organizations we can link our clients into a longer-term range of available health and social services. Hopefully, making the environment more family friendly will encourage them to stay downtown."

Centre celebrates 60

The Information and Referral Centre of Greater Montreal is celebrating its 60th anniversary with new support services for seniors and the homeless.

As of March 1, Montrealers aged 50+ can call a single number (514 527 0007) for information on social services such as available housing, emergency food and transportation, civil rights, and so on. The service is available 10 hours a day, seven days a week. In 2017, the Centre and Centraide will jointly introduce a 211 help line accessible 24/7 to all citizens of the Greater Montreal region.

The Centre has also just published a [Directory of Community Services for Homeless People in the Greater Montreal Area](#) which describes 300 socio-community services in the region. The index allows for researching by subject, geographic sector, languages other than English and French and by alphabetical order.

New access programs delayed

Within the context of reorganization of the province's healthcare system, institutional programs specifying access to services in English will remain unchanged until 2017. This is to give the new regional access committees, now being named, time to organize their agendas.

Serving the oldest

The Jewish General Hospital boasts the oldest contingent of hospitalized patients in the province. Forty percent of those holding beds are 75 or over, compared with 25 percent for the rest of Quebec. As a consequence, the hospital has developed an impressive range of services to accommodate its aged clientele: a geriatric assessment unit, memory clinic, geriatric oncology clinic, and a rapid-response team that springs into action when an elderly person is admitted to the ER.

New network for homeless

The City of Montreal has spearheaded creation of a new network of homeless shelters, community organizations and healthcare providers with the goal of taking 2,000 chronically homeless people off the street by 2020. It has also set up a new homelessness advocacy department at City Hall to oversee the rights of the homeless and to help coordinate action with members of the network.

Forum is 30 years old

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the *Red Feather Forum*. This quarterly newsletter on health and social services was introduced by the Red Feather Foundation in 1986 as a networking vehicle for the English-speaking community of Greater Montreal and its institutions. Today it aims to keep readers informed on the people, policies, programs and events affecting delivery of healthcare services and the social wellbeing of the community.

In brief

Christine Boyle has been named director-general of The Shriners Hospital-Canada.

AMI-Quebec will be moving to new headquarters on April 1: 5800 Decarie Blvd., Montreal H3X 2J5.

Centraide of Greater Montreal has announced results of its 2015 fund-raising campaign: \$54.3 million.

The Centre Québécoise de philanthropie has available a directory of 2,600 fund-raising sources in the province. There is a ranging charge, depending on the subscriber. For information: info@cqp.qc.ca.

Chinese Family Services won Quebec's Hommage bénévolat-Québec 2015, the province's annual recognition award for community organizations.

The Council on Palliative Care is holding three free workshops at Temple Emanu-El-Beth Sholom, 4100 Sherbrooke St., West, from 6 to 8 p.m., on April 4, 11 and 18. For information: fmpa202@gmail.com.

The McGill School of Social Work has awarded its first Master's degree in Couple & Family Therapy. It is the first university to offer this degree in Quebec; Quebec is the first province in Canada to recognize this profession.

St. Mary's Hospital Medical Laboratory Department has received a 99.4% rating from the College of American Pathologists. It is the only Quebec public hospital to have been assessed by this internationally recognized organization.

Nominations are open for the Governor-General's Caring Canadian Award. Call: 1 800 465 6890.

The story of Red Feather is available online at <http://redfeathermontreal.ca>.

The editor welcomes story ideas: 514 937 4309.

Legal deposit:
National Library of Canada ISSN 1709 092X
Bibliothèque nationale du Québec