

INSPIRATIONS

A Snapshot of Our Special Needs Community

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Teacher of Inspiration: visually impaired teacher Francine Gravel thrives in the classroom

By Wendy Singer



Teacher of Inspiration Francine Gravel with students Ahsan and Dimitrios. See our profile on Francine on page 3. (photo by Wendy Singer)

Inspirations has introduced two special recognition awards: the Teacher of Inspiration and the Caregiver of Inspiration. The editorial board is pleased to announce the first Teacher of Inspiration recipient.

Francine Gravel, a teacher of Cycle I, II and III math at Philip E. Layton School for the Blind (at the MAB - Mackay Rehabilitation Centre) wholeheartedly loves her job of 32 years. Her teaching philosophy includes discipline, building strong work habits and having fun while learning. She insists on creativity in the classroom and explains, "I recreate myself each academic year. This teaches students to be creative and improve themselves."

Francine won the Marshal McLuhan Distinguished Teacher Award in 1990 for creating the first gardening
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Advice you can bank on™



By Mike Cohen

REFLEXIONS: The executive director and founder of Dreamsgate Pictures and REFLEXIONS, **Mauricio Fuentes** and **Sean Marckos**, came to speak with the students of Lester B Pearson High School in Montreal North recently on the issue of discrimination. REFLEXIONS is a nationwide campaign that inaugurated its first-ever "Image Discrimination Awareness Week" last spring. Image Discrimination is the passing of judgment on people solely based on superficial qualities and stereotypes. In today's mediated culture, image is repeatedly manipulated and re-shaped in a manner where stereotypes are created due to the portrayal of how people are represented in television, cinema and print publications. These constant portrayals continue to have a negative impact and create misconceptions on how people are perceived from different races, religions, sexual orientations or physical appearances in society and therefore are victims of discrimination.



Sean Marckos is greeted by staff and students at Lester B. Pearson High School.

This campaign focused on the importance of fighting against image discrimination and helped open the student's eyes on how stereotyping can have a negative effect on people. The guest speaker was Mr. Marckos, who is wheelchair-bound due to being diagnosed with muscular dystrophy since birth. Mr. Marckos is also a successful director, producer and script writer who penned an award-winning film titled *De L'Autre Coté*, which has won several awards at different

film festivals worldwide. The students of Lester B. Pearson enjoyed the presentation and had many candid questions for the guest speakers.

MOM AND DAUGHTER TEAM: Recreational Specialist **Erika Tencer** and her daughter **Atara** have been visiting local schools on a very special mission. Atara is a friendly 14-year-old with Down Syndrome. Tencer has designed an entertaining, interactive workshop that she and Atara deliver to Grade 3-4 classes. Their aim is to sensitize students to children with special needs while breaking down barriers, including fears and misconceptions. By the end of the workshop, Atara made many new friends. They would love to visit your school. For information, contact **Erika Tencer** at etencer2@sympatico.ca or log on to www.influentialawareness.yolasite.com.

VISUALLY IMPAIRED ENJOY CONCERT: The Loyola High School Jazz Band performed for the students at the Philip E. Layton for the Blind last spring. **John Pasquini**, the leader of the band, was happy to perform for this venue. He said it was an opportunity to introduce the Loyola boys to their next door neighbours at the The Montreal Association for the Blind (MAB) - Mackay Rehabilitation Centre. Nancy Pasquini, the EMSB spiritual and community animator, invited the jazz band and prepared the students of both Layton and Loyola to meet each other as equals and as friends.



A student from Loyola shares information about his musical instrument with a Philip E. Layton student.

The concert began with four lively selections. The middle of the concert involved full audience participation. The band moved

out into the audience in order to relate one to one with the students and to introduce the students to their instrument. The Layton students loved it. The room was filled with random notes and apparent chaos. Judging from the smiles on their faces, the students in the band and the Layton students were very happy to meet one another. **Nicholas Cesari**, a Secondary V Loyola student said, "I wasn't sure how to interact with them at first. I kept saying, 'Do you see this?'" Layton and Loyola are now truly neighbours. Both groups went away richer for the experience. "I often wonder who benefits more from volunteering or working with people who have handicaps," said Nancy Pasquini. "They are in a certain way a gift to us for they can inspire us to live our lives to the fullest; to use our talents for the benefit of others; and to become all that we can be."

MUSIC TOY LIBRARY: The inauguration of the Music Toy Library at the MAB-Mackay Rehabilitation Centre (MMRC) took place recently. For the occasion, a group of children from the Philip E. Layton School performed their own musical composition under the direction of music therapist **Sylvie Boisvert**. They celebrated this wonderful new opportunity made possible by winning first prize (\$6,000) in the national Change the World contest, organized by the Deloitte Foundation. The Music Toy Library project was submitted by one of their employees, senior manager **Laila Bouali**, whose niece Ayla, age 7, attends the school. The children benefit from therapeutic interventions provided by the rehabilitation program in specialized schools offered at the MMRC. Deaf and blind children grow up in an isolated world, but music therapy can help them learn to adapt to a seeing and hearing world. According to experts, music has the ability, like nothing else, to create multiple stimuli, allowing many different people to experience its effects regardless of their disability.

Musical instruments and toys will be used in the classroom of the Philip E. Layton School by rehabilitation staff and teachers. The children will also have the opportunity to borrow small and medium size musical instruments and musical toys for use at home over the weekend. This project keeps in mind the number of young students at the Philip E Layton School, as well as the older students.

The MMRC counts among its clients, children and adolescents with motor or language impairments or communication disabilities, as well as people of all ages who are deaf or hard of hearing or who are visually impaired. In 2010, more than 5000



The new Music Toy Library is a hit.

clients received services from the MMRC. The mission of the MMRC is to help maximize the autonomy and participation of clients with the intention of improving their quality of life. By using a participative and interdisciplinary approach, this mission is achieved through specialized and ultraspecialized adaptation, rehabilitation and social integration services for people with a significant and persistent disability. Two EMSB schools are located on the site of the MMRC: the Philip E. Layton School (47 students) and the Mackay Centre School (152 students). For more information about the MMRC, visit www.mabmackay.ca

CREATIVE ART THERAPY: The Donald Berman YALDEI Developmental Centre is now offering a new after-school Creative Arts Therapy Program. It is open to children with special needs, ranging from sensory disorder to autism to physical disabilities. Sessions being offered include drama, music, art therapy, yoga and a social skills program for older children. The 10 week program will take place on Tuesday afternoons. Benefits include enhanced motor skills, greater communication skills, reduced hyperactivity, heightened self-esteem and increased motivation in daily activities. For more information call (514) 279-3666 ext. 240 or visit www.yaldei.org/YaldeiCreativeTherapies.asp

SOIRÉE OF FRIENDS: The Action Centre, a fully bilingual day centre in Montreal for severely physically-challenged people living below the poverty line, chose McGill University Health Centre (MUHC) CEO and Director General **Arthur T. Porter** as its 2010 honouree. This year's Soirée of Friends, which raises much-needed funds for the Action Centre, took place on October 6 at the prestigious Club Atwater.

Dr. Porter joined a very impressive group of honourees from the Action Centre's previous Soirée of Friends, including the late Lorne Webster, Suzan Cavell, the late Pam Dunn, David and Mary Culver, John Rae,

(Continued on page 3)



Teacher of Inspiration: visually impaired teacher Francine Gravel thrives in the classroom



Francine Gravel is shown here at a school ice skating activity.

(Continued from page 1)

craft program for the visually impaired in Canada. She is most thrilled when teaching students to read. She explains, "Without Braille, the blind would be considered illiterate. Technological advances are a godsend, but the ability to read opens windows to the world, be it for self-expression or employment." She also reaps satisfaction when finding ways to communicate with multiple disabled children. "It thrills me 200 percent!" she exclaims.

This warm, articulate teacher stresses the

(Continued from page 2)

Pierre and Lucie Boivin, Richard and Carolyn Renaud, and A.K. Velan.

"I am truly flattered to be associated with as vital an organization as the Action Centre and the fine individuals who've been honoured before me," says Dr. Porter. "Not only does the Action Centre provide essential activities and services to a vulnerable population, but it also empowers people to achieve their full potential despite physical and socioeconomic challenges. Having that level of commitment working within and on behalf of the Action Centre is what makes the fabric of the Montreal community and our healthcare network so strong."

David Culver, chairman Emeritus of the MUHC Board of Directors and friend of the Action Centre states, "Paying tribute to Dr.

importance of having a role model to emulate. Francine Gravel is that role model to her students for she too is visually impaired, with Retinopathy of Prematurity that occurred due to a lack of oxygen shortly after birth.

She humbly accepts the Teacher of Inspiration award, believing her colleagues are more deserving. "People are naturally in awe of the blind," she explains. "They think they couldn't do their jobs if they couldn't see."

Porter at this year's Soirée of Friends illustrates the intrinsic community connection between the MUHC and its promise of the best care for life. This can only contribute to building a greater awareness of how fortunate Montrealers are to have organizations such as the Action Centre and the MUHC, and why the need to support them is so great."

Dr. Porter is an oncologist credited with introducing several technologies to his field, including Strontium-89, a bone-seeking isotope to treat cancer having metastasized to the bone. He has held professorships in four universities and is the only Canadian to serve as President of the American College of Radiation Oncology, the United States' national body for radiation oncology. In addition to his medical practice, Dr. Porter has held business and academic leadership

Finding her way was not always easy. "CEGEP was frustrating," she remembers. "I had to break a lot of ice." She did not stop until she earned a Masters in Education of the Visually Impaired and Multiply Handicapped at Boston College. "It is most important to teach students to be self advocates—greet people with a smile, ask questions, build relationships, find a need and serve others," she says.

These teachings have clearly been invaluable to students like Dimitrios Fiskas, 11, and Ahsan Khan, 9. Delighted to have Francine as their teacher and friend, Ahsan adds, "Francine has helped me be organized. Now I can find my own stuff to bring to school."

Patrizia Ciccarelli, Principal of the Mackay Centre and Philip E. Layton Schools, was eager to speak of Francine. "She is a decent, respectful, hard-working human being who hasn't let her visual impairment get in the way of anything, for herself or for others," she said. "She goes above and beyond in everything, as a colleague, employee and friend, and is an asset to all the children she's taught. She's an amazing individual who inspires all of us and has every staff member's utmost respect."

When not teaching, Francine enjoys walking with her guide dog Hollyann and working with her husband.

Francine will be recognized at a public school board council meeting and presented with a gift created by Rosemount Technology Centre students.

Submissions are now being accepted for the Caregiver of Inspiration award at inspirations@emsb.qc.ca.

positions in North America, Europe and Africa. He has been a consultant to the World Health Organization and has helped establish medical programmes around the globe. Dr. Porter continues to serve on the editorial board of 13 scientific journals and has to his credit over 300 scholarly works in peer-reviewed journals, books and conference proceedings.

The Action Centre is a fully bilingual, multicultural centre for adults with disabilities, and provides services, activities and education to improve members' quality of life with the goal of affording them a vision of their own autonomy. A safe day centre, in operation since 1998, The Action Centre accommodates 170 of the most vulnerable in Montreal. For more information about the Action Centre, please visit www.centreaction.org.



INSPIRATIONS

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Editor
Mike Cohen

Consulting Editor
Lew Lewis

Copy Editors
Stuart Nulman
Irene Miller

Special Advisor
Nick Katalifos
Principal, Pierre de
Coubertin Elementary School

**Coordinator of Sales,
Database and Circulation**
Wendy Singer

Sales Associate
Carol Maker

Layout & Design
Yibing Shen

Phone: (514) 483-7200 ext. 7245

Fax: (514) 483-7213

E-mail:
inspirations@emsb.qc.ca

Website:
www.emsb.qc.ca/inspirations

6000 Fielding Ave.
Suite 109
Montreal, Quebec,
H3X 1T4





Kids take “Giant Steps” at wonderful school



By Stuart Nulman

Since it first opened its doors, the Giant Steps School’s mission to the autistic children who make up its student body was a simple, yet very ambitious one: to make sure that the greatest number of autistic children are enabled effectively, so that they can reach their full potential and be independent in today’s society.

However, the school wanted to reach out to the public in general to increase awareness about children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and in particular, find other meth-

was frustrated because she couldn’t find the appropriate materials to teach to her students,” said Marla Cable, coordinator of the Resource and Training Centre. “So she suggested to the administration that all our materials should be grouped into one place, which would better support our staff internally.”

“Our goal is to sensitize the community, not only in the schools and the workforce, but also out in the social realm,” said Natasha Fontes, planning coordinator for Giant Steps. “The more people are aware and accepting about Autism, the greater we will be able to support these children, so that they can become participating adults in our society. We also want to help the public understand who the people in the (Autism) spectrum are.”

The Giant Steps Resource and Training Centre offers a multitude of services to parents, teachers and therapists, and is open to the public. There is a lending/reference library, with a large collection of reference books on



Giant Steps Planning Coordinator Natasha Fontes (left) and Resource and Training Centre Coordinator Marla Cable.

ods of support towards the more than 500 families who were on the school’s waiting list. That’s where the Giant Steps Resource and Training Centre comes into the picture.

“The centre was opened in September of 2005, and was the idea of an educator who

Autism and related subject matters, as well as academic materials and learning supports. “People can come here and borrow books, activities and DVDs,” said Cable. “There is also a workroom where they can create materials, and I can give them the proper support.”



At the Giant Steps Resource and Training Centre, teacher Emilia Fallovita works with student Matthew Lillies.

The centre also offers customized consultation services, to both individuals and groups at home or school. “If a daycare has a child in the spectrum, and is having difficulties on how to better support that child, we actually can go in and observe the child for a period of time, as well as meet the team,” said Cable. “We then give recommendations on how they can better support the child.”

Cable, along with colleague Thomas Henderson, also offer an assortment of training opportunities – whether they be conferences or workshops – that deal with Autism and other related topics and concerns that revolve around it, and are all done on a needs basis. Future workshops that the Resource and Training Centre are scheduled to conduct this fall include a series of evening programs for daycare workers and a training course geared towards parents who have children who were recently diagnosed with Autism. There are also evening conferences for children with ASD and their parents, where they can gather and talk about their life experiences coping with Autism.

“We also do a lot of guest speaking appearances at schools, and talk to students on what is Autism,” added Cable. “I really believe that by creating a social network and making the community more aware about Autism, the better we’re going to be able to support our students, or anyone else in the spectrum.”

Since the Giants Steps’ Resource and Train-

ing Centre was established five years ago, they have experienced an increase in usage not only from the public, educators and professionals in the field, but also interns who are about to specialize in music therapy, speech therapy, special education and special care counselling and use the centre as a vital resource.

“A lot of word of mouth has spread about the centre,” said Cable. “Many of the hospitals which are doing the diagnoses know that we exist, and refer people to us. We’re starting to see people who are in the spectrum use the centre as well.”

“The centre is going through continued growth, and is having a greater impact on the community,” she added. “We are reaching out to those parents who have children who are on waiting lists for all these different programs. They often get the diagnosis, but don’t have anywhere to turn to. And now they’re turning to us because now they want to know what to do.”

The Giant Steps Resource and Training Centre is located in the school premises, at 5460 Connaught Avenue in N.D.G. It is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information, call 514-935-1911, ext. 237 or e-mail them at resources@giantstepsmontreal.com. You can also consult their website at www.giantstepsmontreal.com.



Friendship Circle is a special place

By: Wendy Singer



Melanie Kunista embraces volunteers Meagen Honigman and Leah Lurie at the Friendship Circle.

I am alone. Left out of your world. But I am whole. I am an entire person. I can feel. I can give. I can love. And laugh. And achieve. And be proud. But I am alone. *Because I am different.*” This quote, found in a Friendship Circle publication, exemplifies the Friendship Circle’s raison d’être. Created 10 years ago by Rabbi Yossi Paris and his wife Sima, the organization

aims to cure loneliness with love, while sensitizing the population to children with special needs.

The Friendship Circle’s unique formula pairs children with special needs with some 350 teen volunteers, creating meaningful bonds and friendships. Together, the children participate in activities they otherwise

might not experience, from karate to camp, to friendship and love. As the Centre’s Public Relation Director Leibele Rodal explains, “Our young volunteers are changing the world’s vision of people with special needs, and they are also showing us that teens can be a great asset to society.”

Volunteer Mindy Miller feels rejuvenated when she assists at the Children’s Sunday Circle and the Junior Shabbat program. “The Friendship Circle kids have changed my life completely,” she remarked. “They bring me so much joy. We have so many differences, but they accept you for who you are.”

The Friendship Circle recently moved into their new home at 4585 Bourret just down the street from the Jewish General Hospital. The spectacular Avrith Friendship Circle Centre consists of a multipurpose gym, a library and tactile, art, dramatic play, gross motor, dance, music, snoezelen sensory and water rooms just to name a few. Executive Director Sima Paris explains, “Moving to this new home represents the fulfillment of a nine year old dream,” she said.

They now look forward to the second phase called “LifeTown,” which will produce a full-scale mock indoor city.

Renée Wolanski’s daughter Olivia has been attending the Friendship Circle since she

was five. Now 12, she met her teen friend Tal some six years ago through the Friend at Home Program. Tal continues to visit Olivia regularly, which has resulted in a deeply special friendship. Olivia also participates in the Sunday Circle and the Teen Club, where she does activities such as gymnastics and cooking. Wolanski speaks highly of the organization. “We have always felt safe at the Friendship Circle,” she says. “There is always good support, the people are so warm and Olivia feels at home. Here, the volunteers are the special ones.”

The Friendship Circle Centre is more than a community center or a therapeutic facility. It is a place of friendship, a place for respite for parents, and a hub for their network of volunteers, professional staff and supporters.

For information, visit www.friendshipcircle.ca or call 514-735-2255.



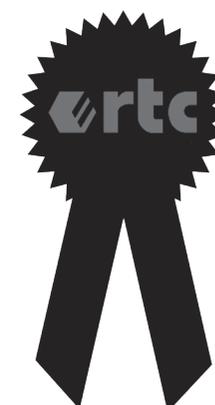
Call for nominations: Caregiver of Inspiration



Inspirations is pleased to sponsor two special recognition awards: the Teacher of Inspiration and the Caregiver of Inspiration. We are presently seeking nominations for The Caregiver of Inspiration. The recipient will be announced in the spring edition of Inspirations, at which time we will then accept new candidates for The Teacher of Inspiration. Francine Gravel, a visually impaired teacher at the Philip Layton School for the Blind, has been selected as the first recipient.

If there is a caregiver you would like to nominate, send your submission to inspirations@emsb.qc.ca. Include the name of the caregiver, the school and school affiliation (school board, private school, CEGEP or university) and a four paragraph description of why he or she is deserving of this distinction. The recipient will be recognized

at a public school board council meeting and presented with a special gift from the Rosemount Technology Centre (www.rosemount-technology.qc.ca).





Students with learning disabilities in college - how information and communication technologies can help

Many high school students are unaware they have a learning disability (LD) and only experience problems when they enter college or university, where reading loads are heavier and students are expected to do substantial amounts of writing. Both general use and specialized information and communication technologies (ICTs) can help.

ICTs have the potential to help and enhance the academic success of all students, including those with LD. Some students do not use specialized ICTs because they are unaware that they have a LD; others because their high schools and/or learning/tutoring centers did not include ICTs in their programs. Thus, many students first learn about ICTs from their college's disability service provider.

We recently completed interviews with 58 experts: those with excellent knowledge of both LD and ICTs. This included students with LD who are highly skilled users of ICTs. They told us the main advantage of ICTs for college students with LD is that they support academic success. For example, the experts said that ICTs can improve the quality of students' work, including their grammar and spelling, help students edit their work more effectively, contribute to becoming better organized, assist students to more easily comprehend what they read



The Adaptech Research Network study is inspirational to those who wish to see students with disabilities succeed.

and, in general, allow them to acquire more skills and techniques for effective learning. ICTs were also seen as helping students work more independently so they have to rely less on others to complete their academic work. ICTs were also perceived as "leveling the

playing field" by allowing students with LD to work at their own pace, function on a par with their peers and achieve grades which more accurately reflect what they have learned. In addition, many of the experts noted that ICTs increased students' self-confidence and motivation, and decreased their stress levels.

ICTs That Can Be Useful to Students

Our findings show that the most popular ICTs to help students were multipurpose, general use software, like Microsoft Office, and specialized ICTs such as Kurzweil, Wynn, and Médialexie (this works in French only). These products allow students to do a variety of things, such as have text read aloud to them, render paper documents into editable digital text, highlight and colour code words and key concepts, access dictionaries, and the like.

Software that assists students with writing, including Antidote (works in French only) and WordQ, were also popular. WordQ is word prediction software that assists students with spelling by giving them choices from a list after they begin typing a word.

Dictation (voice recognition) software was also seen as useful for students with LD, Dragon Naturally Speaking being the most frequently mentioned. This allows students to dictate rather than type text.

Screen reading software, which reads digital text aloud, was also a popular option. The free version of ReadPlease was mentioned in this context. This type of software allows students to listen to their textbook and course materials. Some even allow students to save the voice file to MP3 which they can then take with them on an iPod or other MP3 devices.

Scanners with optical character recognition (OCR), which allow students to convert pa-

per documents into digital text (e.g., OmniPage), were also mentioned as was mind-mapping software such as Inspiration. This type of software helps students organize their ideas with the help of concept maps which allow users to graphically see links among ideas.

One Size Does NOT Fit All!

We suggest that students try out different types of ICTs to see what works for them. In many cases there are free demo versions of the software for students to try. A listing of some of the ICTs noted by the experts can be seen at <http://adaptech.dawsoncollege.qc.ca/cfichten/learning.doc>. In addition, The Adaptech Research Network provides a listing of free and inexpensive ICTs that could be helpful, along with information about where this software can be obtained, what it costs, and whether it works in French or English or both <http://www.adaptech.org/downloads>. This listing is continually updated. To help with training, we have made several five minute videoclips about how to use popular ICTs that can assist students with LD. These can be seen on YouTube <http://www.youtube.com/user/adaptechresearch>.

Ensuring that the ICT needs of students with LD are being met must become an urgent priority for the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, college administrations, and tutoring/academic support/remediation/assessment centers. Since many college students with LD have other disabilities as well, rehabilitation facilities also need to make LD-related ICTs a priority. This is likely to result in more motivated and self-assured students who are less stressed, whose academic work is of better quality, and whose college experience is more satisfying. Access to the required ICTs and to training on how to use these will equip students with LD with the skills they need to succeed in the ICT-intensive world of school, work, community and leisure.

This article was written by Catherine S. Fichten, Laura King, Maria Barile, Alice Havel, Mai N. Nguyen, Jillian Budd, Alexandre Chauvin of the Adaptech Research Network at Dawson College and CEGEP André-Laurendeau.

Up to date special needs database

By Wendy Singer

The updated Inspirations special needs database is available online at www.emsb.qc.ca/inspirations, listing over 350 resources in and around the city of Montreal for children and young adults. Within its pages, you will find services for all special needs, including Autism Spectrum Disorders, Down Syndrome, ADHD, learning disabilities, behavioral difficulties, hearing and visual impairments. The table of contents will guide you through various therapeutic, counselling and support services from recreational activities, tutoring and vocational services, medical clinics, rehabilitation, adaptation and social integration, to resources for parents and

professionals (such as associations and government organizations), camps, respite care, physical aid resources and other helpful information.

The database, compiled to fulfill a need voiced by both parents and professionals, provides pertinent information for each listing such as phone numbers, links to email and website addresses, and a brief description of the service offered. This database is intended to be used as a guide. The English Montreal School Board recommends that you research these resources to determine if they are appropriate for the care of your child or young adult. If you would like to recommend a resource for this list, please contact inspirations@emsb.qc.ca.



Tips from Assante Capital Management Ltd The Registered Disability Savings Plan

Q. I have heard about the Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP). Is this the best option for my child with special needs?

A. The RDSP was introduced at the end of 2008. It is an invaluable program for parents of children with special needs. Essentially, you contribute funds to this plan and they grow, tax free. The government will contribute up to \$4,500 per year into the plan in the form of grants and bonds, with a lifetime maximum of \$90,000. The amounts depend on income level, and once the child turns 18, it is based on the child's income, not the parents. These plans do not require any contributions and over time will grow to very substantial sums. For example, if the child's income is under \$23,855, the government will deposit \$1,000 into the plan without any contribution. The government will add an additional \$3,500 to match each \$1,500 contribution. The bottom line: for an annual contribution of \$1,500 and a 5% growth on the plan, you would save almost \$200,000 after 20 years.

Although it is beneficial, you must be aware that when money is withdrawn in Quebec it will minimize social solidarity payments. Moreover, whenever you withdraw money, you will have to repay any government con-

tributions made in the previous ten years. Essentially, this is a long-term planning vehicle that will enable you to avoid repaying any government funds.

You should keep in mind other very important strategies that will play a role:

- Proper wills must be in order.
- A discretionary trust will provide protection from creditors and allow for Social Solidarity payments.
- You can roll over your RRSP to your dis-

abled child if they are financially dependent on you, and in the most recent budget, you are allowed to roll it into an RDSP as well.

- Proper insurance planning will play a pivotal role as well.

- Do a proper review of all these elements with professionals that are aware of the nuances of special needs planning prior to opening the RDSP.

Nathan Leibowitz is an investment advisor with Assante Capital Management Ltd. who hosts workshops, and consults with families of children with special needs. He can be

By Nathan Leibowitz

RDSP Example



For illustrative purposes only.

reached at 514.832.5144 or at nleibowitz@assante.com. Services and products may be provided by an Assante Advisor or through affiliated or non-affiliated third parties. Assante Capital Management Ltd. is registered with IROC and is a member of the Canadian Investor Protection Fund.

Be exceptionally well taken care of.

If you are taking care of a special needs child, you need expertise.

With a myriad of regulations, government programs, tax incentives and planning opportunities, you need more. Our team of integrated professionals incorporates investment objectives, cash and credit flexibility, capital preservation, estate planning...In short, everything you need to make more, keep more and be more secure. With special needs individuals, you need more; RDSP, government programs and avoiding mistakes that cost parents and caregivers thousands of dollars a year. Please call for a private consultation.



Nathan Leibowitz, MBA
Investment Advisor
Assante Capital Management Ltd.
8301 TransCanada Highway
St.-Laurent, QC H4S 1Z1
514.832.5144
nleibowitz@assante.com



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Pet ownership and the special needs child

By Lori Rubin

Colm McCarry-Taillefer is a very lucky little boy. Like many other children, Colm's best friend is of the furry, four-legged variety, but unlike many of his same-age peers, Colm is a six-year old boy with high-functioning autism, who over the past three years, has been benefiting tremendously from the dog's presence.

"Babelle" is Lab-Bernois, otherwise known as a "Mira breed" (trained by the Mira Foundation), and came into Colm's life about a year and a half ago. Sharon, Colm's mother, was hoping that by bringing a specially trained dog into the family, Colm's night seizures would be diminished and Colm would learn to develop a stronger sense of empathy, a characteristic that is sometimes lacking in children with autism. Babelle was taught to detect levels of cortisol (also known as the stress hormone in the body). Sharon indicated that Colm was more or less indifferent to dogs and cats before he had Babelle. Now, the two are inseparable and Colm is much more interested in other people's pets. It took a long time to have the dog professionally trained and ready to reside in the family home. This lengthy process also involved evaluating Colm, his



Colm McCarrey-Taillefer and his dog Babelle.

mother and 14-year old brother Liam, in order to determine if the family was ready to provide for his needs.

Babelle was trained in French and the family continues to speak to him mostly in

French, although he does respond to and understand English commands and phrases. After all, the language of love is universal! Although having Babelle as a pet is hard work (walking, travelling considerations, vacuuming, etc.), Sharon feels like she is "contributing to research" by participating in this program. She recommends that all families who may be considering getting a dog for a member of the family with autism, engage the services of a professional dog trainer, even if they are not associated with the Mira Foundation.

The stories of how pet ownership has contributed to the lives of children with special needs (physical, intellectual, emotional, behavioural, developmental), are legendary. When children, for whatever reason, have difficulty forming trusting relationships with humans, it is often the connections they form with animals that significantly improves their quality of life and teaches them how to "step outside themselves" and attach to another being. Often, with the gentle guidance of a parent, older sibling or caring teacher or child care worker, the child/pet bond can be carried over to help the child relate to and trust the adults in their lives. If

a dog and cat is not a good fit for the child or the family, hamsters, gerbils (even rats!), birds and fish, can have the same positive effect.

According to Sharon, "Babelle's presence in our lives has changed our family dynamics for the better 100 percent." Aside from helping Colm with his challenges, the big dog has helped Liam, her older son, to be more responsible; the entire family goes on walks together, and there is a strong sense of belonging and togetherness. Throughout history, all over the world, the remarkable relationship between humans and animals has been well established, and children with special needs are no exception to this phenomena. The SPCA and other animal shelters in the city, carefully screen potential pet owners to try to ensure a good match for the pet and the family. It can be truly magical to watch a child open up to the unconditional love that a pet can provide, given the right conditions.

Lori Rubin is a behaviour management specialist with the English Montreal School Board.

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Oscar winning actress Marlee Matlin visits Mackay Centre School

By Mike Cohen

While in town recently to speak at a benefit for Federation CJA, the central funding, planning and coordinating body of services for Montreal's Jewish community, Academy Award winning actress Marlee Matlin made a surprise visit to the Mackay Centre School. Sean Zikman, director of development for The Foundation of the MAB-Mackay Rehabilitation Centre, contacted Federation CJA and they graciously helped arrange the visit.

The Mackay Centre School on Decarie Boulevard in N.D.G. is part of the English Montreal School Board and caters to deaf and disabled children. Its mission is to provide a safe, caring environment which empowers learners to achieve maximum potential with a curriculum that is dynamic and responsive to student needs.

Principal Patrizia Ciccarelli, accompanied by Mr. Zikman and MAB-Mackay Rehabilitation Centre Executive Director Christine Boyle, took Ms. Matlin on a tour of the facility. She also visited a number of



Marlee Matlin (first from the left) meets teachers and students in a classroom at the Mackay Centre School. (Photo by Ron Levine)

classrooms and communicated with hearing impaired students. "She was absolutely wonderful," said Ms. Ciccarelli. "And in her address to a gathering of hundreds of Jewish community leaders that evening she took

the opportunity to highlight her visit to our facility."

Ms. Matlin received worldwide critical acclaim for her motion picture debut in Para-

mount Pictures' "Children of a Lesser God," a performance the film community chose to recognize with an Oscar for Best Actress.

Born and raised in Morton Grove, Illinois, she started acting at the age of seven in the role of Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz* at a children's theatre company in Chicago. After several years of performing on stage throughout Chicago and the midwest, she was discovered in a Chicago stage production of Mark Medoff's Tony Award-winning play, *Children of a Lesser God*. Following an extensive international search for the lead role, the producers of the film version selected her to star opposite William Hurt. She has appeared in countless other movies and television shows.

Ms. Matlin's New York Times best selling autobiography, entitled *I'll Scream Later*, was published by Simon Spotlight, a division of Simon and Schuster in April, 2009. It was reviewed in the Winter 2010 edition of *Inspirations*, which can be viewed online at www.emsb.qc.ca/inspirations. She and her husband, law enforcement officer Kevin Grandalski, reside in Los Angeles with their four children.

Helping students with an ASD become more independent

By Daniela Scoppa

For some students with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), independence can be a daunting challenge. Although low independence is not officially part of the triad of impairments in ASDs, it is common among individuals with an ASD, according to Dr. Andrew Bennet, coordinator of the Lester B. Pearson School Board's (LBPSB) Centre of Excellence for Autism Spectrum Disorders.

"It is difficult to be independent if you have trouble understanding and being understood, interacting comfortably and effectively with others, and generating solutions to life's challenges or shifting from the one strategy you have come up with," said Dr. Bennett.

To help students with an ASD gain more autonomy and independence by improving their social skills, the LBPSB has partnered with the Centre de réadaptation de l'Ouest de Montréal (CROM) on a two year project. It began last school year and was a great success, said Jade Lawsane, a LBPSB Autism Consultant.

The 12-week project was aimed at helping students with autism fit in amongst their peers while working on bettering their social skills. Six students with an ASD – three from LaSalle Community Comprehensive High School (LCCHS) and three from Beurling Academy in Verdun – were paired up with six of their peers, three who are part of the schools' Leadership programs and three who are from the school board's alternative program.

Throughout the project, the 12 students explored eight different themes related to social skills while being supervised by two animators, Tamara Surtees, a social skills facilitator from CROM and Michael Wilds, a special education technician at LCCHS. Some of the themes the students worked on were: improving self-concept, self-advocacy and self-regulation, recognizing and expressing emotions, conflict resolution and cooperation. "It was a great experience for the students," said Lawsane. "They didn't feel like handicap students being taught a lesson. They felt like they were the same as their peers."

During the 12 weeks, the students also participated in two bowling nights and one restaurant evening, which were a big success among the group. "The students were very excited to take part in the two out-of-school activities," said Lawsane. "They had never gone bowling or to a restaurant with anyone their own age before. They had only done these activities with their parents."

Further to launching the project with CROM, the school board's Centre of Excellence for Autism Spectrum Disorders also hosted two seminars and one symposium focusing on social skills development for students with an ASD, which were open to the public. At the symposium, Vicky Tagalakis and Jack Strulavitch of the Montreal Children's Hospital spoke about the difficulties faced by students with an ASD.

Tagalakis and Strulavitch believe that the autonomy and independence issues these students are challenged with can be gradually bettered over time. This can be done through "social interaction and the development of one basic social/coping skill at a time," according to Tagalakis and Stru-

lavitch. By improving social skills, students will be taking a "helpful beginning step towards improvement in communication and interaction with peers," the attendees of the symposium learned from Tagalakis and Strulavitch.

For the school board and its autism team, positive results were seen in the students who took part in the social skills project launched in collaboration with CROM. The project was so successful that it will be expanded for the 2010-2011 school year with it being implemented in six high schools and targeting 20 students with an ASD.

Daniela Scoppa is the communications officer for the Lester B. Pearson School Board.



Paul VI High School

Healing the world: One worm at a time

By Daniel Smajovits

At first, the seniors at Paul VI High School in Ahuntsic wanted nothing to do with it.

Three kinds of worms, mixed with decomposing food in a tub of potting soil is vermicomposting in a nutshell. Not quite anyone's definition of fun. Yet, as the saying goes, with great risk (and some persuasion by teacher Ida Lento and student-teacher Sandra Brodtkin) came a garden of great rewards.

The idea to bring a vermicomposting project to Paul VI came to Lento following a workshop organized by Learning for a Sustainable Future (LSF). Paul VI is an alternative high school providing quality educational programs to students from 13 to 21 years of age who have been diagnosed with learning difficulties. Since its founding in 1979, Paul VI has offered a unique opportunity to students who find the regular high school setting inappropriate

Armed with new knowledge and a desperately needed \$400 grant from the organization, Lento realized that she finally had all the tools to work with her students and truly start making a difference.

"I realized that there's a lot of wasted food [at our school] and that we should do something for the environment, so I adapted



Paul VI students get into the spirit of their new project. (Daniel Smajovits photo)

[what I learned at the workshop] for my students and it just evolved from there," said Lento. "We also always wanted to plant a garden, but we never had the money for it. Now, there was no excuse."

Despite some original hesitation by the students, they eventually jumped on board and

never looked back. "Touching the worms was really gross at first," said Mitchell Kaminski. "But I kept thinking that what we were doing was helping the environment, so it felt good, we knew that we were actually helping out the earth. The most fun part [of the whole project] was when we started planting with the soil and we were able to

start building our garden."

While doing their part for the environment was one goal, having the students overcome their fears was another. As the project evolved and the students' comfort level grew, the emotional barriers began to crumble. The simple composting idea morphed into lessons in math, language arts, French, technology, woodworking and lastly, life skills.

Socially, the students were comfortable with each other, but as a component of the project and a condition for the grant from LSF, they were required to give back in a way of their choice to the community. Luckily for them, Paul VI neighbors a senior citizen's residence.

Despite the usual initial hesitation, the students came through to fulfill their commitment to surprise and delight a lunchroom full of seniors by mingling with them en français, and offering freshly planted flowers in pots which they built and decorated.

"I'm proud of them because of their academic achievements, but also because the project did a lot for their self-esteem," said Lento. "I loved how they became so engaged. They really didn't want to touch those worms, they did not want to go to the senior citizen's home, but I told them that they had to do it and they appreciate it now."

In fact, once the students broke through that initial barrier, they jumped head first into each activity. Documenting every step along the way, they constantly updated a Picasa album with their progress, demonstrating the slow process from an in-class, mid-winter exercise to planting a full-fledged garden in the heat of the summer.

"We're excited for the plants to grow so we can eat the vegetables! And when we're done, we're going to save all the leftovers so we can continue composting next year and make our garden even bigger," said David Wilkinson. "It was great experience; we're doing what we can to heal the world."



Tony Tomassi
Député de LaFontaine

Bureau de circonscription
11 977, avenue Alexis-Carrel
Montréal (QC) H1E 5K7
Téléphone : 514-648-1007 / Télécopieur : 514-648-4559





Gerry Sklavounos
MNA for
Laurier-Dorion
(514) 273-1412



Jacques Chagnon
MNA for
Westmount-Saint-Louis
Vice President of
the National Assembly
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MNA for
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Making Media Accessible

“There’s a media revolution out there,” says David Errington, President and CEO of Accessible Media Inc.-AMI, the award-winning, not-for-profit media network that for 20 years has been making media accessible through two broadcast and online services: VoicePrint and The Accessible Channel-TACTv.

But, adds Errington, “it’s a revolution that is not yet inclusive enough of Canadians who are blind or vision-restricted; print-restricted; learning-disabled; mobility-impaired; deaf or hard of hearing; in need of literacy skills or learning English as a Second Language (ESL).”

AMI is striving to become a new model for cause-driven organizations, one that is inclusive and continually striving to improve and engage others. For all impacted and concerned Canadians, AMI can be a new model media organization that creates, advocates, collaborates, and enables accessibility to all media in Canada across platforms.

Fortunately AMI was created to play a major role on behalf of all Canadians who depend on accessible services like VoicePrint and TACTv. VoicePrint and The Accessible Channel are part of the basic digital cable package. VoicePrint can also be accessed through the Secondary Audio Program (SAP) setting on CBC Newsnetwork.

VoicePrint: Canada’s 24/7 Audio Newsstand.

One of VoicePrint’s listeners says the service is “a light in a dark world.” Just after it was launched in 1990, one Member of Parliament stated that VoicePrint is one of those brilliant, but seamless responses Canadians so often develop to meet a societal need.

Today, VoicePrint is the world’s largest broadcast reading service. Day after day, 600 volunteers from across the country read and record full-text, spoken-word versions of current articles from over 600 leading newspapers and magazines. All together, staff and volunteers are responsible for broadcasting more than 125 hours of new

programming every week.

VoicePrint’s schedule also includes audio-only presentations of well-known, popular movies and recently, began airing episodes of *I Love Lucy*.

For more information about VoicePrint, to listen online, or to access an extensive Audio Archive, please visit www.voiceprint-canada.com

For the VoicePrint channel in your area, please contact your cable or satellite provider.

The Accessible Channel-TACTv:

In 2009, The Accessible Channel made broadcast history, becoming the only digital-TV service in the world that airs all shows and movies with Described Video and Closed Captioning into more than eight-million Canadian homes.

Described Video is a process in which a narrator describes key visual elements of a

movie, documentary or TV show that are not apparent if one relies on the original sound track alone. That narration is added to the sound track. For vision-restricted and blind Canadians, it’s the equivalent of closed captioning, which long has been available.

As one supporter has said: “With The Accessible Channel people know that just because they’re blind or vision-restricted, they’re not excluded from independent access to programming that everyone else has access to.”

For more information about TACTv, please visit www.tactv.ca

For the TACTv channel in your area, please contact your cable or satellite provider.



Intellectual impairment in children

By Despina Vassiliou

As a parent it is difficult to accept that your child has been diagnosed with an intellectual impairment, characterized by significant limitations in cognitive and adaptive functioning, with onset usually before age 18. Other terms that are used interchangeably include intellectual disability and intellectual deficiency.

The degree of impairment can vary considerably and is greatly reflected in the level of independence which includes the individual’s ability to function within his or her community (i.e., classroom, employment). Causes of an intellectual impairment can vastly differ and range from genetic (e.g. Down’s Syndrome) to social factors (e.g. level of stimulation). An intellectual impairment may or may not co-occur with these and other conditions, such as cerebral palsy or autism. In many cases, however there are no identifiable causes. An intellectual impairment is not necessarily a lifelong static condition. Supports and stimulation can enhance the child’s level of functioning, thus our response can make a significant im-

impact on the child.

Parents often need assistance to be able to cope and provide their child with the supports that he or she will need to be able to optimize development. As a parent you will have to educate yourself about your child’s needs, as well as the organizations available that can assist you and your child. Connect with other parents and tap into community resources. There are rehabilitation centers that are specific to children with intellectual impairments. Your local CSSS is set up to help you with that, and it is the first place to contact after a diagnosis is made.

It is important to remember that the experiences your child lives through will shape him or her and provide an optimal opportunity to learn. A hands-on approach provides meaning and a multi-layered way of sharing information. This can be done with simple day to day things that can be used as teaching tools. For instance, a walk in the park can spark interest in squirrels that can lead to an internet search, a visit to a library, and/or visit to an eco-museum.

(Continued on page 13)



Accessible Media Inc. (AMI)

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CAHD wows with an eco-humanitarian conscious show

By Wendy Singer

The Centre for Arts in Human Development (CAHD) is a division of the Department of Creative Arts Therapies in the Faculty of Fine Arts at Concordia University. Unique in Canada, it is an educational, clinical and research centre serving adults with developmental disabilities as well as other special needs populations. Led by Executive Director Lenore Vosberg, they use art, drama, music and dance/movement as methods of therapy for improving self-confidence and social skills, encouraging autonomy and enhancing quality of life. Every second year, the Centre accepts 20 new participants aged 20 and over with intellectual disabilities such as Down Syndrome and Fragile X, or visual impairments. Participants are referred by the West Montreal Readaptation Centre, The Miriam Home or a CSSS, and have attended adult education at schools including Summit, Contact and Filion. CAHD also has a designated research unit within the university. Directed by Dr. Maranda D'Amico, Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education, they

cal, which is the culmination of the participants' two years of creative arts therapies. This year's production, 'The Frog and The Princess: A Musical Ecodrama' was brilliantly scripted and directed by drama therapist Dr. Stephen Snow, CAHD's Director of the Creative Arts Therapies and Chair of the Department of Creative Arts Therapies in the Faculty of Fine Arts. Produced by Vosberg, it is an allegorical tale of environmental and humanitarian consciousness. Vosberg expresses, "Over two years, CAHD participants work on various goals. The musical highly motivates them to communicate clearly. We see enormous growth. The actors gain confidence and that translates into significant changes in their interaction with family, at work and in the community."

While driving home the urgency of the ailing environment, the musical subliminally screamed for the acceptance of all creatures, be they tadpoles or human beings. At a talk back after the show, one elementary student shared his thoughts, "Everyone has the same rights as everyone else." Snow aptly



Carlo Magtibay, who plays John the Singing Narrator. Photo credit: Tristan Brand.

joy and talent overriding challenges. CAHD graduates David Allen and Lisa Walsh acted as mentors on stage. Both expressed their delight, "We encourage performers who may be nervous. We love to be on stage!"

Participants must be referred to the program. For information about CAHD, contact Lenore Vosberg at 514-848-8619 or <http://cahd.net>.

CAHD's mission to educate, entertain and inspire audiences, while sensitizing the population to people with special needs was most definitely achieved.



Lucien Gauthier (King Phoenix of the Human Kingdom) on the right, Kemoy Connor (Queen Helga) in the middle and John Felmeth, (Prince Edward), on the left. Photo by Tristan Brand.

conduct innovative research in the field of disability and the arts.

responded, "We must not judge people on how they appear."

Every second year since its establishment in 1996, CAHD showcases an original musi-

The collaborative production welcomed the assistance of music, drama and art therapy students. The cast demonstrated immense

(Continued from page 12)

Children become self-sufficient and more productive members of society when they learn how to take on responsibilities – no matter how small or large. Chores such as watering the plants, setting the table, and making their own beds can help develop life skills while boosting their self-esteem.

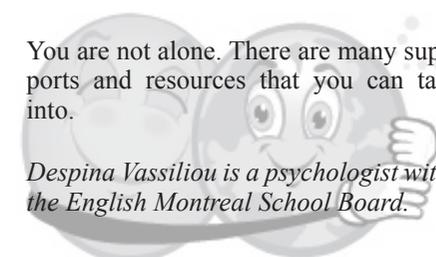
In addition, there are activities (e.g., swimming, scouts) and camps that are set up specifically to accommodate children with special needs. Such options provide your child with an opportunity to learn from the experience and important social interactions with others.

A very important component in the child's life is school. Therefore it is im-

perative that you communicate with the school and let them know about your child's needs, preferably before the academic year begins. Bring in all reports of the differing evaluations to the school and they will develop an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), which sets out objectives and methods that are tailored to your child. A parent's role is critical in the IEP, therefore it is important to play an active role in your child's school life.

You are not alone. There are many supports and resources that you can tap into.

Despina Vassiliou is a psychologist with the English Montreal School Board.





Jay Jones-Doyle

The challenges that stutterers face

For some, stuttering can be a debilitating disorder. Unlike a visibly identifiable disorder, wherein a person who sees you approaching knows that something is out of the ordinary, a person who stutters must deal with the anxiety that accompanies entering each new speaking situation, aware that the listener will not be expecting a lack of fluency and may react poorly. Combine that with the social pressures of youth, adolescence, and early adulthood, and you begin to understand the challenge that people who stutter sometimes face.

That being said, all need not be dark and gloomy. Apart from speech therapy, one must learn to accept their stutter as just one aspect of who they are instead of letting it become a defining (and limiting) characteristic. One great way to achieve this is to meet other people who stutter, and there is

no better place to do that than the National Stuttering Association's (NSA) annual conference. The NSA's annual conference, which has grown to an attendance of over 600 people, is a four day event that brings together people who stutter from all across the United States, Canada, and beyond. The schedule is comprised of workshops on topics related to stuttering, keynote speeches (usually by people who stutter who've achieved greatness irrespective of their speech impediment), and social events geared towards a healthy mix of inspiration, information, and interpersonal interaction.

I have attended, and presented workshops at, six conferences since the age of 17 and intend to keep presenting. My realm of presentation is two-fold. The first pertains to framing your stutter as non-negative so that it stops being a source of shame and anxi-

ety, hindering your interpersonal interactions and preventing you from reaching your potential. The second (which naturally builds off the first) deals with how to stutter and still succeed in life, love,

and all manner of endeavour. The basic logic is that when you're speaking to someone face-to-face, over 200 "communication variables" are being sent back and forth each second. Speech is a variable, however, the majority of these signals are non-verbal (body language alone makes up over 120), and even the majority of the speech signals are not affected by stuttering (intonation, volume of voice, choice of words, pausing for emphasis, etc). In essence, having a stutter need not hinder your ability to communicate... in fact, given that people might sometimes need to devote more attention to listening to you for them to fully understand, one could even make a convincing argument that people with a stutter may be in a better position to get their message across than those who do not. That being said, another key piece of information is to be realistic: when you stutter it's going to take you

longer to get the words out. Keeping that in mind, if you know that (for example) it will take you ten seconds to say what another person could say in five, then it is your responsibility to make what you're going to say twice as intelligent / worth hearing as that of the next person. If not, how can you reasonably expect the listener to give you the extra time you require?

This is just a taste of what gets discussed at the NSA conferences, along with new treatment options and advice/discussions on any number of other related topics. To learn more about the conference, please visit www.westutter.org. For treatment options in Montreal (unrelated to the NSA), please visit <http://www.montrealfluency.com>. On a final note, I would like to pass on one of the greatest pieces of advice I have ever received: When discussing the concept of shying away from talking to someone I didn't know for fear that they would judge me negatively on account of my speech, I was told "If you decide not to interact with someone for fear that they will judge you, are you not judging them?" Needless to say, I haven't looked at strangers the same way since.

Jay Jones-Doyle has cerebral palsy. He is pursuing his MBA at Concordia's John Molson School of Business.



Dining in the dark enlightens at O'Noir

By Andrea Di Tomaso & Wendy Singer

As a sighted person, one can only guess what it feels like to be visually impaired. That's why dining at O'Noir, Montreal's only restaurant where you eat in complete darkness was a deliciously enlightening experience.

O'Noir is a dining phenomenon that began in 1999 in Switzerland with a blind pastor who pledged to teach the sighted about the sightless world. We visited O'Noir Montreal, one of two zero-light restaurants in Canada, the second is located in Toronto. O'Noir not only provides a delectable three-course-meal, but employs and supports the visually impaired, donating five percent of its profits to local organizations that assist the blind and visually impaired.

Ian Martinez, one of the founders and general manager of O'Noir, explained that they partner with Horizon Travail, part of Emploi-Quebec, to hire and train the visually impaired and the blind to work at O'Noir. It usually takes three weeks to train employees to navigate the dining area and perform most of the standard functions of a waiter.

We selected our entrees, main courses and desserts in the dimly-lit bar before entering the dining room. Our waitress Griselda then led us to our seats, competently maneuvering the pitch-black restaurant with ease. She graciously explained such overlooked details as the location of our water glasses and the bread basket.

A Spanish born Canadian who has worked at O'Noir for over three years, Griselda explained the difficulties of finding work due to her visual impairment, and how apprecia-

tive she is of her job at O'Noir. She enjoys being able to work in a restaurant setting, acknowledging that she had trouble getting around when she first started. "We are trained to memorize where all the tables and place settings are," she says, "Sometimes there are accidents, less now, than when we first opened."

Griselda uses her sense of sound while working and explains, "On loud evenings it is difficult as I cannot hear a great deal."

Dining at O'Noir was a dubious, but fascinating experience. We were startled by our heightened taste buds, the variety of foods we discovered on our plates, and challenged to manipulate it onto our utensils. The meal itself was delectable, Mediterranean style food prepared to be easy to find. Thankfully, we did not have to worry much about our manners. Of great fun was the "surprise"

dessert, which means, you do not know what you order until it is served. After a bit of contemplation, we surmised that it was a rich chocolate mousse cake! Also unforeseen was the difference in social dynamics while dining in the dark. With the absence of facial and hand gestures, a tilt of the head, a smile, listening became a focal point of the evening.

This unique dining experience is a must for the socially and gastronomically curious. We left with a profound understanding of a life without vision, leaving us less daunted and more sensitized to visual impairment.

Located at 1631 Ste-Catherine West, it caters to small or large groups. Reservations are required. Call 514-937-9729 or www.onoir.com/MTL/.



John Grant High School holds employer appreciation luncheon

By Bram Eisenthal

To honour the employers who have helped make their Job Orientation Program such a resounding success, the administration, staff and students of John Grant High School in Côte Saint-Luc organized an Employers' Appreciation Luncheon recently.

Held in the cafeteria of the school, which is located on the ground floor of Cote Saint-Luc's Giovanni Palatucci Facility (formerly Wagar High School), the first annual event paid tribute to the commitment of the businesses and staff who have given the special needs students a priceless gift this past decade: viable work experience that will prepare them for life once their schooling ends.

"You have taken this (program) under your wing to show the students skills we are not always able to, in our environment," stated Principal Roland Desloges during his comments to the invited employers. "This is a very important partnership for us."

Indeed, the work-study program has given students skills that might otherwise be denied them due to the physical, emotional or mental challenges they must contend with.

Dorothy Shaw has been the coordinator of the job program and career advisor for a decade, a commitment that will shortly be placed on hold as she takes a well-deserved sabbatical. "The success of this program has been immeasurable," she said. "Some students have actually found permanent jobs through the program once they have graduated, but all have developed important life and work-related skills. This is a win-win situation for both employers and students alike."

Once assigned to a particular employer, the students are then supervised by that person, as well as by the John Grant school staff, who visit regularly. Work-Study educator Solomon Krueger coaches two students working at the non-profit Colorectal Cancer Association of Canada (CCAC), accompanying them to work once per week. He is also involved with travel training, hygiene, etiquette, fostering responsible work habits, time management and work performance. "I coach them when needed and help them with practicing things like their interviewing skills," Mr. Krueger said. The assistance the school offers extends beyond the end of the Secondary V academic year, he added, as a certain number of students can return to polish their job orientation skills for up to five years after graduation. The school ac-



John Grant students show some of their musical talents.

commodates 150 students, with 30 graduating this year.

Three of the grads who have benefitted from the Job Orientation Program – Julie Myhr, Allan Fineberg and Jermaine Muckler - spoke to guests about their experiences, showing not only their gratitude, but plenty of enthusiasm and infectious humour. "At Tim Horton's, my favourite job, I loved putting the jelly in the doughnuts and then eating the doughnuts," said Myhr, genuinely smiling from ear to ear.

Teachers and employers alike commented about how well this program has built the self-esteem of the affiliated teens. Carl Levesque, representing the CCAC, commented on how his organization has benefitted "from their (the students') vibrancy and an upbeat sense of achievement they have brought to the atmosphere of our office. We also help them develop a sense of belonging, as well as accomplishment."

Guests enjoyed a delicious full-course lunch prepared by the students and were entertained by a Caribbean steel drum band comprised of students and their teachers.

Following the lunch, one graduating student requested that all of her teachers assemble at the back of the room, where she then proceeded in stirring fashion to thank them for according her such a happy educational experience... hardly an occurrence in most latter-day high schools.

Creating an IEP: a parent's role in working with the school team

By: Tania Piperni M.Ed

An individualized education plan (IEP) is a tool educators use to create a tailored curriculum for students with special needs. It acts as a plan to coordinate their efforts to better respond to the needs of a student. Any student with a handicap, social maladjustment, or learning disability must have an IEP. One may be created to help a student who is not formally identified as having special needs.

The plan is formulated by the school team, which includes input from parents, and even from the student when appropriate. Input from outside resources can be included as well, whenever possible. It is not a description of everything the student will be taught; rather it outlines strategies to be implemented and the adaptations and/or modifications to be made to the curriculum. This allows the school to better address the needs and learning style of the student as well as create a link between the educational competency requirements and the capabilities of the stu-

dent.

It is the responsibility of the school administrator to ensure an IEP is created. It is developed in collaboration with in-school members (i.e. classroom teachers, resource teacher, parents, child care workers, student) as well as school board professionals (i.e. consultants, guidance counselor, technicians, psychologist, speech-language pathologist).

It is important that an IEP specifically addresses the interests, emotional profile, learning style, cognitive profile, strengths, and challenges of each student. Therefore, one student may have a very detailed IEP describing various curriculum modifications, while another may only require strategies to address behavioural difficulties. Interventions may include adapted and/or modified curriculum material, visual strategies, behavioural plans, and/or environmental accommodations. The IEP objectives must be clearly formulated, measurable, achievable, and realistic within the school timeframe.

Furthermore, the roles of each participant are described including recommendations for home support and follow up.

Thus, parents have an essential role in this IEP process. They can prepare for IEP meetings by having a list of topics they wish to discuss and writing down questions to raise. Copies should be brought to the school of any updated reports that may have been received since the last meeting. It is important for parents to know what they want accomplished and what their child wants. A parent can be an effective participant during the IEP meetings by making sure they are introduced to everyone at the meeting, knowing the purpose of the meeting, and being aware of time constraints. Parents can take notes, share concerns, and ask for clarification. It is imperative to have realistic goals regarding the child's abilities, the timeframe of the school, and the availability of the school's resources.

Children often react differently depending upon the setting, so parents should listen to

the team members when they share their experiences at school. Examples of similar behaviours seen at home can be shared, along with the typical consequences that occur. Furthermore, discussing concerns about behaviours which are not seen at home can lead to insights about the dynamics at school and the student's reactions. It is important to support the teacher's expectations and the classroom routines by reinforcing such behaviours at home, thus creating consistency between home and school. If parents have any concerns, they can contact the school administrator to discuss them.

The ultimate goal of an IEP is to best address the individual needs of students so they can each grow and flourish at their own pace. Together with the school team, parents can be active members in formulating the IEP and in helping their child achieve their greatest potential.

Tania Piperni is the Autism Spectrum Disorders Consultant at the English Montreal School Board.



Government of Canada helping people with disabilities in Quebec

The Honourable Diane Finley, Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, has provided an overview of recent measures to promote the participation of Canadians with disabilities in the workforce.

These measures include funding of \$8.6 million over three years to SPHERE-Québec for the coordination of projects aimed at helping persons with disabilities in Quebec acquire a wide array of skills and work experience. SPHERE-Québec serves the entire province of Quebec from four offices located in Montréal, Québec City, Rimouski, and Sainte-Agathe-des-Monts. Its team is composed of experts in project management, co-operation, and process facilitation. It stands out for its flexibility, sense of initiative, and creativity in the development of practical and efficient measures.

The government of Canada will also be contributing \$157,094 to the organization for its project *Imagine ton avenir*, which aims to give youth with disabilities a better chance at finding jobs.

“The Jobs and Growth Budget tabled by the government will help create new opportunities for all Canadians, so that they can participate fully in the job market and be successful in their professional lives,” said Minister



Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development Diane Finley is thanked for her support by Martin Trépanier of SPHERE-Québec.

Finley. “By supporting SPHERE-Québec and similar organizations across Canada, we are improving the resources available to people with disabilities and hope to thereby contribute to their independence.”

Minister Finley has also met with members of the disability and business communities

in Quebec City to discuss local challenges and solutions to issues affecting persons with disabilities in Quebec.

“Our government is fully aware of the issues facing the approximately 4.4 million people with disabilities in Canada, and we will continue to work with you to find in-

novative solutions to local challenges,” said Minister Finley. “Together, we will develop effective tools to support persons with disabilities.”

To meet the needs of people with disabilities, each year, the government invests in programs such as Registered Disability Savings Plans, the Disability component of the Social Development Partnerships Program, the Disability component of the Canada Pension Plan, the Opportunities Fund, Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities and post-secondary education assistance measures for students with disabilities.

In its 2010 budget, the government proposed a number of measures aimed at helping persons with disabilities and their families participate in all aspects of Canadian economic and social life, including an investment of \$45 million over the next three years in the Enabling Accessibility Fund, which aims to eliminate obstacles and improve accessibility.

The federal government works with the provinces and territories, community organizations and other stakeholders to provide Canadians with the training, skills and opportunities they need to get jobs and contribute to their communities.

Wide range of policies, programs and services

The government of Canada is determined to break down barriers that prevent Canadians with disabilities from reaching their full potential with a wide range of policies, programs and services.

- Recognizing that families of children with disabilities may not be able to contribute regularly to their Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP), the government proposes to allow a 10-year carry-forward of the Canada Disability Savings Grant and the Canada Disability Savings Bond entitlements.

- To provide parents with more flexibility in ensuring that their savings may be used to support a child with a disability when they are no longer able to support its needs, the government proposes to allow a deceased taxpayer's Registered Retirement Savings Plan or Registered Retirement Income Fund proceeds to be transferred, on a tax-free basis, to the RDSP of a financially dependent

child or grandchild with a disability.

- To enhance accessibility for people with disabilities, the government is extending the Enabling Accessibility Fund and providing \$45 million over the next three years. The Fund will continue supporting small projects that focus on removing barriers and enhancing accessibility. It will also support a number of mid-sized projects, allowing for communities to undertake larger retrofit projects or foster partnerships for new facilities.

- The government is allocating \$5 million over two years to the Canadian Paralympic Committee to build on the successes of our Paralympians and continue to encourage persons with disabilities to actively participate in sports.

Canada's Economic Action Plan and other recent federal initiatives are also addressing the needs of people with disabilities and their families through a series of important measures, including the following:

- Allocation of \$1 billion for renovations and energy retrofits to social housing, including renovations that support people with disabilities.

- Allocation of an additional \$75 million over two years for the construction of new social housing units for persons with disabilities.

- Allocation of \$40 million over two years to improve the accessibility of federally owned buildings.

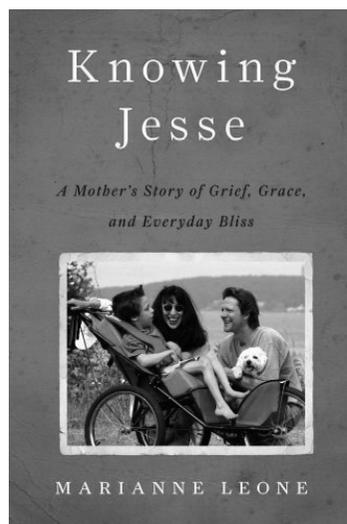
- Effective doubling of the tax relief provided by the Working Income Tax Benefit, which includes a supplement for persons with disabilities.

- Extension of

the increase in the Home Buyers Plan limit and the first-time Home Buyers' Tax Credit to people with disabilities who are not first-time home buyers but are buying a more accessible or functional home.

- Allocation of \$32 million for the operation of the 2010 Paralympic Winter Games.





Inspiring Book Review

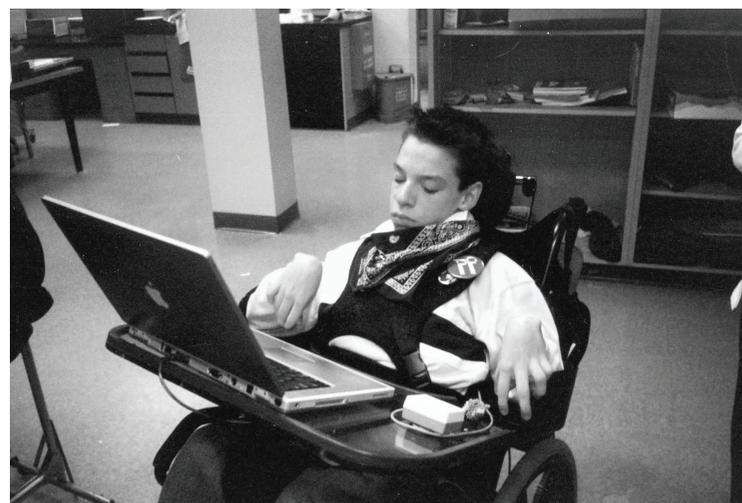
Knowing Jesse by Marianne Leone (Simon & Schuster, \$28.99)

By Stuart Nulman

For any parent, it's always a priority to make sure that their children get the best care, the best education, the best upbringing as possible, so that they can become productive adults as they grow up.

But for a parent of a special needs child or a child with disabilities, those priorities are ratcheted up exponentially, with a great deal of frustrations and roadblocks along the way. Nonetheless they do everything in their power to make sure that these frustrations and roadblocks don't stand in their way.

That was the case with Marianne Leone (best known for her role as Michael Imperioli's alcoholic mother on the television show *The Sopranos*) and her husband, Os-



Jesse, at age 12, using his computer.



Jesse Cooper at age 10 with his long time caregiver Brandy.

car-winning actor Chris Cooper. In December 1987, their son Jesse was born prematurely. However, a cerebral hemorrhage left young Jesse with severe cerebral palsy, as a quadriplegic, unable to speak and easily prone to seizures.

While many would have written Jesse off as beyond any help or therapy and should have been institutionalized for life, Marianne and Chris refused to accept this judgment not only from the public in general, but in

particular those medical and psychological services that were supposed to be around to help cater to Jesse's needs.

And when Jesse died in his sleep in January of 2005 at the age of 17, the pain that Marianne experienced of the loss of her much loved son was, to say the least, palpable. These genuine feelings of pain and love are quite evident when one reads her powerful, searing memoir *Knowing Jesse*.

The book chronicles the Coopers' struggles to deal with Jesse's severe disabilities, and to make sure that he had the best care available, as well as have the chance to grow up like any other kid. As the struggle to pay for special need services for Jesse disappears, as Chris starts to work regularly in movies and TV, another struggle becomes even more apparent and more distressing for the Coopers. That is the lack of proper schooling for disabled children like Jesse, and the prejudice and indifference of special educators and their administrators, who are more willing to dump them than to accommodate them, in a system that preferred to quickly write them off as people without any hope for the future.

Most importantly, as the title suggests, the book is more than just the biography of a child with a severe disability. Marianne's prose deftly humanizes Jesse Cooper. You get the unique opportunity to know him as a young man who was personable, loved to laugh, loved to dress up every Halloween, was an intelligent student who enjoyed writing poetry, and possessed a passion and joie-de-vivre that affected every person whom he encountered throughout his short time on this planet.

Knowing Jesse is a startling book that starkly shows the pain, agony and frustrations that parents of special needs children have to endure trying to care for them while facing so many obstacles that are thrown upon both parent and child. And yet, it is an empowering look at how the power of love, respect and endless determination can conquer these usually insurmountable obstacles.



Leadership students from Westmount High School joined physically disabled and visually impaired children from the Mackay Centre and Philip E. Layton Schools in N.D.G for the annual Terry Fox Walk, Roll and Run. For two hours, the students joined together to participate in various fitness activities which culminated in 30 minutes of intense walking, running and rolling around the Westmount High School track. Since the event's inception in 1992, the schools have raised over \$38,000.



Adapted Travel by Mike Cohen

Cape Cod accommodates travelers with special needs

Yarmouth: home to the Red Jacket Resort

My family and I recently returned from our first trip to Cape Cod in six years. Based on previous experience I started the process of booking accommodations in January. We began our summer vacation with a four night stay at the Red Jacket Beach Resort (www.redjacketresorts.com) in beautiful South Yarmouth and what an excellent choice this was. We actually squeezed an additional full day at the beach by packing our car up before check-

out time, keeping our safety deposit box and requesting the front desk to place our cooler of perishables in their fridge. That turned out to be an excellent decision.

Nothing can quite compare to this locale. Situated directly on the beach, we secured a spacious family room with a balcony overlooking the ocean and only seconds from the heated outdoor and indoor pool, the latter of which also has a whirlpool. You can practice your swing on the private tennis court or enjoy a quiet afternoon game of shuffleboard. There is also a spa on the premises. Wireless internet is available throughout the complex and in each room. The resort has 150 guest rooms and 14 cottages, totaling 164 total guest units.

The convenience of being able to go back and forth to your room cannot be understated. Upon entering the private beach you are provided with towels, beach chairs and umbrellas. Because this is the South Side of the Cape the water is exceptionally warm. The hotel is humming with different family activities. You can also choose from a variety of water sports offered by Gold Coast Parasail (www.goldcoastparasail.com). We opted in favor of

the jet ski (\$115 plus \$15 per passenger) and banana boat (\$25 per person for 20 minutes) options. Just a mile down the road from the Red Jacket are sister properties the Blue Water and Riviera Beach Resorts. The former is where we went for the banana boat ride, which I strongly recommend. You need to actually swim over to the boat, which I found kind of cool.

Gold Coast Parasail is operated by Kurt Kossman and his wife Sarah. Kurt, 39, is also a race car driver. One of the most amazing aspects of his successful career is the fact that he lost his left leg to cancer in 1988. Kurt was diagnosed with an osteosarcoma and had to have an above the knee amputation. Even with the amputation Kurt was given only a 30 percent chance of survival. He underwent 13 months of chemotherapy and through strength and perseverance he survived. While in the hospital Kurt designed a unique prosthetic so that he could shift the race car flawlessly and continue his racing career. He parasails, jet skis and in the winter skis down the steepest hills of snow. His message to others in his predicament? "You have to learn to adapt. It definitely changes the way you do things."



Despite wearing a prosthetic leg, Kurt Kossman (seen here with his wife Sarah), water skis, jet skis, parasails and is a car racer.

Staff here aim to please. Ken Smith, director of operations for the Red Jacket group, has been with the company for 25 years, while Red Jacket Beach general manager Thomas Moore – who married a Montrealer named Sylvie Trudeau – has been on board for a decade. As Moore explained, every effort is made to organize different activities for the kids such as hermit crab races. There are evening buffets, with live music. You can call 1-800-CAPECOD or email info@redjacketresorts.com. The large Cape Cod Mall in Hyannis is an easy 15 minute drive from the hotel. That could be a little longer during the very busy traffic season.

If you are in Cape Cod during the end of July, make sure not to miss the sensational Barnstable County Fair (www.BarnstableCountyFair.org). Keep in mind that you are going to face heavy traffic on the way there and since it ends at 10 p.m. each night (the midway stays open longer), do not wait until early evening to leave. Some the terrain may be difficult for wheelchairs to navigate and you would be

advised to try and get a spot in the reserved parking section. The Fair features interesting kiosks, all kinds of animals and live musical presentations. This past summer we got to hold a baby kangaroo.

For special needs guests, the Red Jacket offers several options, including first floor rooms, grab bars and stools in showers, Visual Alarm, TDD phone equipment and raised commode seating. Indoor and outdoor pool decks and the restaurant and lounge are wheelchair accessi-



An overview of the Red Jacket Resort in South Yarmouth.

ble. There is a small zero entry pool, which can be used for people in wheelchairs. Just let the reservation agents know your requirements.

When seeking out a dining spot in Yarmouth, someone pointed me to the website of the Skipper Restaurant and Chowder House (www.skipperrestaurant.com). As an old fan of the TV show Gilligan's Island I was immediately intrigued by the Skipper's take of the show's theme song. The Skipper was established in 1936, and it is one of Cape Cod's oldest waterfront restaurants with the pristine views of Nantucket Sound. The Skipper Crew have made this restaurant the huge success that it is, by hard work and taking care of customers.

Owner Alan Delaney and his chefs work hard to present the finest and freshest fish you can find, Angus cuts of beef and not to mention their award winning clam chowder. All entrees are cooked to order and they have a great kids menu. Located at 152 South Shore Drive, the Skipper is open from mid-April until October 31 and only minutes from the Red Jacket. Delaney bought the restaurant in 1998 and has expanded the building's size in recent years and just added an ice cream bar. The night we went, folks were lined up outside the door for tables. It is no wonder why. The chowder was superb. Ditto for the crispy calamari and my family's selections of the skipper scampi, the seafood trio (shrimp, scallops and lobster sautéed in a saffron tomato cream sauce with rice or pasta) and a pound-and-a-half lobster which our waitress Miriam cut up nicely for us. Open for lunch and dinner, you can call 508-394-7406 for reservations. The Skipper is wheelchair accessible, with a ramp at the entrance. Make sure to book a table on the first floor.

Eastham: Cape Cod's Gateway to the National Seashore

With miles of sandy coastline, the Cape Cod towns of Eastham, Orleans and Wellfleet represent a haven for beachcombers and pail-

toting youngsters. Only 25 miles up Route 6 from the bustle of shopping in Hyannis, this Gateway to the National Seashore is often referred to as the Cape's little secret. If you are planning a holiday here, consider this area for your base.

The western border of Eastham is lined with six miles of beautiful beaches overlooking Cape Cod Bay. Just as magical as the National Seashore, Cape Cod Bay offers calmer and warmer waters, amazing flats at low tide and breathtaking sunsets. We enjoyed Coast Guard Beach, only a few blocks from our hotel. It is \$15 to park your car and take a shuttle. Limited handicapped parking is available directly on the beach, where they also have beach wheelchairs. There is a free beach pass for those who are permanently disabled or legally blind.

When we last visited this area six years ago, we discovered the Four Points by Sheraton Eastham Cape Cod (www.capecodfourpoints.com), a modern full-service hotel which just kind of appears before your very eyes as you travel on busy Route 6, which consists mainly of small motels. For summer trips, an early winter booking is highly recommended. Hyannis is only 45 minutes away. The hotel has beautiful indoor and outdoor swimming pools and is close to the beaches. Some rooms have balconies overlooking the indoor pool, which is beautifully heated and a fabulous place to go after returning from the beach. There is also a jacuzzi. This hotel has one of the most magnificent suites I have seen in a long time. The Nauset Suite has two separate bedrooms – one with a king bed and another with two twins. There is ample cupboard space. Each has a flat screen television. The very large living room also has a flat screen, a couch, four comfortable chairs, two end tables, a large working desk, a dining room table for four, another clothing closet and a small kitchen with a full-sized fridge, a microwave, dishes and silverware. In the bathroom you will find a large shower with glass doors. Oh yes, let me tell you about the balcony. It is gigantic, with two lounge chairs, two picnic tables and 10 plastic chairs – ideal for entertaining friends or family. This is traditionally used for businessmen, as the hotel hosts a lot of conferences. But for a family seeking good space for everyone, this is a luxury.

The free wireless high speed internet is indeed "high speed" and faster than what most other hotels offer. There is also great service from the front desk, starting with the printout of descriptions and directions to the local beaches.

This hotel also has a fitness facility, a game room, refrigerators and coffee makers in each standard room, an on-site restaurant (Bellamy's) and five meeting rooms in case you want to hold a company conference here.

The hotel has two rooms with a roll in shower and five handicapped accessible rooms in all, located on the first floor. They have the wider doorways, raised commodes, hearing impaired smoke detectors and lowered thermostats, etc. The hotel also has the TTY equipment and closed captions on all televisions. General Manager Jacqui Frost says all staff are re-



quired to watch a video on disabilities to have a better understanding of guests with disabilities and how best to accommodate them.

Orleans: Academy to become more accommodating

Nestled between spectacular Nauset Beach on the Atlantic and tranquil Skaket Beach on Cape Cod Bay, Orleans offers something for everyone. One of the prime draws in Orleans is its Academy of Performing Arts (www.apa-cape.org), Cape Cod's finest quality theatre and studio. Located at 120 Main Street in what was once Orleans Town Hall, the Academy Playhouse delivers the best drama, musicals, comedies and original works you can find on the Cape. It is a year-round source of great entertainment for all ages. Established in 1975, this non-profit organization is dedicated to producing high quality performances and nur-



Entry to the pool at the Sheraton Four Points in Eastham is wheelchair accessible.

turing the artistic development of our community. Last summer my family and I attended a performance of Rent.

The cozy 162 seat theatre, which captures the essence of live theatrical experience, hosted an enthusiastic crowd the evening my family was in attendance.

The Playhouse is not presently wheelchair accessible. You need to climb stairs to get to your seats. Plans are now in place to mount a rigorous capital campaign to restore the front of the theatre, as well as to provide ADA compliant handicap accessibility by installing an elevator.

The top restaurant on our list from the last trip was the Orleans Waterfront Inn (www.orleansinn.com). Right on Route 6A, in a beautiful setting overlooking the water and next to Windmill Park. Just like last time we made this our dinner prior to going to the theatre. Our waitress Kara, an aspiring performer herself, was wonderful in getting us our dinner in enough time for us to get to the show on time.

This is a family-owned establishment. Ed Maas, his wife Laurie and their eight children have all played a role in making this historic property a must stop since purchasing it 14 years ago. The restaurant offers the finest menus, from a varied selection of fresh local seafood, produce and grill specialties. There is a kids menu, offering everything from chicken fingers and burgers to pasta and pizza. Homemade desserts, specifically the chocolate layer cake, are to die for. If you order lobster, this place will crack it up for you. Also, try the clam chowder.

Ed's two twin daughters and his eldest son

now manage the restaurant. Three of his children were adopted and each of them has special needs. Two work at the restaurant, which is fully wheelchair accessible with a ramp at the front.

On the evening we went was dinner delicious: clam chowder, an appetizer of seafood cakes, a 12 ounce teriyaki ginger crusted sirloin steak, lobster and scallops. The triple layer chocolate cake was perfect to share for three. Ed was busy attending to two of his grandchildren. He has four in all and a fifth on the way.

A huge Stop & Shop grocery store is across the street from the Orleans Inn. It is conveniently opened till midnight and has everything and more you wish to stock your fridge with. A CVS Pharmacy is just as few more blocks up the road.

The Lower Cape's largest and best 18 hole mini-golf course is located right at the Orleans Rotary (next to Wendy's). Cape Escape Adventure Golf (www.capeescapeadventures.com) is operated by the McCarty family and has the backdrop of a beautiful nautical setting, featuring waterfalls, fishing vessels and live koi fish you are encouraged to feed. Michael McCarty has been working at the course for 19 years, since he was 12. It is open from April until October (9 a.m. until the last group enters the course at 10:30 p.m.). We really enjoyed the ambience. The course itself was fun. Good music played in the background and everyone was friendly. Each hole is named after a different town in Cape Cod, with Plymouth, Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket added in for good measure.

While individuals in wheelchairs cannot navigate this course, McCarty says clients with crutches have managed to complete the course. There have also been many visually impaired individuals as customers.

Orleans, the Queen of the Cape, is dotted with many fresh water ponds as well as having the very popular Nauset Beach, a long sandy stretch right on the Atlantic Ocean. It also boasts an accessible ramp on fresh water Crystal Lake.

Wellfleet: fine seafood at Van Rensselaer's

Wellfleet (www.wellfleetchamber.com) on Cape Cod offers something for everyone. Located some 30 miles out into the Atlantic Ocean, Wellfleet has an abundance of quaint seaside character and charm. Bounded on the east by the Atlantic Ocean and the west by Cape Cod Bay, 61 percent of the land area of Wellfleet is in the Cape Cod National Seashore Park. Wellfleet has a total upland area of approximately 13,100 acres (20.47 square miles). Of this total, about 8,000 acres (12.5 square miles) are within the Seashore boundaries, leaving 5,100 acres (8 square miles) outside.

We did venture to Wellfleet for dinner. Van Rensselaer's (www.vanrensselaers.com) has been family owned and operated for over 35 years. In 1968, Howard and Anne Hall opened Southfleet Restaurant, serving a variety of

Cape Cod fare. Many a customer today recalls those summer nights when a Wellfleet entertainer by the name of Arnie would fill the place with song. But 1980 marked the beginning of Van Rensselaer's, a name chosen from Peter Hall's Dutch ancestry. A trace of the family line leads to Steven Van Rensselaer, a name highly associated with New York's Rensselaer County and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. Today, Peter and Diane Hall proudly continue to serve the freshest locally caught seafood and superbly prepared meats. As Peter told me, his wife was originally a dental hygienist before they were married and assumed running the restaurant from April until October. It is fully wheelchair accessible, with an accessible washroom as well.

Van Rensselaer's hosts two to three special wine dinners each year - generally, one in the spring and two in the fall. These five-course dinners are a wonderful opportunity to try some innovative, new wines paired with some delicious and creative courses from their chef and kitchen staff.

Located on State Highway 6 in South Wellfleet, opposite the entrance road to the Marconi area of the Cape Cod National Seashore, the restaurant actually draws diners from as far away as New Hampshire who drive in for the evening. My family enjoyed a wonderful dinner. The virgin pina colada was a quenching beginning while the salad bar and homemade New England clam chowder were excellent. We were urged to try the house speciality appetizer, lobster cakes, a creation of Peter's brother-in-law. They were spectacular. For the main course I would recommend the barbecue beef short ribs, braised in red wine, green and wax bean sauté, corn bread and zesty barbecue



Michael McCarty runs Cape Escape Adventure Golf in Orleans. sauce or the one and one quarter outer cape roasted lobster.

Provincetown has eclectic arts and culture scene

Meanwhile, a trip to Cape Cod is not complete without exploring Provincetown (www.provincetowntourismoffice.org)---literally the last town on the Cape until you run out of land.

Located 120 miles from Boston along the National Seashore on the outermost tip of Cape Cod and surrounded on three sides by the Atlantic Ocean and Cape Cod Bay, Provincetown is a year-round destination with a fascinating history and extraordinary qualities. From incredible beaches and boundless natural beauty

to an eclectic arts and culture scene and world-class dining and shopping, Provincetown offers something for each of the diverse visitors it hosts throughout the year.

Bubala's By The Bay (www.bubalas.com), at 183 Commercial Street, not only has a delightful menu for all three meals of the day. It also offers free parking, a true luxury on what is the best place for people watching in town. Before or after dining, take a walk and check out all of the interesting shops.

Bubala's began in 1993 upstairs at the Cafe Edwige. Noreen Bahring ran the floor and Rose Kennedy was the executive chef. Bubala's moved to its current location at the beginning of the West End of Provincetown in 1994. John Yingling is the owner, Liz Roberts runs the bar and floor, Tom Conklin is the general manager, and Gui Yingling is the kitchen manager. They even have a chef named Mike Cohen, who I was unsuccessful in meeting the night we went.

The clam chowder is outstanding. I would also recommend the Cajun calamari as an appetizer while the grilled lamb rack cuts like butter and is very tasty. The pan seared scallops and cod in parchment are also worth considering. A children's menu for those 12 and under includes penne pasta, pasta alfredo, pasta with tomato sauce and chicken fingers.

There is a nice selection of homemade desserts from which to choose from, notably the chocolate truffle torte. The restaurant is fully wheelchair accessible. In the warmer months there is also a popular outdoor patio.

Chatham Bars Inn (www.chathambarsinn.com) is a spectacular property which I had a chance to tour and visit for the day, experiencing a private beach and enjoying lunch at the Beach House Grill.

The Chatham Bars Inn has been an idyllic Cape Cod family vacation retreat noted for its excellent service, fine cuisine and beautiful surroundings since 1914. The Inn is nestled near the heart of Chatham on 25 beautifully landscaped acres overlooking Pleasant Bay and the Atlantic Ocean.

This world-famous turn-of-the-century landmark has a remarkable ambience. The expansive lounge, front veranda and main dining room have been returned to their original grandeur, affording panoramic ocean views and gentle sea breezes. If you're looking for boat charters on Cape Cod, you'll love the top-notch fleet operated by Chatham Bars Inn. A variety of luxury boats offer unforgettable Cape Cod experiences. Memorable and unique boating excursions offered by Chatham Bars Inn include Cape Cod sunset cruises on Pleasant Bay, big game sport fishing, sailing tours, family activities, and private charters to Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard. You'll also love their Cape Cod sailing packages, including the popular Cape Cod Sunset Cruises Package.

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