

INSPIRATIONS

A Snapshot of Our Special Needs Community



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Fall 2012 / Winter 2013



Former Hab Chris Nilan brings anti-bullying message to Peter Hall School



Chris Nilan (left) with student Jonathan Pepin.

See page 17 for more about his visit

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Josée Beaulieu

Femme de défis et Enseignante source d'inspiration Fonds Dynamique

Par Lise L'Heureux

Le prix d'Enseignante source d'inspiration Fonds Dynamique 2012 est décerné à Josée Beaulieu, enseignante titulaire à l'école Victor-Doré de la Commission scolaire de Montréal (CSDM), un établissement spécialisé en déficiences motrices et organiques graves, et qui accueille des enfants de toutes les commissions scolaires.

C'est Anne Alexandre, la directrice de l'école, qui a soumis le nom de Josée à notre conseil de rédaction, mais elle ne voulait pas nous dire ce qui l'avait motivée. « Vous verrez! » nous répétait-elle. Nous l'avons donc observée avec ses élèves avant de lui parler et nous avons vite compris.

Josée a un baccalauréat en adaptation scolaire et sociale et travaille à la CSDM depuis 15 ans. Elle a toujours travaillé avec des élèves atteints d'une déficience grave. « Tu l'as ou tu ne l'as pas », insiste-t-elle, en parlant de l'aptitude et du désir de travailler avec ces enfants. Elle raconte qu'à l'âge de 5 ou 6 ans, elle avait fait une rencontre déterminante avec une petite fille trisomique. « Il faut les trouver beaux, les prendre comme ils sont, les aimer. Je crois que c'est inné en moi. L'amour pour mon travail et mes élèves est ce qui me donne le goût de rentrer

tous les matins. »

En 2011, après 10 ans dans des classes de déficience intellectuelle sévère à profonde, Josée a exprimé le désir de relever de nouveaux défis. On lui a offert le poste d'enseignante titulaire dans une classe de préparation au 1er cycle pour enfants de 6 à 8 ans souffrant de troubles langagiers sévères à profonds. « J'avais peur », avoue Josée. « Madame Alexandre m'offrait une classe pédagogique après 10 ans en déficience. J'avais tout à apprendre, même comment utiliser le tableau blanc interactif! Mais je croyais en moi, en mes capacités à relever ce défi ».

Et ce fut tout un défi! À l'automne 2011, Nadine Rebts, enseignante ressource au service de suppléance à la communication orale (SSCO) et responsable du développement des systèmes de communications des élèves non oraux dans la classe de Josée, lui a proposé de produire une adaptation du film Blanche Neige et les sept nains.

Josée a hésité un moment, mais ses craintes ont vite fait place à l'enthousiasme. Elle a travaillé énergiquement pendant plusieurs mois à intégrer les matières de base au projet, ainsi qu'à préparer et répéter les textes avec ses élèves, pendant que Nadine



Josée Beaulieu et ses élèves.

s'occupait des outils de communication et de l'édition des enregistrements. Les efforts de Josée ont porté ses fruits. La première de Blanche Neige a été présentée aux parents et aux proches de ses « vedettes » lors d'une soirée gala. « Les élèves étaient tellement fiers », se rappelle-t-elle, les yeux pétillants de bonheur.

Josée offre quelques conseils aux enseignants et aux stagiaires en adaptation scolaire. « Il faut beaucoup de patience pour travailler avec ces élèves, car les objectifs peuvent être très longs à atteindre. La confiance en soi est primordiale, mais il ne faut surtout pas hésiter à demander de l'aide. »

Le coup de cœur de Rémi Girard : Josée Beaulieu

« Josée fait un travail exceptionnel », insiste sa directrice, madame Anne Alexandre, un sentiment partagé par nul autre que Rémi Girard, icône du cinéma québécois.

En 2006, lorsque les organisateurs du Gala Artis ont demandé à monsieur Girard qui était son coup de cœur dans le grand public, il a nommé Josée Beaulieu, l'enseignante de son fils, Renaud.

Au-delà de la fierté d'être reconnue par Rémi Girard, Josée a eu l'honneur de monter sur scène pour lui remettre son prix de la personnalité masculine préférée du grand public.

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The Dynamic Funds Teacher of Inspiration 2012

École Victor-Doré staff open their doors and hearts to Inspirations



Josée Beaulieu

By Wendy Singer

The Dynamic Funds Teacher of Inspiration recognizes teachers for their outstanding work while presenting a forum to share teaching philosophies. We are delighted to recognize teacher Josée Beaulieu from École Victor-Doré of the Commission scolaire de Montréal, marking Inspiration's first partnership with a French-language school board.

École Victor-Doré serves 175 pre and primary school students aged four to 13 with severe motor impairments, including neuromuscular and musculoskeletal diseases, and cerebral motor deficits. Many students experience medical conditions, in addition to their motor deficiencies. Principal Anne Alexandre remarks that over the last five years the number of students with intellectual difficulties, in addition to their motor handicap, has increased. Students come from at least 13 school boards to attend this school.

Alexandre began her career in education

with the former Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal (PSBGM) and was delighted to collaborate with Inspirations: "We are very happy to know that someone we don't work with is interested in our milieu. This is a wonderful surprise, both stimulating and intriguing. It is also a wonderful way for me to get back home to my roots at the PSBGM."

At École Victor-Doré, teachers and aides work alongside specialists from the Centre de réadaptation Marie-Enfant (CRME) of CHU Sainte-Justine including physiotherapists, occupational and inhalation therapists, nurses, nutritionists, psychologists and social workers, who make up one third of the staff.

"Victor-Doré is a school," Alexandre explains. "It's not a school-hospital. Nor is it a hospital-school. It can resemble that. But the mission of the school above all else is to have the children live in the most normal school environment possible and to have a successful academic experience."

Alexandre describes the Dynamic Funds Teacher of Inspiration Josée Beaulieu as original and dynamic, with a great sense of humour. Beaulieu came to her in 2011 looking for a new challenge after working with profoundly handicapped students for some 15 years. "I assigned her a class of preparatory students for Cycle 1. She took it on and has done extraordinary things with the class," Alexandre adds.

When Beaulieu was asked why she chose to work with children with special needs, she responded: "These kids are real people and are a part of our world. They have something special to share with us, to teach us."

Beaulieu works closely with Nadine Rebst, an energetic, creative teacher specializing in non-verbal communication. Both Beaulieu and Rebst agree on several key elements that teachers should have: Confidence in yourself; don't be afraid to ask for help and advice; adapt to situations by being flexible; have patience; never say 'no, that can't be done.' "There is always a way," Rebst adds.

As for the required dose of patience, Beaulieu explains: "It may take months to achieve your goals. It makes our day when we get the desired response. Je profit de les fruits de mon travail," states Beaulieu. Rebst agrees: "C'est merveilleux. For the parents - it's a miracle." Both are grateful to work with such an extraordinary team.

Alexandre summarizes our Dynamic Funds Teacher of Inspiration experience: "Victor-Doré is an exceptional school for exceptional kids. All of our staff are fully committed to our mission and our students. Josée and Nadine are two of the many representatives

we have."

Dynamic Funds was established as a small investment club in Montreal in 1957, where it was a pioneer in providing professional investment advice to retail investors. Since then, Dynamic has evolved to become one of Canada's most recognized wealth management firms. They offer a comprehensive range of products and services, spanning every major sector, geographic region and investment discipline. Dynamic's financial solutions include open and closed-end investment funds, fee-based, tax-advantaged and customized high-net-worth programs.

If you have a Caregiver of Inspiration to nominate, email mcohen@inspirationsnews.com.

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By Jason Goldsmith

Planet Sheldon



Jason Goldsmith is the founder of *The Big Blue Hug* autism art project. Planet Sheldon is loosely based on Jason's experiences being a single dad and raising his autistic son Ellis. Jason would love your feedback about Planet Sheldon. Contact him at: jgoldsmith@thebigbluehug.com or visit www.thebigbluehug.com

Guest Editorial

It's time for national action on autism

By Francis Scarpaleggia



Francis Scarpaleggia rises in the House of Commons

During the spring 2012 session, the Senate and the House of Commons debated a piece of legislation that would officially enact in Canada April 2 as World Autism Awareness Day. I was proud to speak in favour of bill in the House.

The bill is but one item in a suite of federal actions needed to address the growing and still poorly understood Autism Spectrum Disorder, which affects a growing number of children and their families every year in this country. We can only have concerted national action on autism if first we create a critical level of awareness among the general Canadian population. This awareness will lead to overwhelming public consensus on the need for such action, followed logically by political pressure at the grassroots that, at the end of the day, should produce concrete government measures on autism.

Throughout Montreal's West Island, I have met numerous parents and families who are nurturing an autistic child with extraordinary love, dedication, intelligence, creativity and patience. What all these parents have in common is a

fierce and indefatigable determination to create a powerful community of interest around those directly or indirectly affected by autism and to push for a proper public policy response to autism at the local, provincial and national levels.

Issues of common concern to Canadians from coast to coast need to be addressed through national coordination and with standards of service delivery that are consistent for all citizens, wherever they may live in this great country.

Autism is such a matter of common interest and national priority. Declaring April 2 of each year World Autism Awareness Day is a small but meaningful step in eventually, hopefully, creating an effective national approach to learning all we can about autism and providing the services children with autism and their families need, and this as early as possible in their development.

Francis Scarpaleggia is the Liberal Member of Parliament for Lac-Saint-Louis.

INSPIRATIONS

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A life story using three tenses

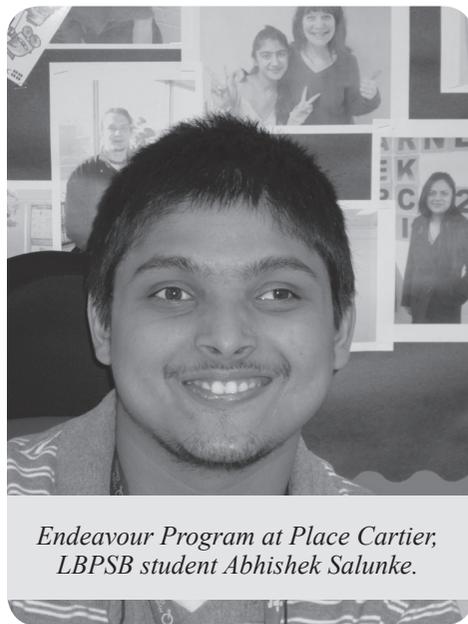
Abhishek has not let cerebral palsy stand in his way

By Abhishek Salunke

My name is Abhishek Salunke. I was born with cerebral palsy. My parents learned about my condition when I was seven months old. When she heard the news, my mother was dismayed, but realized that she was holding her precious baby boy and decided to be with that child like the tree feeding its branches.

My parents set out on a journey to find ways to nourish me mentally, physically and spiritually. When we used to live in India, my mother used to carry me to the fourth floor on her shoulders. She is a saint of action that does her duty, just like the God asked her to.

There is the power to transform a child that thinks he's a cripple, into a deeper being that



Endeavour Program at Place Cartier, LBPSB student Abhishek Salunke.

would take him on a boat, which would not only allow him to sail the seas, but to fly in the air with crooked wings. My father is a gift. His spirit is like a jewel that is beyond the calculations of money and mathematics. I really believe that if my father was not consistent for six years, I would not have smelled the flowers on the other side of the fence.

My grandparents' love could never be duplicated. They treated me like a normal child and loved me like their own little teddy bear. They followed God's teaching in a crowded country like India, where judgement comes out like waves from the Indian ocean.

I definitely think about how evil the world is. There will always be divine and energy to balance the world out.

I was given an opportunity to come to To-

ronto in 2002 to receive medical treatment and a better life. My life started to transform and translate into great opportunities through which today, I became a writer.

I developed my English at Alexander Sterling Public School with the help of my teacher, Kristie Griffies. At Bloorview Macmillian Center doctors gave me advanced treatment, which changed the scenery of my life.

Then we came to Montreal. A lot of great things happened as the years progressed. I started my treatment at the MAB-Mackay Rehabilitation Center. I was trained through Viomax to play Bocci ball. I took part in many competitions and with God's grace, I won three medals. I learned French and studied at Riverdale High School and John Abbott College. I have made good friends that do not see me as a crooked human being and give me the opportunity to recite my poetry as free as a bird sings its song.

Currently, I am part of the Endeavour Program at Place Cartier, which allows people with special needs to explore themselves so they can enhance the gifts that they have got.

Advertising News Feature

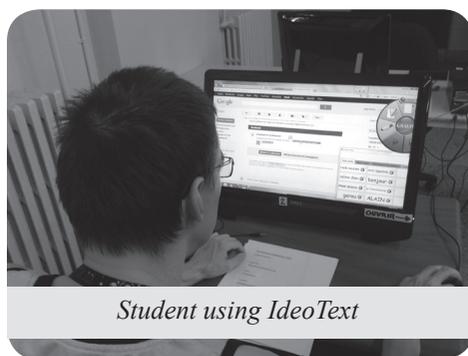
Oralys software breaks down communication barriers

Advances in technology have led to the development of computer software that breaks the silence barrier, enabling many children and adults with mild to severe cognitive difficulties to share their thoughts, be part of a classroom or gain independence.

Parents, teachers and therapists discover a multitude of options while searching for tools to improve the communication, learning and organizational skills of individuals with special needs. Many questions arise in the quest to determine which will best suit your needs - is it user-friendly; will it evolve as our needs change; does it include effective training and support?

Innovative software products such as IdoVoice, IdoText and The Companion, developed by Montreal-based Oralys Inc., have opened the communication windows to their users' worlds, including people with intellectual difficulties, autism, cerebral palsy, learning disabilities, dysphasia and head trauma, and physical disabilities such as hearing impairments.

"These programs, which are available in French and English, were designed by the Oralys team in collaboration with schools, rehabilitation centers, speech language pa-



Student using IdoText

thologists, occupational therapists and other professionals," explains Tanya Reddy, Director of Oralys. "We listen to what the people closest to the users tell us they need, and we design software to fill these needs. We work very closely with our clients, both technically and by supporting them fully with the expertise of our trainers."

IdoVoice offers simple, quick and easy communication for individuals that are non-verbal or who have difficulties speaking. Its visual content and voice synthesizer are customizable according to the user needs via the IdoVoice Editor. Offering 3,500 pictograms or the option to download images, this electronic interactive communication grid runs on a personal computer or a handheld device. "It is not just for individuals. It

is an effective classroom tool. Teachers can create content for learning, such as sentence construction, early language acquisition, colour coding, learning sounds and syllables," states Reddy.

IdoText is a reading, writing and learning tool. A floating bar or palette discreetly provides user-friendly tools such as a text extractor, colour filters, different keyboard display options, a word bank, word predictor and phrase completion, and an editor that enables one to write with the support of pictures. It is the only bilingual software that changes language with one click! "Individuals hear the words, see them and read them. It gives them confidence when they are finally able to communicate," adds Reddy.

The Companion facilitates organizational and daily living skills. This electronic version of scheduling uses words or images to break down daily tasks, like getting ready for school or sequencing specific work or school tasks. "We break down task sequences for our users that are integrated into the workforce so they don't need people repeating the steps to them," explains Reddy.

Oralys is also the exclusive distributor in Canada for eBeam, an Interactive Whiteboard without the board, and the eBeam

Capture software that saves all of your dry-erase marker notes straight to your computer where they can be broadcast online in real-time to anyone with an Internet connection.

User support is key to Oralys' model. They ensure that everyone involved in the life of the user is comfortable using the software, including teachers, speech language pathologists, special educators, caregivers and family members.

Oralys will be happy to speak to you about the various government grants that support their tools.

The Oralys team will present their tools at your school, and leave a demo for you to try out. Teachers, administrators, specialist, parents and caregivers who would like more information about Oralys' software products can visit www.oralys.ca or call 514-847-5251.





The LDAQ: Spreading awareness with sincerity, empathy and confidence

By Stephanie Winterford

The Learning Disability Association of Quebec Montreal Chapter 1 is an organization made up of volunteers who work to advocate for children and adults with learning disabilities. Services for people who are affected by learning disabilities include, among others, seminars for parents, workshops for teens and job-seeker assistance for adults with learning disabilities.

Even in today's relatively tolerant society, spreading awareness is an essential component of assisting those of us faced with learning disabilities with overcoming an abundance of social and academic obstacles. Inspired by a team of students who were travelling to schools to speak to staff and students about the challenges that come with learning disabilities, LDAQ's Cindy Blauer and Pam Wener created a group called the Ambassadors. It was with pleasure that I met with a remarkable young man, Christopher Simeone, who embodies the LDAQ Ambassador directive of spreading awareness with sincerity, empathy and



Christopher Simeone

confidence.

Chris is a student at Vanier College. He has dyslexia, and experienced a severe speech delay when he was young - speaking to him now, you would never guess. Chris has volunteered as an Ambassador with the LDAQ for three years, bringing discussion and awareness about learning disabilities to high schools, elementary schools, students and professionals. As an Ambassador, Chris educates people about programmes available to assist with the diagnosis procedure, techniques for diffusing bullying, and how LD means that the brain functions in a different way, but by no

means determines that a person will be any

less successful in his or her endeavours. I was thrilled to hear that he has never received a negative response to one of his talks; could we be reaching a point where education is, in fact, promoting acceptance?

I asked Chris to tell me some of the most important things he's shared with caregivers over the years, and this is what he said: "First - and it's daunting - do everything you have to do to find the resources you need, and advocate for the person under your care. It's okay to ask for help," he explained.

When I asked him about advice he'd give to parents of a child with LD, his answer was beautifully honest, if bitter-sweet: "Show them that you love them. Show them that you love them no matter what. And everything will run more smoothly."

Chris's compassion is catching: LDAQ's audiences are in for a treat.

For information, visit www.ldaqmontreal.org.

École Vanguard: de l'individualisation à l'intégration

Par Linda Handiak

Quand Rebecca s'est présentée à l'École Vanguard primaire, elle n'aimait ni la lecture ni l'école. Selon elle, les deux la faisaient souffrir. Avance rapide, et Rebecca se prépare pour la prochaine étape de sa vie, des études en anthropologie à l'Université de Toronto. Ceci résume bien son cheminement à Vanguard. D'abord, elle trouvait ça rassurant d'être dans de petits groupes de douze à quinze élèves, au primaire et ensuite au secondaire. De plus, elle trouve que les petits groupes permettaient aux enseignants de cerner très vite les forces et faiblesses de chaque enfant et de lui faire un plan d'intervention adapté.

D'autres finissants plus récents se font l'écho de ses sentiments. Ils expliquent que même si parfois, comme partout, des désaccords surgissaient, on pouvait les régler plutôt comme une famille. «On dirait que l'énergie est plus concentrée dans cette petite école,» rajoute Masha, une ancienne qui fréquente maintenant le Collège Vanier,



Les diplômés de Vanguard Lyndsay, professeur Linda Handiak, Nicolas, Alyssa et Rebecca à un forum de la jeunesse en 2010.

« et cette énergie nous pousse et nous motive. » Les enseignants croient en nous et ne lâchent pas, résumant les autres finissants.

De cette base sécurisante, on essaie

d'intégrer nos jeunes dans la collectivité. On offre les mêmes programmes de base que les écoles régulières, mais transmis par un enseignement adapté. Nos jeunes sont soumis aux mêmes épreuves uniques que les autres élèves au Québec, donc ils ont les mêmes opportunités d'obtenir leur diplôme professionnel ou collégial. Au primaire comme au secondaire, nos élèves participent aux comités écologiques et font des levées de fonds

pour des causes humanitaires. Ils sortent pour faire du bénévolat en plantant des arbres ou en cuisinant pour les

sans-abris. Nos enseignants aussi cherchent

à accroître leur champ d'action : ils sont affiliés à des organismes professionnels comme QAIS - The Quebec Association for Independent Schools et la FEPP - Fédération des établissements d'enseignement privés, l'AQETA - Association Québécoise des troubles d'apprentissage. Ils s'impliquent aussi dans des recherches menées par des universités et ils participent à des ateliers de perfectionnement. Pour nos intervenants, tout comme pour nos jeunes, c'est important d'évoluer.

Vanguard Intercultural High School, one of Vanguard's three schools, is celebrating its 20th anniversary of service to students with learning disabilities. The high school offers a regular curriculum in both French and English, to classes of about fifteen students on average. The school has grown over the years, but we continue to offer personalized attention and adapted instruction. Visit www.vanguardquebec.qc.ca for more information.





Arts and Entertainment

Hats off to Fringe Festival

Dreaming in Autism presentation just superb

By Andrea Di Tomaso

Arts & Entertainment Editor



Christine Rodriguez performing a scene from the show.

Dreaming in Autism is the autobiographical story of Christine Rodriguez and her struggle to raise her mildly autistic son, Imtiyaz.

As part of the Montreal Fringe festival last summer, the show took place at Bain-St-Michel, an old city pool converted into a small theatre. Interestingly, the stage and seats are inside the pool. The set was stark and simply designed in muted grays and whites. Christine herself was dressed in grey sweatpants and sweat shirt; the garb of a hard-working, exhausted stay-at-home mother. She was the only actor, and the white silence around her seemed to symbolize the struggles that parents of autistic children today must face.

The play began with her hopes and dreams for unborn Imtiyaz. Christine spoke of piano lessons, basketball games and an education at Harvard University. Christine realized quickly that Imtiyaz behaved differently from other children; he's overly fascinated by ceiling fans, and is difficult to reason with over the simplest things. When

Christine got Imtiyaz evaluated by health-care professionals, she was told that he had mild autism. She then began her battle to integrate her son into society and raise him to be a happy and well-functioning human being.

For those of us who do not have children with autism, Christine let us peek into her world. For those who do, it was also their story. As heart-warming as it was heart-breaking, there is a lot of room for this simple one-woman show to evolve and grow into something great.

Conquer your Mountains, performed by Michael Lifshitz, was a hit at last summer's Montreal's Saint Ambroise Fringe Festival. Michael's show begins with a description of two life events that led him to stand-up/sit-down comedy and motivational speaking. As he describes, he first lost a bet, which resulted in him performing at open-mic comedy night. Second, he met Inspirations editor Mike Cohen, who led him to motivational writ-



Radio (2003)

Hollywood filmmaker Michael Tollin directs the sports drama *Radio*, based on a true story set in a small South Carolina town in the mid-seventies. The film stars Ed Harris as Harold Jones, a high school football coach who barely has time to spend with his daughter, Mary Helen (Sarah Drew), or his wife, Linda (Debra Winger).

When Coach Jones meets an intellectually challenged student, who goes by the name

ing and speaking.

Throughout his one-man show, Michael eloquently and humorously describes how he has conquered numerous struggles, such as mobility issues which make him reliant on his electric wheelchair, due to Multiple Congenital Musculoskeletal Abnormalities.

Michael pokes fun at himself while sharing anecdotes of how 'normal' people react to him. His show playfully offers advice on topics such as 'to help or not to help' a person with a disability.

Michael concludes his thoughtfully written show with words that resonate: "Anyone can conquer their mountains, but make sure that mountain is yours, and that it really does need to be conquered...and if it does

DVD Review

Andrea Di Tomaso

of *Radio* (Cuba Gooding Jr.), he invites the young man to help out at football practice, during games and to sit in on his classes at school, despite the initial misgivings of the school principal. Not everyone is happy with *Radio*. Frank Clay (Chris Mulkey) the town's banker and Johnny (Riley Smith) his son, the town's star athlete, feel that the football team's shaky performance is caused by the distractions of *Radio*'s sideline antics. When Johnny plays a cruel trick on *Radio*, Frank and his supporters attempt to use it as a reason to get rid of *Radio*.

Despite adversity, Coach Jones and *Radio* develop a powerful friendship where each learns valuable life lessons from the other, to be true to yourself, stand up for what is right and to make time for the important people in life like family and friends.

Watch it on Netflix
Download it on: iTunes

Michael Lifshitz

By Wendy Singer

Conquer your Mountains

need to be conquered, might there be an alternate route?"

One can learn a great deal from Michael's life experiences as he shares them with the utmost sincerity and a perfect mix of comedy.



Michael Lifshitz



Our World: A musical ethnodrama

By Andrea Di Tomaso

Arts & Entertainment Editor



Concordia Centre for the Arts and Human Development actors performing 'Our World, a musical ethnodrama'.

The Concordia University Centre for the Arts in Human Development recently presented *Our World: A Musical Ethnodrama*. Directed by Creative Arts Therapies associate professor Stephen Snow, the musical featured a live orchestra band, multimedia presentations and a multitude of skits, dances and original songs.

Entertaining, as well as thought provoking, the multimedia musical asked the following question of how important is personal cultural identity in Canada? and what is the means by which adults with disabilities relate to culture and diversity? Centered around the experiences of its exceptional special needs cast, each member shared their personal stories about culture, diversity and acceptance.

The first half of the show delivered delightful traditional dances, tales and customs from Greece, Ukraine, China and Israel. This was followed by a lively re-enactment of the Jewish story of Esther, a heart-warming Italian lullaby and an Irish folk ballad accompanied by a talented cast member on the contrabass. We were also treated to a video presentation and "talk show" about the Canadian immigrant experience.

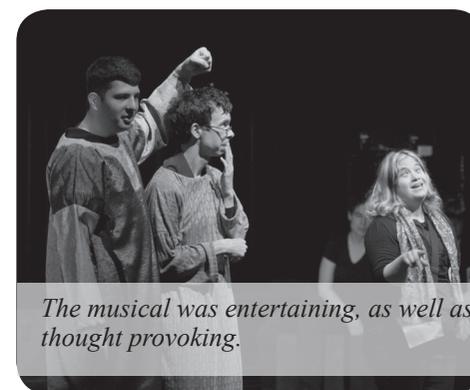
A deeper and more reflective second half saw the actors speaking about their fears of rejection and intimidation for being different. They shared ways to find common ground, either through adapted technology for the visually-impaired or the mutual love of "people-bowling", a unique sport where the bowling balls and pins are replaced by real people.

The show wrapped up with a rousing performance by "Lady Go Go", asking all of us to be proud to be born this way and

to accept the beauty of diversity around us with open arms.

The Centre for the Arts in Human Development at Concordia University, established in 1996, is an educational, clinical and research centre serving adults with developmental disabilities and other special needs populations. Located at the university's Loyola Campus in Montreal, Quebec, the Centre is under the auspices of the Department of Creative Arts Therapies in the Faculty of Fine Arts.

For more information log on to their website at <http://cahd.concordia.ca>.



The musical was entertaining, as well as thought provoking.

It is our pleasure to support the entire team at Inspirations whose noble efforts have made a real impact within the special needs community!



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Libéral



Canada



Julie René de Cotret

Une première expérience

Le camp Papillon est un camp spécialisé pour les enfants ayant des besoins particuliers

Depuis plusieurs années, des gens de notre entourage nous conseillaient d'envoyer notre garçon dans un camp de vacances. Toutefois, étant donné ses besoins médicaux ainsi que sa diète particulière, nous avons longtemps hésité. Finalement, cette année, nous avons pris la décision de lui faire vivre cette belle aventure au camp Papillon.

iter le camp et a pris le temps de répondre à nos nombreuses questions. Nous avons par la suite, rencontré l'infirmière ainsi que la nutritionniste, qui allait prendre en charge la diète de notre fils pour la semaine à venir. Lorsque nous avons quitté, nous étions rassurés que notre fils passerait une formidable semaine. De son côté, notre garçon sourire aux lèvres, était pris en charge par un groupe de moniteurs.

Pendant son séjour, mon fils a fait de nombreuses activités telles que le canot, baignade à la plage, jeux de ballons et j'en passe. Chaque soir, les jeunes étaient invités à assister à un spectacle organisé par les animateurs. Les journées débutaient par un rassemblement où les campeurs chantaient avant de connaître l'horaire de la journée. Durant la semaine, les jeunes ont reçu la visite des policiers de la Sureté du Québec. Ils ont eu l'occasion de faire un tour de bateau à moteur ainsi que des tours de quatre-roues accompagnés des policiers.

À la fin du séjour, lorsque nous sommes arrivés pour aller chercher notre garçon, ce dernier s'est plaint que nous étions arrivés trop tôt. Il était heureux de nous voir mais triste de quitter le camp.

Il est certain, que suite à cette formidable expérience, mon garçon désire retourner au camp pour un plus long séjour. Il garde en mémoire de merveilleux souvenirs en plus d'avoir gagné de l'assurance et de l'autonomie.

Si vous désirez de plus amples informations sur le camp Papillon, je vous invite à consulter le site internet au <http://www.enfantshandicapes.com>.

Julie René de Cotret est la directrice-adjointe Services aux élèves, à la Commission scolaire English-Montréal.



Le camp Papillon est un camp spécialisé pour les enfants ayant des besoins particuliers. En fait, ce camp est le plus important du genre en Amérique du Nord. Il est situé à 40 kilomètres au nord de Joliette dans la petite municipalité de Saint-Alphonse de Rodriguez. Il occupe la superficie d'une presqu'île au bord du lac Pierre. Près de 700 campeurs participent aux différents séjours chaque année.

Lorsque nous sommes arrivés au camp, je peux vous avouer que nous étions tous un peu anxieux. Néanmoins, ce sentiment fut bref puisque nous avons été accueillis par une équipe de moniteurs forts sympathiques. Mathieu, un chef d'équipe, nous a fait vis-

Un service d'emploi adapté aux personnes ayant un trouble envahissant du développement

Par Martin Prévost

Depuis plus de deux ans maintenant, le service *À l'emploi !*, offert par l'organisme Action main-d'œuvre inc., est facilement disponible aux personnes habitant l'Ouest de l'Île, grâce au point de service de Dollard-des-Ormeaux.

À l'emploi ! est le premier service d'aide à l'emploi dédié spécialement aux personnes ayant un trouble envahissant du développement (TED) sans déficience intellectuelle. Il a d'abord été offert dans une formule expérimentale durant deux ans, à compter de 2005 et fait partie de l'offre régulière de service financée par Emploi-Québec depuis 2007.

Les services sont gratuits et s'adressent aux personnes ayant un TED qui souhaitent occuper un emploi à temps plein ou à temps partiel. Ils comprennent l'évaluation de l'employabilité, l'aide au choix de carrière, le soutien à la recherche d'emploi, la négociation avec les employeurs, l'adaptation du poste de travail et le maintien en emploi.

Les services sont offerts de façon individuelle et la recherche de l'emploi est personnalisée, c'est-à-dire qu'elle est axée sur les choix de la personne, sur ses capacités, sur ses compétences et sur la disponibilité des emplois sur le marché du travail de la région. Dans le but de mieux faire connaître le potentiel de ces travailleuses et travailleurs,

l'équipe d'*À l'emploi !* effectue des présentations dans les milieux de travail qui souhaitent embaucher les candidats. Elle met en place des accommodements et développe aussi des outils propres à chaque personne intégrée en emploi et à chaque milieu de travail.

Les services sont offerts avec une durée et une intensité variables qui s'ajustent au besoin de chaque individu. De plus, si la réussite en emploi n'est pas obtenue du premier coup, le service se poursuit et d'autres tentatives ont lieu. Tout ce travail est effectué en collaboration avec les autres intervenants engagés auprès de la personne ainsi qu'avec les parents. Le partenariat est particulièrement développé avec les écoles, dans le cadre de la Transition école - vie active.

Pour être admissible au service *À l'emploi !*, il faut être âgé d'au moins 16 ans (pas de limite), avoir un rapport diagnostic ou un rapport d'évaluation faisant état d'un TED, pouvoir se déplacer pour aller travailler et parler le français ou l'anglais. On peut faire une demande de service en composant le 514 721-4941, poste 113.

Dans un prochain article, nous énumérerons des exemples d'intégrations en emploi réussies.



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The Centre for Child Development and Mental Health, Jewish General Hospital



support parents, and advocate for children's mental health," says Dr. Jaswant Guzder, head of Child Psychiatry.

The JGH provides intensive treatment for children with serious emotional and behavioral difficulties that interfere with their adjustment in school, at home, and with peers.

These children present with a range of diagnoses and they experience a broad range of issues, including psychological, cognitive, behavioural, and family problems. The children and their families are offered a comprehensive treatment program incorporating psychological assessment, individual and family therapy, social skills training, educational services, art therapy, and occupational therapy. The hospital works in partnership with families, as they are an integral part of treatment planning and implementation. As a result of this approach, therapeutic outcomes are highly successful, enabling children to return to their regular school or daycare settings with optimal functioning in over 95 percent of cases, within an average six to 12-month treatment period.

The staff maintains a close working liaison with community schools, during and following the admission, in order to ensure a successful reintegration. The JGH and the English Montreal School Board (formerly the PSBGM) have had a longstanding partnership for decades. In addition, both the principal and teaching staff, at the Day treatment program, are EMSB employees. As a Behaviour Management Specialist for the EMSB, I have seen firsthand how students can struggle when faced with unresolved mental health issues. The Montreal anglophone community is quite fortunate to have access to such a comprehensive service and a dedicated team.

Catherine Korah, M.Ed., c.o. is a Behaviour Management Specialist, English Montreal School Board.

By Catherine Korah

Many people recognize the importance of mental health, but few recognize mental illness until adulthood. Studies show that one in five Canadians will have a mental health problem or illness this year. Research tells us that mental and emotional troubles in childhood should be taken very seriously, that psychiatric disorders can arise and persist from the earliest years, and that they can continue to develop further into adulthood.

According to 2006 data from the government of Canada, at least 70 percent of mental health problems and illnesses have their onset during childhood and adolescence.

Many studies have demonstrated the importance of interactions in early childhood with significant family members, which has a strong potential to determine a person's future mental health status. Childhood trauma has a profound effect on the emotional, behavioural, cognitive, social and functional

status of the adult brain. This new information illustrates the importance of supporting vulnerable families and investing in their children's well-being as a collective, societal responsibility. As few as one in four children with a mental health problem or illness will receive treatment; the rest (75 percent) will not, says one study.

The Division of Child Psychiatry of the Jewish General Hospital (JGH), established in 1966, provides second line and tertiary care specialized treatment services to an ethnically diverse population of high risk children and their families. The Centre includes an Outpatient Service for children up to 15 years old and Day/Evening Hospital programs for children, in the anglophone sector, ranging in age from five to 12. The hospital receives 350 to 400 referrals per year and 250 to 300 of these are for children aged five to 12 who are assessed and accepted for treatment in the Day/Evening Hospital Programs. "The Jewish General Hospital has pioneered a family-based, child-focused treatment approach. This aim has become increasingly relevant in order to reduce stigma,

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Wendy Singer

Inspirations Notebook



INSPIRATIONS is embarking on its fifth year of operation! What began as an twelve-page newsletter has turned into a full-fledged resource newspaper that continues to grow with each edition. The wealth of information that we share with you is in thanks to the special needs community and our many consultants and contributors who alert us to the most relevant and timely news.

Our team is expanding with the growth of Inspirations. We are extremely fortunate to have the guidance of a group of committed and involved individuals who lend tremendous support. With the vision of our incomparable editor **Mike Cohen**; the guidance of English Montreal School Board Director of Student Services **Lew Lewis**; Assistant Director of Student Services **Julie René de Cotret**; Inspiration's Coordinator of Educational Outreach **Linda Mahler**; and our special advisor **Nick Katalifos**, Principal of Pierre de Coubertin Elementary School, we are looking forward to an outstanding year. All of our work is in gracious thanks to the support of the English Montreal School Board and our many loyal sponsors, advertisers and volunteers.

THE SECOND ANNUAL MONTREAL WALK NOW FOR AUTISM SPEAKS CANADA was a great success. The nearly \$200,000 raised will fund global research into autism and raise public awareness about it. Under the amazing leadership of **Tania Piperni**, Autism Spectrum Disorders consultant, EMSB, Team Inspirations raised \$6,090, making us the sixth top fundraising team. Our 15 participants had a fun day meeting so many of you. Fundraising for this event continues until December 31st. If you would like to support the cause, visit <http://events.autismspeaks.ca/>.

Congratulations to **Stephanie Shaffer** on her recent appointment as events manager for Quebec at **Autism Speaks Canada**. Known to many as an autism warrior, Shaffer has worked tirelessly as an effective advocate for change for many years. She played a key role in the successful campaign to secure the right of psychologists to diagnose children with autism spectrum disorders, decreasing the waiting time for a diagnosis. She is also the vice-president of the Miriam Home User's Committee.

SUPER SONICS SOCCER is celebrating its fifth anniversary. A division of the

Lakeshore Soccer Club, Super Sonics offers an opportunity for health, fitness and social interaction to children with special needs. Head coaches **Martin and Barbara Cheetham** lead weekly soccer practices with energy and compassion. To see them in action is to understand their drive to ensure that this population is never isolated or excluded.

This soccer program is tailor made to fit each young athlete's abilities. Over the past five years, the Cheethams have watched these athletes develop confidence and acquire exceptional soccer skills while learning about the game and how to be part of a team. They have also seen this confidence transfer into each player's daily life.

Serving children from the Greater Montreal area to as far away as St. Bruno, Super Sonics has seen a steady growth in registration each year. To meet their demand, they run a young coaches mentoring program for teens aged 14 to 20, which is equally as inspiring. This coaching opportunity is offered to children coming up through Super Sonics if they show interest in teaching and leadership skills, allowing them the chance to give back to the community. We wish Super Sonics a happy fifth - and many more exciting years of inspiration through soccer!

THE MIRIAM FOUNDATION AND THE UNICORN CHILDREN'S FOUNDATION threw their first fundraising **International Tea Party** to the delight of the 250 guests in attendance. The Loft Hotel was transformed into a tea lovers dream experience featuring David's Tea. Main sponsors included the Mike Rosenbloom Foundation, Reitmans and Osler Lawyers. Guests enjoyed scones or cucumber sandwiches and a harpist's serenade in the English garden, a sampling of Oriental delicacies and traditional Chinese music in the Chinese garden, and Indian "amuse-gueules" in the India themed garden. This fabulous trip around the tea world was created by Geeta, from Events by Geeta Suchak and her co-organizer Nancy Smith, the Miriam Foundation's director of events.

Emceed by CJAD's Eramelinda Boquer, special guest speakers included: Diane Guerrero, president of the Miriam Foundation; Valeria Rosenbloom, treasurer of the Unicorn Children's Foundation; Sharon Al-

exander, executive director of the Unicorn Children's Foundation; and Nathalie Garcin, executive director of Centre Gold.

Each spoke passionately about the need for more funding and awareness of autism spectrum disorders. Funds raised created a Neurodiversity Project, which consists of live interactive webinars hosted by international experts in the field, with the goal of improving diagnosis and treatment for those affected by neurodiverse disorders. This project offers researchers an opportunity to communicate findings on evidence-based practices.

VINCENT MASSEY'S SECOND ANNUAL CHARITY FASHION GALA: Vincent Massey Collegiate graduate **Andrew Zaccardo** was the inspiration for the school's second annual Charity Fashion Gala, which raised more than \$29,000 to benefit **The Montreal General Hospital Foundation**, and **The McGill Scoliosis and Spine Group of the McGill University Health Centre**, directed by **Dr. Jean Ouellet**.

Andrew's life changed in October 2010 after suffering fractured vertebrae during a hockey match while playing for the Laval Patriotes. Thanks to his determination, he made considerable progress and was able to graduate with his classmates last year. Now 18, Andrew is continuing his rehabilitation, and his perseverance and remarkable improvement have served as an inspiration for the entire school.

Cassandra Baucó, one of the teacher organizers of the event, said the students were immediately inspired by Andrew's story, sparking contagious excitement for the event. "The spirit of generosity is a hallmark of our school community. Our students' awareness and eagerness to help others has always been heartwarming, but even more so in this case," Baucó said. "Everyone came together and the fundraising efforts to honour this VMC grad were unprecedented, not to mention very personal...and for that, I couldn't be more proud."

SUMMIT SCHOOL'S LOOK YOUR BEST DAY: The Occupational Therapy (O.T.) Department at Summit School recently hosted a Look Your Best Day (LYBD) for the vocational team students (aged 16 to 21). The goal of the event was to increase the students' awareness of their own self-care, give their self-esteem a boost, and inspire them to take interest in caring for themselves by giving them the resources to do so.

Staging a full day of makeovers, students signed up for different stations according to their interests, from hair styling, nail

care, make-up and shaving. There were also booths that offered different activities, including skin care, fashion and fitness. The O.T. Department contacted health and beauty product companies prior to the event, who donated an enormous amount of samples for the day. The LYBD was a great success! Students were thrilled with the activities and the final results of their makeovers.

THE MONTREAL AUTISM IN MOTION CONFERENCE AND EXHIBIT: **Tracy Pennimpede** and **Andre Pereira** quickly realized how difficult it is to find help and information when their son was diagnosed with autism. As Pereira explains, "Early intervention is so important, but when you are overwhelmed by the shock of the diagnosis, the process of going through thousands of Google hits on autism and reading through hundreds of testimonials, good and bad, can be extremely tiresome and confusing."

This power couple took matters into their own hands, organizing The first Annual Montreal Autism in Motion Conference and Exhibit 2012, themed: Engage. Collaborate. Improve Quality of Life. "Our goal was to try to help as many people as possible by assembling renowned speakers on autism and autism-related associations, vendors, and service providers under one roof," states Pereira. They also held a Movies For Me Too! event at Cinemas Guzzo, featuring a sensory-friendly movie for kids with autism.

The Montreal Autism in Motion Advocacy Award 2012 was given to **Carly Fleischmann**, who wrote the book *Carly's Voice with her father*. You can read Stuart Nulman's review of the book in this edition of Inspirations.

THE DEAF AND HARD-OF-HEARING PROGRAM (DHH), previously located at the Mackay site of the **MAB-Mackay Rehabilitation Centre (MMRC)**, has moved to newly renovated quarters on the third floor of the Centre's MAB site located at 7000 Sherbrooke Street West. The area once occupied by the former Gilman Residence for visually impaired seniors has been transformed into a state-of-the-art facility to accommodate rehabilitation, assistive technology, employment and ASL (American Sign language) services. The environment is designed to provide comprehensive assessment, intervention and follow-up.

Christine Boyle, executive director of the MMRC, explains that bringing their services for the deaf and hard-of-hearing to the MAB site will benefit their clientele. "It is the first step in our overall vision to regroup all rehabilitation services under one roof. We will now be able to serve this popula-



tion in facilities that are truly suited to their needs. Grouping together services for the visually and hearing impaired will especially benefit our clients who have both a visual and hearing impairment,” shares Boyle.

THE ERNEST AVRITH FRIENDSHIP CIRCLE launched a new pilot project called **The Giving Circle** where teenagers and young adults with special needs volunteer their time visiting hospitals and senior homes on a weekly basis. The project was so successful, that The Friendship Circle had to double their staff members to accommodate interested participants. According to **Dovid Ross**, director of operations at the Friendship Circle, the teens and adults did a phenomenal job, brightening many people’s days.

The work of these amazing teens and young adults was celebrated at a ceremony held at The Ernest Avrith Friendship Circle. The **Honourable Irwin Cotler**, M.P. was present to hand each volunteer a certificate of appreciation. **Norton Segal**, Q.C., president of The Friendship Circle, was in attendance as well. Cotler expressed his appreciation of The Friendship Circle and the commitment and community service of The Giving Circle volunteers.

Dayna Wiseman participated in the Giving Circle program and shared her experience: “When I joined the Friendship Circle, I immediately made many new friends and felt part of a whole new circle of friendship. This is what pushed me to volunteer my time to help out in the community and share the feelings I had when I joined. I feel so good that I can bring smiles to other people’s faces.”

A CELEBRATION OF UNIQUE TALENT recently took place at Shaïka Café in N.D.G., featuring an exhibition of artwork created by young people with autism. These beautiful works reflected their interests, passions, and determination, and showed evidence of a unique vision and talent that is not always readily apparent.

Some of the work on exhibit was produced during the **AriArt summer program** which serves as a pilot project for the Studio sans limites work training and continuing education program for adults with autism, which is currently under development.

The artists were on hand to receive their accolades, as were family members and summer program coordinators **Patricia Williams** and **Ross White**. The evening was enhanced with wonderful live jazz and blues music by Continental Rhythm, a talented local band that is predominantly made up of people connected to Giant Steps School.

THE FIFTH ANNUAL “I HEAR YOU” GOLF TOURNAMENT, headed by **Dr. Sam Daniel**, Director of Otolaryngology (Head and Neck Surgery) at the Montreal Children’s Hospital (MCH), benefited the MCH’s Auditory Sciences Laboratory. Dr. Daniel founded the “I Hear You” campaign to finance devices for some of his young patients who have chronic ear infections or some type of hearing loss and cannot benefit from conventional hearing aids.

The donations from the “I Hear You” campaign will be used to continue supporting the research and clinical work on BAHAs (Bone Anchored Hearing Aid), which allows children with severe auditory limitations to recover hearing, to pursue research in preventing hearing loss in cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy, and to find innovative treatments for hearing loss.

Thanks to generous donors, many children now benefit from using BAHAs. Not subsidized by government funds, BAHAs are surgically implanted electronic devices allowing sound to be conducted through the bone (rather than via the middle ear) for the treatment of hearing loss.

If you have tidbits to share with us, email us at info@inspirationsnews.com.



Summit School vocational team student getting her make-up done by a professional Mary Kay make up artist at LYBD. Photo credit: Nicholas Vathis



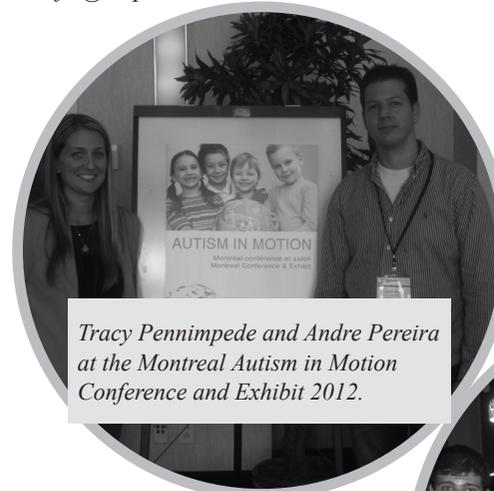
Vincent Massey graduate Andrew Zaccardo.



Tania Piperni and Team Inspirations at Montreal’s second Annual Walk Now for Autism Speaks Canada.



Ribbon cutting ceremony for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Program at the MAB-Mackay Rehabilitation Centre.



Tracy Pennimpede and Andre Pereira at the Montreal Autism in Motion Conference and Exhibit 2012.



Ari Coltin, Cheryl Zink, Patricia Williams, Ellis Goldsmith, Jason Goldsmith and Lucien Lecomte at Shaïka Café.



Rabbi Leibele Rodal, Assistant Director of The Friendship Circle, Shalom Ceitlin, staff, The Honourable Irwin Cotler and Ariel Mechaly, member of The Friendship Circle. Photo credit: Chani Rodal



Caroline Fletcher with children at International High Tea event. Photo credit: Julian Haber



Super Sonics Soccer: Martin Cheetham, Scott Lee, Katia Frate, Adamo Morrone, Barbara Cheetham.



How Dalkeith Elementary shaped life of Julian

By Carol Marriott

In a time of declining enrollment, the celebration of a school's 50th anniversary inevitably brings a sense of great pride to current staff, students and parents. It also invokes countless fond memories from faculty and alumni from years past.

To Julian Rodriguez, Dalkeith School Class of 1993, this anniversary presented a not-to-be-missed opportunity to give thanks to the teachers and principal who had made such a significant difference in his life. "Giving thanks once again to the people who made a difference in our personal growth when we were younger was something worth getting together for."

With this goal in mind, and with the support of current principal John Wright, Julian set about organizing a reunion that coincided with the school's Open House last June. What is it that led Julian, one of hundreds of Anjou-based Dalkeith graduates, to work so hard to make this happen?

When he arrived at Dalkeith School as an 11-year-old, Julian had already attended several other schools. He remembers clearly just how welcoming and supportive everyone was. This was a school that afforded him seemingly limitless opportunities to grow. "As a Dalkeith School student, I contributed to the well-being of other students by being a peer tutor, indoor-recess monitor, office monitor, by singing in the school choir and by being a public speaking participant," he said. "I also developed a strong interest in historical facts, urban landmarks, in analyzing and drawing maps, and developed my knowledge of Montreal's public transit network."

These interests kept Julian focused through the challenges of high school and CEGEP, and then onto Concordia University where, in 2006, he obtained a B.A. with a specialization in Urban Planning. There is, however, far more to Julian's story.

When he arrived at Dalkeith, Julian had already experienced significant difficulties in school. Extremely capable in math, spelling, art and computer technology, he struggled with language processing and social communication skills. His inability to successfully navigate the social world of peer interactions resulted in teasing and isolation. Diane Wood, his new principal at Dalkeith, and Edith Clarke, his resource room teacher, helped turn this around for him. They understood



Julian visits his old school

his challenges and appreciated his strengths – and they made sure he became an active and contributing member of the school community. When he reached high school and had to overcome "some stressful and emotional growing pains while studying, socializing and contributing to student life," he called on his successes from elementary school to help him through.

It was only when he was studying for his Masters in Environmental Studies at York University in Toronto, struggling with setbacks related to living alone and making adult choices, that Julian, at the urging of a former elementary school classmate, decided to get to the root of his challenges. Returning to Montreal in 2008, he underwent the evaluation that gave him the diagnosis that helped him better understand his difficulties: Julian has Asperger's Syndrome.

Today, Julian channels his interests in mapping and historical facts into managing his own website about the evolution of public transit history by bus in Montreal. His increased self-awareness has fueled his desire to overcome his own personal challenges, and has also made him very aware that few resources are available in Montreal for young adults who are high-functioning autistic or who have Asperger's Syndrome. "I believe that more needs to be done to support this group of people who may still encounter some social communication and language-based

challenges at this stage of life," he said.

As busy as these pursuits keep him, Julian was driven to organize his elementary school's 50th anniversary reunion. His few short years there provided the foundation on which he continues to build his successful and productive adult life. "One important thing I learned while at Dalkeith School that helped me manage my life better was to accept difference and realize that a name or label doesn't define who I am."

Yes, there is much to celebrate when a school marks its 50th anniversary.

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Miriam and Azrieli Foundations teaming up to create leisure programs for adults with special needs

By Wendy Singer

Recreation and leisure activities for adults with developmental disabilities have traditionally been given low priority, leaving many people limited to segregated recreation and leisure choices.

One of The Miriam Foundation's goals was to create community life and leisure programs to fill the gap, enrich the quality of life and community inclusion of adults with developmental disabilities and ASDs (Autism Spectrum Disorders) in Montreal.

To meet this goal, the Miriam Foundation and the Azrieli Foundation partnered to create 13 leisure programs for adults. These include gym, swimming, coffee club, breakfast club, cinema outing group, dance movement, cooking club, spectator sports, glee and drama clubs.

"We are very proud to have over 139 registrants for the Gold Centre's Leisure programs!" explained Nathalie Garcin, executive director of the Gold Centre. "This is quite a feat considering that the programs were launched just one year ago. We have a dedicated team of leisure program animators, all coordinated by Nina Chepurniy, who come from various backgrounds: some have degrees in drama therapy, others in leisure and recreation studies.

"We are privileged to have found a partner in the Azrieli Foundation. For their generosity, we are all indebted. Their gift, in the form of an endowment, will enable these special groups to continue in the future."

The Miriam Foundation hosted an art auction in honour of architect, designer, developer, art collector and philanthropist David Azrieli in celebration of his 90th birthday and in appreciation of the Azrieli Foundation endowment. The auction featured works by artists such as John Little, Stanley Cosgrove and Yehouda Chaki.

The Miriam Foundation's Glee Club presented Azrieli with a most extraordinary gift. "It was our great pleasure to surprise David Azrieli on his 90th birthday," commented Jennifer Furlong, Glee Club leader. "We sang his favorite song to him, which is, 'All you need is love.' The Glee Club sang the popular Beatles tune with contagious energy, and were acknowledged with two standing ovations!

"Participating in the Glee Club helps these individuals develop a sense of connection and community. It gives them a place to go and helps them develop a whole new set of skills. The response from the audience gave our Glee members a sense of validation and accomplishment."

Azrieli was forthright in expressing his gratitude to the Glee Club. "This is one of the best birthday gifts I have ever received!" he shared. "We saw a great need for projects to help create an environment for a better life. That's why we, my family, my Foundation chose the Miriam Foundation to help them make programs available. They are doing a wonderful job."

Naomi Azrieli, chair & CEO of the Azrieli Foundation added: "Everyone at the Azrieli Foundation considers it an honour to support the wonderful work and dedication of the Miriam Foundation, and to partner with them in enriching the lives of adults with developmental disabilities. This is an often overlooked segment of the population, and we know we are contributing to meeting a tremendous need."

For information about the Gold Centre's community life and leisure services visit www.goldlearningcentre.com/leisure_programs.html. For information about the Azrieli Foundation, visit www.azrielifoundation.org.

Miriam Foundation was established in 1970. The Foundation provides finan-



Miriam Foundation's Glee Club. Photo credit: Julian Haber.

cial resources and leadership required to support rehabilitative, vocational and residential programs and services for children and adults developmental disabilities and ASDs.



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Inspirational Book Review

Carly's Voice: Breaking Through Autism by Arthur Fleischmann with Carly Fleischmann (Touchstone Books, \$18.99)

By Stuart Nulman

In one of the postings that begin every chapter of the book *Carly's Voice*, 17-year-old Toronto resident Carly Fleischmann writes that "I wish people would be understanding and caring. But how can they be when they just don't get it. I can explain it but no one will give me a chance. I want people to understand that autistic people are people and we all have an inner voice."

The above statement is not just the *raison d'être* of the book that was written by her father Arthur Fleischmann, but Carly's personal mission statement to increase public awareness about autism and the people who are diagnosed with it. And this mission of spreading her message is not being done through a medical expert or celebrity spokesperson; it's being done by Carly herself.

And she managed to accomplish this by writing. Using a laptop computer, voice output devices and the latest state-of-the-art software such as WordQ, Carly is able to express her thoughts and reflections to her family and the rest of the world on the myths and realities of what it's like to be a person living with autism. And thanks to a text-to-speech feature in the WordQ software, Carly is able to tell her story to large gatherings at conferences or appearances on TV interview shows. Since this personal breakthrough at the age of 10, Carly has been a tireless advocate for autism awareness. As a result of her prodigious written output, she has amassed 40,000 Facebook fans, 25,000 Twitter followers, has appeared on "Larry King Live", "20/20" and CTV National News, and has won many awards and honors for her autism advocacy efforts, including the Autism Advocacy Award that was bestowed upon her at the Autism in Motion Conference, which took place in Montreal this past August.

Carly was diagnosed with severe autism at the age of two – along with an oral mo-



tor condition that hampered her ability to speak and cognitive delay – and her parents Arthur and Tammy were told by the doctors that she would never be intellectually developed beyond the abilities of a small child. She went through Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) therapy and thanks to the nonstop dedication of her therapists Barb and Howard, Carly was making slow, steady progress. But it was one day, when she was 10 years old, that Carly made that significant personal breakthrough. While working with Barb and Howard, Carly went over to their laptop and typed the message "HELP TEETH HURT."

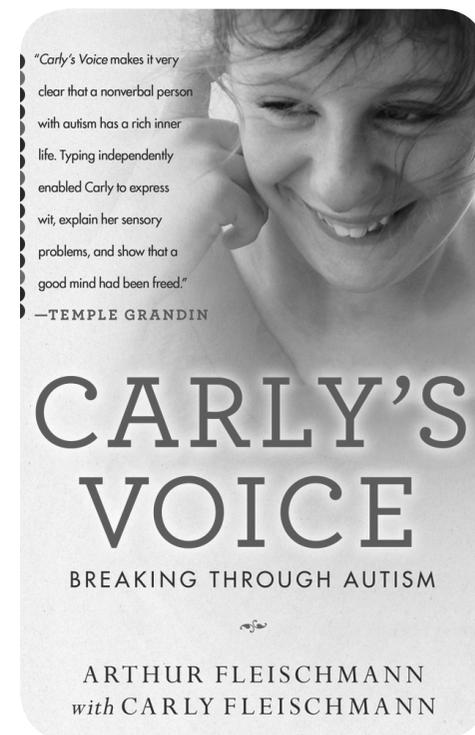
From that point forward, Carly began to use the technology available to her in order to communicate and break free from the shell that autism put her in. With plenty of patience, help and motivation (thanks to plenty of Lay's Potato Chips that were given as a reward), from her family and therapists, she began to develop the skills that would open herself up to the rest of the world, bring her a great deal of self-confidence, and practically become an immediate advocate for

people with autism.

The book is filled with Carly's writings, whether they be postings on her Facebook and Twitter accounts, "conversations" with her father and therapists, or speeches that were given in public (she even had the honour of introducing Dr. Temple Grandin – herself a person living with autism and subject of an award-winning HBO made-for-cable movie – at a conference). When you read them, the impression you get is that Carly is a young woman who is intelligent, wise, stubborn, strong-minded, with a keen sense of humour and filled with energy to tackle any challenge that is put before her. As well, she is also your average teenage girl, who enjoys pizza, going to the movies with family and friends, and of course, boys.

However, what is amazing about her writings is that she successfully unlocks that closed door of what it's like to have autism. We get that rare insight of the true face of this disorder, on the emotional and physical side (for example on the latter, Carly explains why she has moments when she rolls around on the floor and hits herself on the head, which is because she suffers from a great deal of pain and sensation in her legs and head, and this is the only way for her to communicate this to everyone else). We also get fascinating insight into how she processes information (which she attributes to the concept of "audio filtering") and admits that although she is not in direct eye contact with anyone who speaks to her, does not mean she isn't paying attention to them.

However, the bulk of Carly's story is recounted by her dad Arthur, a native New Yorker who moved to Toronto to establish a successful advertising agency. From his point-of-view, the reader gets a full, compelling story of autism from the people who endured Carly's hardships, triumphs and setbacks by her side (her mom Tammy – who survived two serious bouts with cancer – her twin sister Taryn and her brother Matthew). There's the countless late nights when Carly slept very little; the family outings that took



a great deal of painstaking logistics and planning; the painful, heartbreaking process of finding group homes (many of them were in a shabby state of disrepair) that would offer Carly round-the-clock respite care three days a week. And then there's Carly's gradual, successful transition from home schooling, to special needs school, to becoming a full-time student in a mainstream high school; her adaptation to challenging high school courses like philosophy; and one of the major milestones of her life, in which she managed to convince comedian/talk show host Ellen De Generes to read her personally-written bat mitzvah speech to all the guests in attendance in a pre-recorded presentation.

"Carly's Voice" is a book that tells the triumphant, inspiring story of a young girl's road to freedom and self-realization from the bonds of autism. If the main goal of this book was to create a much deeper understanding of this disorder to a larger audience, and how someone with it can break their silence like Carly did, then it's mission accomplished. Through a technological means of communication, we have found out that Carly Fleischmann is just like any North American teenage girl ... who at the same time has become a loud, powerful voice that people with autism -- and their families -- can look up and listen to.

And as Carly expressed it: "I am an autistic girl but autism doesn't define who I am or how I'm going to live my life ... There are many days when I think it might be easier to give up than fight. However if I give up, if I don't try, then who am I really?"



Jay Jones-Doyle

Holding on to the moment

Happiness is hard. And I kid you not when I say IT IS a decision. It is a decision to grant the better moments more weight than the lesser ones. It is a decision to permanently say that the good outweighs the bad. Okay, no more clichés. For now...seriously though, being happy can be hard. Much like being fit, it requires constant work for most people. A key ingredient is the daily dose of positive reinforcement, which can sometimes be hard to find if you are constantly looking for it externally.

But what is positive reinforcement, and what does it really do? I liken it to a source of energy, much like food. Without it, our ability to perform the actions needed to progress in

life is usually severely impeded. With it, we get the boost needed to tackle life head on for another day. So how do we get it, and how is it used? Just like how finding and storing food is important to maintaining a healthy diet, the key to maintaining positivity is to understand how to grow and store it. When the majority of your positive reinforcement comes from external sources (compliments and attention, test scores, performance in competition, etc), you never know when your next meal will be. Conversely, when most of your positive reinforcement comes from within (pride from personal achievement, enjoyment of the small things, belief in your ability to succeed, etc), you can always be sure that the boost will be there when needed.

This is where holding on to the moment becomes important. If something good happens, and you generally feel a sense of happiness, remember it! Remembering it means that you can call upon it when you're having a tough day and your positivity tank is empty. By calling upon that good feeling, you can reinforce the fact that you are good and capable and success is possible. We all have days that feel insurmountable and that get us down but by drawing on memories of days that went well, we can find the strength to make it through the rough days.

So, how can we hang on to the feeling of success that is all too often, fleeting? Take a picture, write it down, tell your friends, even make a Facebook post! Taking the time to record and commemorate the success or something that reminds you of how you felt that day makes recapturing that feeling so much easier.

Happiness doesn't always come easily and it takes work to maintain but when you hold on to the best moments and use them to get

through the worst, happiness seems to fall into place.

Jay Jones-Doyle is an intern with the UN's Business and Biodiversity programme and has recently completed his M.Sc.A in marketing and environmentally-friendly behaviour at Concordia's John Molson School of Business. He was the 2010-2011 President of the John Molson Graduate Students' Association, and was named one of Quebec's top three graduate students of 2011 as well as Concordia's Outstanding Student of the Year. He sits on the Board of Directors of the Concordia University Alumni Association, as well as on the Inspirations Editorial Board. He is an accomplished motivational speaker, having presented both locally and at the National Stuttering Association's annual conference seven times in eleven years. He is a championship-winning junior hockey coach, enjoys golf, has cerebral palsy, and is the proud father of an eight year old boy.

Former Hab Chris Nilan brings anti-bullying message to Peter Hall School

By Wendy Singer

Former Montreal Canadiens Chris Nilan is concerned about the effects of bullying. A man of action, Nilan read everything he could find on the topic, attended training with organizations, including the Montreal Police, and is now sharing his anti-bullying message with students across Quebec.

Nilan's visit to Peter Hall School marked his first address to students with special needs. His heart and passion won these students over immediately, and clearly, the feeling was mutual. The fact that 1986 Stanley Cup winner Nilan hung up his Habs shirt before these students were even born didn't diminish the excitement of having an NHL great in their presence.

Nilan defines a bully as someone who doesn't know how to be nice to others. "Bullying occurs when the bully tries to impose his way on the victim through aggression or intimidation, resulting in an imbalance of power," he explains. "Direct bullying is when someone does it right in front of you, either physically or verbally. Indirect bullying occurs through the internet, cell phones, Facebook, Twitter, rumours and lies that

spread quickly that effect you emotionally."

According to Nilan, indirect bullying is more detrimental than direct. "Emotional bullying stays with you. A black eye goes away," he stresses.

Using interactive bullying exercises and his contagious enthusiasm, Nilan describes 'the bully' as smart: "He does it when no teachers, no mom and dad are around."

Aside from the bully and the victim, Nilan highlights others involved in bullying, including the bystander, the follower, and the defender. "Followers are like jellyfish – they have no backbone. Let's see your backbone – everyone sit up straight!" he challenges. "Yah, we all have backbones!" The defender's role is to say 'STOP' and report the incident.

If you are being bullied, you must speak to a parent, guardian, school administration and the bully. "At some point you have to say LEAVE ME ALONE. Make educators aware," states Nilan.

I had the opportunity to speak with several Peter Hall students after Nilan's talk. All had experienced bullying. Seventeen-year-old student Justin McBrien was bullied

when he was young. "Two guys picked on me every day. They dunked my head in the toilet, pushed me in the mud," he shared. After hearing Nilan speak, McBrien stated: "You need to tell someone you were bullied. If it happened to me now, I would tell somebody."

Nilan was strongly influenced by the teachings of his father: "My Dad said, 'Chris, if you don't have anything nice to say, don't say it. You live your life. Let others live the way they want to live.' It's really all about respecting others." It seems fitting that Nilan - a right-winger who defended his teammates at any opportunity - is now effectively spreading the message that kids deserve to go to school, learn and grow in a safe environment.

If you would like Chris Nilan to visit your school, contact info@knucklesnilan.com or visit www.knucklesnilan.com.

Peter Hall School welcomes four to 21 year old students with intellectual disabilities, pervasive developmental disorders or psychopathological disorders. They may or may not have associated disabilities. www.peterhall.qc.ca.

Chris Nilan's anti-bullying message

- **Stand up for yourself and others**
- **Be a defender, not a follower**
- **Speak loud and with conviction**
- **Use your backbone**
- **Be assertive**
- **Tell someone that you were bullied**
- **Don't use aggression unless it is to protect yourself from aggression**
- **The best way to stop a bully is to not be one (no one likes a bully)**
- **Protect your teammates!**

Other interesting anti-bullying websites to visit:

www.specialneeds.thebully.com

www.power2gether.com



The Canaccord Wealth Management Caregivers of Inspiration Ceremony

Early Intervention Centre aides honoured

By Stephanie Winterford

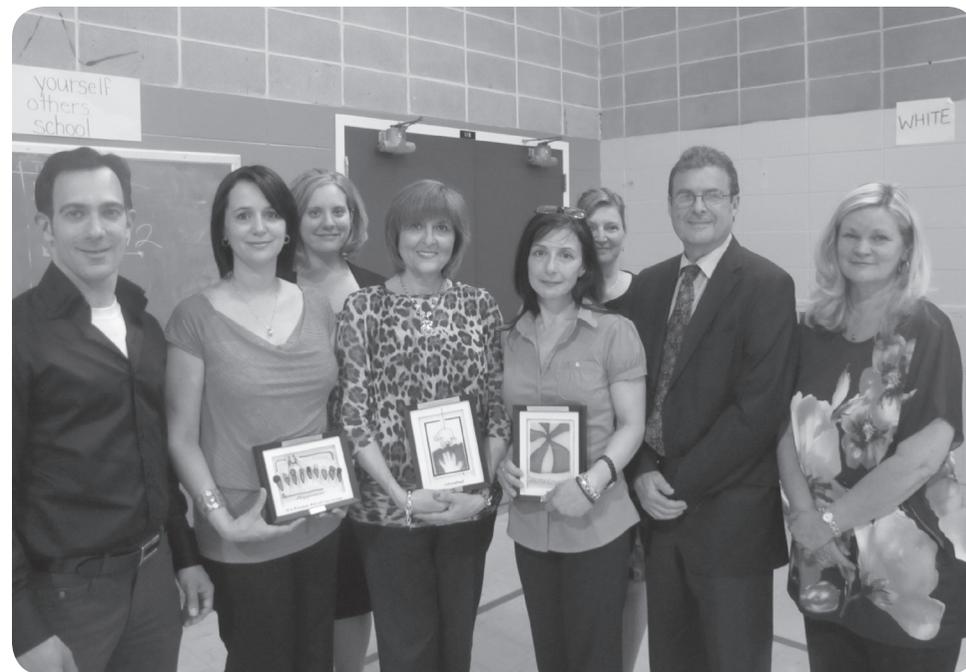
Students and staff at Crestview Elementary School in Laval's Chomedey district recently gathered in the gymnasium for the Canaccord Wealth Management Caregivers of Inspiration Award ceremony, recognizing the outstanding work of Early Intervention Centre aides Murielle Beaulieu, Marilyn Silverman and Cora Amenta.

Principal Mary-Helen Goyetche welcomed Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board's Vice-Chair of the Council of Commissioners Carolyn Curiale, Director of Complimentary Services Stephanie Krenn, Governing Board Chair Paul Leal, Director of Human Resources Linda Di Domenicom, former Crestview Principal Mary Lazaris, Canaccord Wealth Management Senior Investment Advisor Sam Mahler, Inspirations editor Mike Cohen and staff.

As a surprise to the award recipients, their husbands had been invited without them knowing – the effect was as touching as we had anticipated!

The ceremony began with a performance by EIC students. Said EIC teacher Gloria MacLean: “Cora, Murielle and Marilyn are all about the kids; the awards ceremony is going to be fun, and the kids are going to play a big role.” In keeping with the child-friendly atmosphere, Audrey Selzer and Sandy Zechmeister led their classes in a performance of “The Circle of Life” from the Lion King.

Sam Mahler addressed the audience on behalf of Canaccord Wealth Management, the award sponsor. Mr. Mahler was delighted to congratulate Cora, Murielle and Marilyn and “to honour three people who have done some tremendous work in the school, and (who) certainly deserve this recognition.” He left the students with the



The Caregivers of Inspiration receive their plaques at the school ceremony. With Jason Goldsmith, Murielle Beaulieu, Stephanie Winterford, Connie Dorfman (Marilyn Silverman's sister), Cora Amenta, Marie-Helen Goyetche, Sam Mahler and Gloria MacLean.

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message that they should be proud of attending Crestview Elementary with such wonderful people working there, “helping you to become better students and better people.”

Tributes to the work of Murielle, Cora and Marilyn were highlighted by a touching slideshow of pictures of the ladies working in the EIC as well as a poem recited by EIC students. Marilyn Silverman was recognized for being an inspiration not only to students, but to parents and colleagues alike. It was remarked that her impact on those who have had the chance to work with her is a lasting one. Murielle and Cora, who so often referred to Marilyn as their mentor, were reminded of their own outstanding skills, and it was suggested with conviction that many caregivers to come will be lucky to have them as mentors.

The aides each received flowers, gift cards from Tim Hortons and Cinemas Guzzo, and a painting by Jason Goldsmith, founder of The Big Blue Hug (and a former Crestview student!). He presented the paintings in person. Each one was specifically chosen for the recipient to whom

it was awarded. The themes of friendship, belonging, self-discovery and providing a helping hand were so very appropriate. Student participation, along with the presence of so many people who truly appreciate the work of Cora, Murielle and Marilyn, made the ceremony entertaining, emotional, and, most of all, genuine – and genuine is a fitting term, because it defines the work ethic of these very deserving award winners.

Special thanks to Sam Mahler and Canaccord Wealth Management for sponsoring the award, Susan O'Keefe, communications consultant at SWLSB for her help in promoting the award and organizing this event, and her participation in the success of Inspirations. Thanks to Marie-Helen Goyetche and Gloria MacLean for organizing a wonderful celebration, Tim Hortons, Cinemas Guzzo, The Big Blue Hug, and CTV News for their support.

If you have a Caregiver of Inspiration to nominate, email mcohen@inspirationsnews.com.

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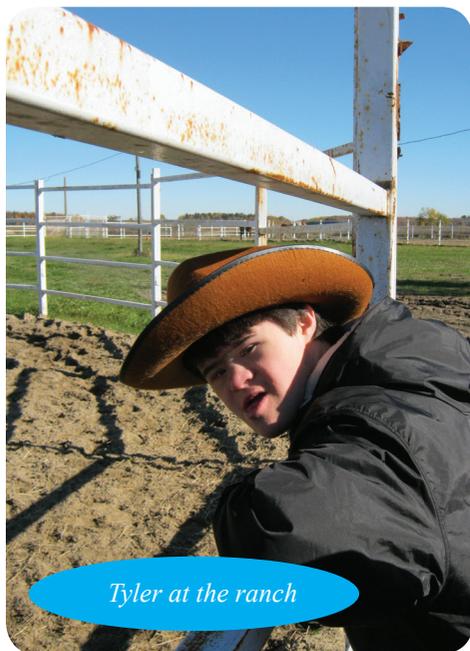




Tyler's equestrian journey

By Ghyslaine Massé

A special internship in zoo therapy



Tyler at the ranch

Laurentians back in 2008 for health reasons. I was pleasantly surprised with his confident and eloquent introduction. "Hello, me Tyler, Tyler James O'Brien. What's your name?" he said to everyone he met that important first day. From that moment on, his transition from Summit School to Saint Agathe Academy of the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board (SWLSB), was as smooth as silk. Tyler has many interests which include animals, hiking, mountain biking, kayaking and an exceptional memory for music and movies.

Tyler started his journey at Saint Agathe Academy with eight students in the SWLSB's Work Oriented Training Path (WOTP) program. Living in the Laurentians yields fewer opportunities for stages. Thus said, Tyler's first stage (internship) was working at the local SPCA. With the shake of his head and his hand in the air he would say, "No thanks, stinky" or "Dogs too big and loud."

Although he did try, this stage did not last. His second choice of stage was to work in a video store. Unfortunately, there were no

places available in the local video stores. So what next? Tyler's mother said that he always talked about living in a big red barn on a farm with horses. The only problem with this was that Tyler had a morbid fear of horses, particularly when he got close to them.

To resolve this fear, Tyler began zoo therapy. He participated in a social skills program that included visits to farms, equestrian centers in the Laurentian area. Winning tickets to a horse show helped with the learning process. After three months of private tutoring and a stage at a horse ranch in Sainte Anne Des Plaines, Tyler became more confident and his anxieties melted away.

When he finished his first ride on his own he yelled out, "I did it, Hee-haw!" After that particular achievement, he would say goodbye to his horse and sometimes kiss it before putting it back in its stable. A month later, Tyler was fortunate to find an equestrian ranch that was willing to accept a Down Syndrome student for an internship. The personnel at the Centre d'Equestre Laurentides in Morin Heights willingly opened their hearts to the idea of having Tyler as a stable hand.

In his first few weeks he needed a little prompting to learn the routine and stay on task, but he was adamant that he did not need help. "No help, my job," he said with pride when I offered to shovel or rake one of the stables for him. Tyler has been invited for a second year to return to the Centre d'Equestre this fall as a stable hand or simply to enjoy riding lessons. Tyler has come a long way since that first day at school. Way to go cowboy!

The Work Oriented Training Program (WOTP) is part of the MELS "Guidance Oriented Approach to Learning" (GOAL). Its goal is to help those students aged 15 years and older who are unable to follow the mainstream program due to learning difficulties, as well as those students with intellectual or handicap disabilities. Even though students are required to complete core subjects like math, English and French, the WOTP program focuses on helping the students



Tyler and Moka

on school-to-work transitioning skills and finding job internships that are best suited to each student. For more information on the WOTP program visit <http://www.learnquebec.ca/en/content/mels/goal/curriculum/>

Ghyslaine Massé has been working for the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board (SWLSB) since 2005 as a special needs and handicap attendant (integration aid), mostly with Down Syndrome and autistic students that are integrated in the mainstream at the high school level.

Visit www.inspirationsnews.com – online extra stories to see Tyler's Powerpoint presentation about his zoo therapy experience.

When I first met Tyler four years ago, he was a quiet sixteen-year-old student with Down syndrome starting a new phase of his life. Originally from Montreal, Tyler moved to the lower

Happy graduation Carolina!



By Lori Rubin

Last June, 21-year old Carolina Baldassarre celebrated her graduation from the Mackay Centre satellite class at Westmount High School. A beautiful party was prepared for her, together with delicious food and lovely gifts, such as clothes, perfume and a CD by her favourite performer, Justin Bieber. Her parents and sister joined the fun and helped her open her presents. Carolina was described by her teachers, Rose Sondola and Sebastien Piquette, as a happy, bubbly young lady with a terrific sense of humour.

Some of Carolina's favourite memories from her nine years at the program include playing basketball with her friends in the gym at WHS, art classes, and outings with her group, especially the one to the Alexis Nihon Plaza where she bought a T-shirt with a big butterfly on it. Over the summer, Carolina said she was looking forward to attending camp Massawippi, as she does every summer, and spending lots of time with her family.

Students with special needs who attend specialized schools, are entitled to attend school on a full-time basis until they are twenty-one. After that, things sometimes become uncertain, as there are not always specific programs readily available for them to engage in. This story ends on a happy note for Carolina. On August 28, she was accepted into CROM (Centre de réadaptation de l'ouest de Montréal), where she will receive appropriate services and will be able to participate in a work-like setting.

Best of luck to you, Carolina, you will be missed by all your friends and the staff at Mackay!

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Change is good at McGill's Office for Students with Disabilities

By Jay Jones-Doyle

Succeeding at university can be extremely challenging for anyone, but perhaps more so for an individual with a disability. There may be specific conditions that, if not addressed, could hinder one's ability to achieve. This is where the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) comes in.

McGill University's OSD, under the direction of Mr. Frederic Fovet, has undergone an impressive set of changes in the past year. The offices have moved to a more accessible location, and have been completely modernized. A massive outreach campaign using print and electronic media has raised awareness about invisible disabilities, such as ADHD and other learning disabilities. This outreach program promises to bring new and current students to the OSD; students that otherwise might have continued struggling through the learning process without the right tools for success. One example of a service offered is a detailed analysis of the individual's daily schedule, resulting in the creation of attainable goals which advisor and student work together to achieve. The OSD has also been very busy with outreach at the administrative level. They have designed programs to help professors modify their course to be in line with the standards of Universal Design (UD). UD is an inclusive teaching methodology maximizing the ease of access to, and retention of, informa-



The Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) attended the Summer Sustainability Conference; an event where each summer sustainability intern got an opportunity to showcase his or her project to various McGill departments. With McGill OSD Director Frederic Fovet. Photo credit: Cedric Yarish Ferland.

tion by all students – disabled or not.

The case for making UD a McGill-wide teaching practice is currently being made at the upper-echelons of the university's administration. Within their own department they have converted to UD as much as possible. All forms are now interactive and accessible through the student portal, meet-

ings and appointments can be conducted via Skype, and many more improvements have been made. Disabilities Week was also initiated, and was a massive success. Many events were held, speeches were made, and the feedback was very positive; and as such, it will be repeated next March 18 to 22. As a result of this event, a student subcommittee was formed to seek out avenues

for improving services and the McGill Disabilities Film Festival was created and will run from March 21 to 28. Additionally, a new mentorship program has been created where graduate students are paired with disabled undergrad students.

The mentor must hold the same undergraduate degree that the mentee is currently pursuing, and is paid to guide the mentee academically where needed. Furthermore, through a paid summer internship program, a full evaluation of all university libraries has been undertaken to evaluate their accessibility in relation to international standards. A map is currently being created outlining which on-campus libraries are the most accessible for which types of disabilities. Finally, although the list does go on, an amateur video competition has been established for the best short video on invisible disabilities. The winner will be given the budget to have their video created professionally. For the future the OSD plans to increase its outreach and create a faculty resource page for UD, however I am sure that many other projects are undoubtedly on the books.

For more information log on to www.mcgill.ca/osd.



Design: Su Wei

A POSITIVE HOME-SCHOOL RELATIONSHIP: The winning condition for success

By Lori Rubin

It is a fact that parents depend upon consistent communication, both oral and written, from teachers, child care workers, specialists and administrators, to let them know how their child is doing at school. How many times have we asked our children, "How did things go today at school?", only to get the answer "fine". How often have we asked our child, "What

did you do today in school?", only to be told "nothing". Is this simply a case of a child not wanting to take the time to relate the goings on in their school day to their parents, or could they be hiding information that they don't want their parents to know? The answer is likely a combination of both. In these instances, your child's teacher can fill in the blanks. An important part of their job is to communicate regularly with their students' parents.

Of course, this presents a huge challenge for

high school teachers, as they often have anywhere from 150 to 250 students, and cannot always be vigilant about home/school communication. This often results in communicating with parents only when there is a problem that is ongoing, either academic or behavioural in nature, rather than making those "good news" phone calls or writing positive notes in the agenda that they wish they had the time to do.

Home-school communication takes on an even greater role when it comes to students with special needs. Children on the autism

spectrum, those with intellectual or learning difficulties, or students who struggle with a language impairment, may not be able to tell their parents about their day at school in a coherent fashion, nor can they tell their teachers about their time spent at home. In most cases, parents and teachers can read the child's body language and facial expressions, giving them a red flag when something is wrong. Communication books or agendas, filled in regularly by the teacher

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Number of students experiencing mental health issues increases each year

By Despina Vassiliou and Janet Perlis

Mental health challenges are the leading health issues impacting children and youth compared to any other illness, according to the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC). As many as 80 percent of individuals with mental health needs do not get the help needed. Stigma is believed to prevent 40 percent of parents from voicing their concerns regarding the mental health challenges their children face.

Half a million Canadians are absent from work every day for psychiatric reasons. Our mental health, and that of our children, impacts almost every person in every community across Canada

(according to Partners for Mental Health). The statistics are staggering, but should make us stop and think.

The major goal of the EMSB's Mental Health Resource Centre (MHRC) for the 2012-2013 academic year is Mental Health Literacy; fostering awareness, understanding, education, as well as connecting to appropriate resources for intervention. The target population includes EMSB parents, staff, and students. We began the year with a presentation to administrators on focusing on what schools can do to help build resiliency in children and adults.

In August 2012, the in-school admin-

istrators attended a workshop created and delivered by members of the MHRC team. This workshop began the important process of building awareness and understanding of the mental health issues students are experiencing, learning how to recognize the symptoms and their impact on learning and providing a forum for discussion, as well as appropriate resources to our school leaders, the principals and vice-principals. They are now in a position to transmit this information to the rest of the school staff. The expectation is that students showing signs of mental health issues, even in the early stages, can be signalled. As well, this information can help to create a more supportive environment in our classrooms that will result in build-

ing more resilient students.

In summary, today's student is exposed to many factors that can weaken their ability to meet their academic potential. Statistics suggest that the number of students experiencing mental health issues increases each year. The MHRC has been created by the EMSB to counter this effect by focusing on promoting Mental Health Literacy in our schools through initiatives involving staff, parents, and students. The expected result of these efforts is having our elementary and high school students becoming more resilient and being able to better cope with an increasingly complex world.



Marymount Adult Education Centre's Social Integration Services

By Denise Maroun

The cafeteria at Marymount Adult Education Centre in Côte Saint-Luc is filled with sunshine, students and the sound of people chatting over coffee in many different languages. At one long table sits a group of students new to Canada from all over the world taking a beginners' English class. They are practising their basic English skills as they place their breakfast orders. The students taking their orders are from a Social Integration Services class (SIS) for students with learning difficulties. They are cooking and serving breakfast to the English students as part of their course in independent living and work skills. The English students get conversation practice with native English speakers, the SIS students get work experience and social integration, and everyone gets a delicious, nutritious, low-cost breakfast.



Some students from Marymount Adult Education Centre

Marymount Adult Education Centre is a unique place within the English Montreal School Board (EMSB). It is within walking distance of services, parks, and recreation, yet easily accessible by transit. What is truly remarkable, however, is the vibrant, inclusive community within Marymount's walls - both on and off campus. The main campus is home during the day to six classes of students with special needs and nine classes of students studying basic English and French, the majority of whom are new

immigrants from around the world. Off campus in various locations around the city there are 21 more classes of students with special needs and 17 of students studying basic English and French.

At various times throughout the year the entire Marymount "family" - students, teachers, and support staff - share community activities such as apple picking, sugaring off, visiting places such as Ottawa and

Quebec City, as well as pot luck parties and barbeques. Two variety shows per year showcasing student and staff talent are enthusiastically supported by the entire school community, whether one is performing or in the audience.

Our SIS Programs are designed to give students with learning, physical, and/or mental health difficulties educational opportunities to develop skills which lead to increased

levels of social integration. We serve adult learners of all ages and levels of ability. Some students use our service on a short term basis to enable them to reintegrate into society after a mental or physical set back. Others use our service on a longer term basis to gain skills over time to help them eventually move on to a new educational or employment opportunity.

Courses offered are tailored to the specific needs of the clientele and follow the MELS SIS curriculum. All modules are adaptable to a variety of cognitive levels. The classes take place in various settings such as in-centre classrooms, or on-site in non-profit organizations, hospitals, and job stations. Teachers work in collaboration with the students, as well as personnel from other organizations which may also serve the students, to set realistic goals within the SIS program.

Students are referred to Marymount from many different sources - hospitals, CLSC's, rehabilitation centres, special needs schools, mainstream high schools, community organizations, SARCA, and word of mouth.

For more information please call 514-488-8203.

Denise Maroun is the Vice Principal of Marymount Adult Education Centre.

Parkdale student opens up her heart

By Daniel Smajovits

For what the 11-year-old frame of Rebecca Sequiera-Villavencio lacks in stature, her heart definitely makes up for in inspiration.

While in the minds of most Grade 6 students, the sound of the bell signals recess, lunch or the end of the day, for this student from Parkdale Elementary School in St. Laurent, the clanging means yet another opportunity to spend time with her friends in the Junior Autism class.

"I help them when I have the time and whenever I can," said Rebecca. "At recess, I eat lunch with them, I play with them, in the winter and summer we will go outside together. I think they're very fun to be around. I have fun playing and spending time with them."

Although Parkdale has certainly taken notice of Rebecca, Sun Youth also recognized her efforts recently, honouring Rebecca with the Exceptional Youths in the Community Award, for which she received a brand new, fully equipped bicycle.

"I never expected the present from Sun Youth," said Rebecca. "I was excited and happy that I won't have to use my old bike

anymore. This new bike is very fast."

"I think it's really great when children in this school understand that there are differences," said Sarah Evans, the special needs coordinator at Parkdale. "Here we have a number of children with special needs, so it's really great what Rebecca is doing."

"Instead of being afraid of these differences, Rebecca wants to understand them, be a part of the lives of these children and help them. I am very proud of her and children like her who can put their own fears to one side and be compassionate for these children. It's very special."

While Rebecca sees her time in the Junior

Autism classroom as hanging out with her peers, for Sarah Evans and the staff, her presence is not only a big help, but incredibly beneficial for all parties involved.

"A lot of these children are in the class for a reason and one of the things that they need is a lot of one-on-one help and support," added Evans. "At lunchtime, it's not always easy for the staff members, but having Rebecca there helps the adults in the class and also the kids. She helps the class run well and we all really appreciate it."

"When a special needs child is able to spend

(Continued on page 28)



奇迹的见证

Witness of a miracle

By Yibing Shen



Lead dancer Tai LiHua performing thousand hand buddha dance

-----残疾人艺术团《我的梦》表演观后感

10月17日晚上，我有幸观看了由中国残疾人艺术团表演的一场非常精彩的晚会。本次晚会的演员全部都是聋哑、盲人等残疾人表演的，他们那种自强不息、拼搏向上的精神和独特精湛的表演使我大为惊叹，不禁掩面沉思：这难道不是一个奇迹吗？如此特别的视听盛餐，他们就是奇迹的见证啊！无论是从开始的千手观音还是到最后盲人演员演奏的音乐剧，我始终觉得自己进入了奇迹的世界，这正是见证奇迹的一个晚上！他们一些节目也许称不上非常具有艺术欣赏价值，但是设身处地想想他们本身的残疾因素，想想他们要付出超越常人百倍、千倍乃至万倍的努力才能取得的成绩，我不由的觉得奇迹二字恰是对他们最好的描述。最为令我震撼的节目音乐舞剧《化蝶》是整个演出的亮点之一。全剧分三幕，进入第二幕，黯黑舞台上出现十余双用手拼成的蝴蝶，亮晶晶地扑闪，体现出丰富的想象力和美感。第三幕“化蝶重逢”，情侣以蝴蝶造型出现，两只蝴蝶“合体”成一只，引发掌声雷动。

十七岁的聋女孩魏菁阳一个人表演了两场优美的舞蹈，一场是芭蕾舞《天鹅之美》，一场是具有杨丽萍

风格的民族舞《雀之灵》。她还参加了多场群舞，成为全场引人注目的美少女。其他像伦巴、恰恰、华尔兹等摩登动感舞蹈，均表现了盲人不屈的生命意志和对美的向往。表演结束，观众们的欢呼声，掌声与哨子声持续不断。

《我的梦》综合了各个门类的艺术形式，声乐、器乐涵盖民族和西洋，舞剧囊括了民族、芭蕾、拉丁和现代舞，并创造了手语诗、盲人舞蹈、手语舞蹈等新的艺术形式。

我想每个残疾人艺术家都是奇迹的化身。他们用血汗换来的艺术表演，无论是否比得上专业的表演，我们都要发出由衷的赞美。这是对生命缺憾的不屈斗争，是对命运不公的长期挣扎，是对自己缺陷身体的永不言弃！除了奇迹二字，我实在无法找到更合适的词语来形容这个晚上给我带来的收获。虽然我们都是四肢和智力健全的人，但是在生活中我们的勇气和毅力远比不上这些身残志坚的残疾人艺术家们。生活和工作中遇到困难就一蹶不振或者破罐子破摔，一点不去与前进道路上绊脚石去斗争，这是何其的可悲啊！比起这些残疾人奇迹般的生存能力和奇迹般的演绎技术，我不得不去检讨自我、审视自我、鞭策自我，越是在铺满荆棘的路上，就越需要去咬紧牙关不断努力、不断拼搏、不断前进。其实每个人的生命都是造物主的恩赐，残疾人在那么多先天抑或者后天不足的情况下能取得如此奇迹般的成就，更何况我们这些正常人呢？这些伟大的残疾人艺术家在他们的倾情表演下，已经彻底地征服了我，对我来说他们就是奇迹的见证，是我生命之舟远航风我的心久久不能平静，很多感慨，感谢残疾人演员和幕后老师所做的一切，你们给我上了一课，人生的课。愿你们拥有更璀璨的人生！愿所有善良的人拥有美好和幸福！

To read the article in English, please go to our website at www.inspirationsnews.com



Paul Karwatsky

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Golden smiles of pride at the 29th Défi Sportif Altergo

By Wendy Singer

The Défi sportif is a unique international event that gathers nearly 4,000 athletes with disabilities from 14 countries. Competitors range from elite and Paralympic athletes to students of all levels of ability from 74 Quebec schools and institutions. The competitions take place in Montreal and Longueuil in April for seven days.

This exceptional event provides a level playing field where students with disabilities of all kinds can compete and have fun. Students register with their school to compete in a variety of eight sports: athletics (races, jumps and throws), ball hockey, basketball, boccia, rhythmic gymnastics, soccer, swimming, and volleyball.

Athletes are fully supported as they tackle their sport. Aides jump in to pick up a child who falls, bring them to their feet and run the course with them...cheering all the way to the finish line! Kids stop mid-race to look starry-eyed into the noisy bleachers, soaking up the attention when they realize that the cheers are for them!

Ten-year old Alex Slaney-Ashton competed for the Mackay Rehabilitation Centre athletics team for her third year. When I met up with her, she was getting a pep talk from her mentor Luca "Lazylegz" Patuelli. Alex has right hemiparesis, which falls under the umbrella of cerebral palsy, causing weakness and spasticity on her right side, resulting in a marked lack of dexterity in her right hand.



Alex Slaney-Ashton with Luca "Lazylegz" Patuelli at the Défi sportif

Pamela Ashton describes the positive influence that the Défi sportif has on her daughter: "Alex's favourite part is that she can hang out with a bunch of kids she hasn't met and not be asked any questions about her hand. The Défi sportif has opened the world to her. We see a big change in her understanding, confidence, and her determination to not let what other people say about her get her down. She's proven everyone wrong who said she was 'never gonna.'"

Peter Hall School's ball hockey team began as a weekly lunchtime activity in 2005 upon the request of then campus director Maurice Berlinguette. Under the direction of their coach and special education technician Tamara Novak and attendant Owen Williams, they now represent their school at The Défi every year.

Seventeen-year-old Justin McBrien is a veteran of the Peter Hall ball hockey team.

He doesn't get much sleep the night before the Défi sportif. "When you get on the bus, you're so excited, you can't wait," he exclaims. Proud of his team's accomplishments, Justin adds: "We didn't win gold yet but we keep trying. We can't give up."

Coach Tamara sees how being part of a team enhances her students' social lives and boosts their self-confidence. It gives them something concrete to focus on. Justin carefully watches hockey games on television and discusses new plays with his teammates. Winning gold is irrelevant to Coach Tamara. "As long as they're having fun and trying, that's all that matters," she explains.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the Défi, scheduled from April 22 to 28, 2013. "We are expecting a very exciting edition! We expect the crowds to come and cheer in large numbers for these exceptional human beings!" exclaims Josée Rochon, Communication Agent at Altergo.

School registration will begin in January 2013. The Défi is also in need of volunteers on all the competition sites. Schools are welcome to cheer on the crowds – the Défi might be a great field trip for your class! For information: <http://www.facebook.com/Defisportif>, www.defisportif.com or 514-933-2739.

The Défi sportif is organized by AlterGo, a grouping of organizations working for the social inclusion of people with disabilities through leisure. For information: www.altergo.net.

(Continued from page 26)

time with his or her peers, they look up to that child. Both can appreciate what each other is all about," said Itrat Ahmad, former principal of Parkdale "There's a nice bonding that takes place and it really helps in the development of social skills for both children and that's our ultimate goal, is for them to get along, be happy and treat each other equally."

For both Evans and Ahmad, Rebecca is an embodiment of what Parkdale stands for.

"She is a very caring and generous child. She is always willing to give what she has in terms of her effort," added Ahmad. "She

loves to help children, especially those with special needs. She is a very dedicated child, tries her very best all the time and she always puts a smile on everyone's face."

"Integrating special needs children with their peers is at the heart of Parkdale," Evans explained. "To have children want to help them makes the special needs children really feel a part of the school and it makes them feel like they're not separate. While they have a separate class, what Rebecca does and their overall involvement in every activity makes them feel like everyone else."



Parkdale student Rebecca Sequiera-Villavencio.



The soaring fish



potential by addressing them as unique and special individuals.

Unfortunately, we still use a standardized system to measure educational achievement and children must learn to climb this predetermined academic ladder to achieve success. We are still judging success in the same 'old' ways, even though this may involve asking children to do things that will lead them to failure. It is like asking a fish to climb a tree, even though he is not equipped to be outside of the water and does not have any hands/legs/paws.

The failure that occurs is inevitable: the fish cannot climb the tree and therefore cannot achieve success in the eyes of our academic system. He then becomes depressed, feels unworthy and incapable, he develops low-

Albert Einstein summarized the problem with standards and norms perfectly: "Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish on its ability to climb a tree, it will spend its whole life believing it is stupid." Did you know that every child learns differently? That is why it is our responsibility to help children tap into their

By Robin Bernstein

self esteem, becomes anxious, and decides to give up. On a more global scale, it can lead to increased school drop out rates and bullying. The next time the fish is asked to climb a tree (even if it is a different tree, with different leaves in a different geographic area), the fish decides that he is a failure and gives up before he even starts. The fish believes that he is stupid. If only the fish had been given some tools so that he could succeed!

Here are some ideas about how a fish could climb a tree:

- The tree could be transported to the bottom of the ocean or to a large swimming pool. This way, the fish would be able to swim up the tree.
- Small fish bowls could be placed at every step along a ladder all the way to the top of the tree and the fish could jump from bowl to bowl until he has reached the top.
- The fish could ask for help—he could find a human to climb the tree while holding his fish bowl.

These ideas are completely unconventional and they may even seem a bit silly. BUT THE END RESULT IS THE SAME: THE FISH MAKES IT TO THE TOP OF THE TREE! He no longer feels like the stupid fish that couldn't—instead, he feels successful! And isn't it fantastic that success is accompanied with the following emotions: joy and pride, accomplishment, confidence, self-satisfaction and self-worth! The fish was able to overcome a huge obstacle, understands what success feels like and wants more! He feels capable, like he can face the world! Now imagine what would happen if we equipped all children with the tools and strategies that they needed to achieve success?

Robin Bernstein, Director of Brightside Learning, is a Youth Success/ADHD Coach who believes that every child can climb the tree of success with the right tools. For more information about personal coaching sessions, please contact (514) 242-5162 or visit www.brightsidelearning.com.

Brightside
LEARNING

Movement is the door to learning

A conversation with Brain Gym® creator Dr. Paul Dennison



By Lisa Marcovici

All learning includes movement, both physical and mental, along neural networks. As we move, play, interact with the world and master life skills, we are literally building and developing the brain.

While teaching in public schools in the 1960's, Dr. Paul Dennison began research

into reading achievement and its relationship with cognitive development. Upon opening his first learning center in California, working alongside developmental optometrists, he began offering students additional movements that enhanced balance and perceptual skills: the foundation for the Brain Gym® activities. The Educational Kinesthetic system of programs he subsequently devel-

oped with his wife Gail Dennison have been translated into 40 languages and are being taught all over the world.

Brain Gym® is considered to be a learning readiness program designed to address the physical skills of learning: ease and coordination in sitting, standing or moving about, the level of curiosity or motivation in what our students are doing or trying to avoid doing, as well as their ability to shift their attention from near to far and near again without distraction... These skills are seldom taught and are too often taken for granted.

The Brain Gym activities are quick, fun and energizing. These exercises are designed to help us relax, focus, think and move to the best of our ability. The movements are simple and are very much like the movement patterns children do naturally while learning to coordinate eyes, ears, hands and their bodies. By promoting efficient communication among the many nerve cells and functional centers located throughout the brain and body, Brain Gym allows us to access our innate ability to learn and function optimally.

"I didn't learn on the schedule of my peers," said Dr. Dennison. "I failed fourth grade because I wasn't reading. I was made to feel 'less than' and 'broken.' I have dedicated my career to help students like myself to never

have to endure the "shame" of not learning at the same pace as other students.

"Movement is the Door to Learning" applies to anyone who wishes to learn faster and more easily, to be more focused and organized, especially during test taking, to be able to start and finish projects with less stress, to overcome learning and behavioral challenges.

If you would like to reach new levels of excellence and learn more about Brain Gym® and how to integrate these fun and simple activities into your home, office or classroom we invite you to join us on Tuesday, April 30, 2013 when Dr. Paul Dennison will be giving an evening conference at Centennial Academy (3641 Avenue Prud'homme) in N.D.G. from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Seating will be limited so reserve early.

For more information and registration please visit: www.rekinexion.org.





Joint venture by two CEGEPs

By Cindy Davis

Planning a disability film festival, researching the use of software for people with learning disabilities, developing public sensitization conferences - all in a day's work for Thomas Henderson and his team at CRISPESH (Centre de recherche pour l'inclusion scolaire et professionnelle des étudiants en situation de handicap).

A joint venture between Dawson College and CÉGEP du Vieux Montréal, CRISPESH is a College Centre for Technology Transfer in Innovative Practices (CCTT-PSN) awarded to the two colleges by the Ministry of Education in October 2010. CRISPESH's mission is to research, create and develop social practices that target the optimal inclusion of people living with disabilities in their educational and professional lives as well as to sensitize the greater public to the diversity and capabilities of those with special needs. "It's really about development, promotion and implementation of better practices in inclusion and accessibility," says CRISPESH's Director, Thomas Henderson, who

took on the post in February after a highly successful 18-year-long stint at Giant Steps. "We are there to respond to the needs of the community."

As two of the largest CEGEPs in Quebec that both have very long and well-known histories for the inclusion of people with disabilities, the collaboration between Dawson and CÉGEP du Vieux Montréal was a natural fit. "Both schools recognized that they were leaders in the inclusion of people with disabilities at the college level and have been doing it for a lot longer than other colleges," says Henderson.

Although still new, CRISPESH has already been at the core of some exciting programs and research: last spring they held two sensitization conferences where university professors, one with autism and the other who is blind, spoke on their experiences. CRISPESH also holds monthly "Let's talk about research" meetings where they invite researchers to speak about specific projects that they've completed with stakeholders from the community, including people with disabilities, employers and teachers. "These

meetings offer a dynamic way to get the community involved in the colleges and get them talking to researchers," says Henderson.

This fall, in addition to work on new and ongoing research projects, CRISPESH will be working closely with the Adaptec network at Dawson to organize an information session on accessibility at the school. In November, CRISPESH will also be holding a day-long symposium at Dawson on the topic of universal design and new ways of creating accessible spaces and programs. In the spring, CRISPESH will be organizing a disability film festival at Cinéma du Parc where films either about disabilities, or made by disabled filmmakers, will be shown. CRISPESH will also be working with Cinéma du Parc to make their space more accessible.

Through their important work, CRISPESH is an exciting new resource whose offerings are as diverse as the community it serves. For Henderson, every day is a learning experience. "It's exciting and endless, I think that's the thing that keeps me doing what I



CRISPESH Director Thomas Henderson

do. It's what makes me tick."

For information visit www.crispesh.com

An alternative kickstart: Yaldei Developmental Center

By Robin Bernstein

A common problem in helping children with ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) prepare for daycare, preschool and other group settings is finding financially-friendly programs and services. The Donald Berman Yaldei Developmental Center has heard the cries of concern from parents and has developed the Kickstart ABA Group, a cost-effective, bilingual, and specialized group program that focuses on socialization, peer interactions, pre-academic skills and play skills. Through the development of individual and group goals, the program aims to help children, aged three to five years, gain independence and be able to integrate socially.

The Kickstart ABA Group extends beyond the traditional one-to-one contact that children with developmental delays commonly receive. With a ratio of three children to one teacher, the skills of routine, group integration and group communication can be strengthened. Also, there is a program component for parents, so that they can



The program aims to help children aged three to five. A Yaldei student having fun. Photo credit: Leah Netzer, Photography

receive guidance, support and training. Lillian Vennor, Yaldei's Director of Development explains: "We really want to make parents an integral part of the program so it's not just dropping their kids off in the mornings." Monthly one-on-one parent training sessions will play an integral role to help parents be actively involved in helping their child succeed.

The Donald Berman Yaldei Developmental Center provides Early Intervention treatment and specialized therapies to children with developmental needs from birth to age 18 years. For more information about the Kickstart ABA Group, a cost-effective alternative to one-on-one ABA sessions, please contact Sasha Zalob at 514-279-3666 ext 236 or visit www.yaldei.org.

Robin Bernstein is a Youth Success Coach and Director of Brightside Learning.



Relation élève-enseignant : puissance incomparable

Par Catherine Korah

Depuis les dernières décennies, le système éducatif a connu un progrès phénoménal au niveau pédagogique, curriculaire et technologique. Toutefois et malgré ces avancements, l'enseignement ne mène pas inévitablement à l'apprentissage. En effet, il semble que l'écart entre les efforts émis et les résultats souhaités s'accroisse. On pourrait noter que les élèves sont moins réceptifs que jamais à l'enseignement et que le décrochage scolaire a atteint des niveaux alarmants.

Par conséquent, pourquoi certains enfants éprouvent un blocage quant à l'apprentissage? Selon le Docteur Gordon Neufeld, psychologue, un enfant est plus susceptible d'être « bloqué », lorsqu'il présente un tempérament sensible ou lorsqu'il a vécu des expériences stressantes et/ou traumatiques. Subséquemment, ces élèves deviennent résistants face à leur vulnérabilité, ce qui affecterait leur maturation. De plus, pour de l'enfant acquiert de la ma-

turité, il se doit d'être en proximité de ses émotions. Ainsi, ce mécanisme de défense enfreint le développement des processus d'apprentissage et il crée des répercussions inattendues sur le degré « d'enseignabilité » de l'enfant. De ce fait, seul l'enfant en voie de maturation peut être éduqué par le biais de la pédagogie, du curriculum et de la technologie. Malheureusement, un enfant éprouvant un blocage ne détiendrait pas les acquis nécessaires à sa réceptivité à l'apprentissage sous ces mêmes conditions.

Il faut mentionner que les éducateurs ne peuvent compter uniquement sur trois composantes (pédagogie, curriculum et technologie) pour répondre aux besoins spécifiques de l'enfant dit « bloqué ». En agissant de la sorte, ils oublient un élément crucial au progrès académique, soit la relation élève-enseignant et l'importance du contexte dans lequel l'enseignement se tient. En d'autres termes, l'attachement que l'élève éprouve envers son professeur déterminera si celui-ci sera réceptif à l'enseignement. Bref, il serait essentiel que les éducateurs axent davantage leurs efforts à cultiver un contexte propice

à la proximité avec leurs élèves, s'ils désirent effectuer des progrès académiques. Par exemple, les élèves auraient tendance à s'attacher plus facilement à leur enseignant, si ce dernier leur offre des conditions qui invitent à une ambiance d'entraide, de réciprocité et de sécurité.

Selon le Docteur Neufeld, trois items inciteraient à une connexion, soit d'appivoiser l'enfant, de faire le pont, et d'être un entremetteur. Ces trois éléments permettraient à l'élève d'ouvrir son cœur et d'accepter ses sentiments de vulnérabilité. L'appivoisement s'instaure par une réception cordiale (regard compatissant, voix chaleureuse, commentaires encourageants) et quotidienne ainsi que par une attitude positive envers les élèves. Si l'éducateur considère établir un pont en moment d'interruption, il doit se concentrer à préserver la connexion à l'enfant lors de leurs séparations. Ce processus se produit généralement lorsque le professeur attire l'attention sur ce qui reste similaire « Je serai toujours ton enseignant » ou sur le point suivant de connexion tel que « À de-

main ». Il est fondamental de créer un pont pour toutes les séparations, les fautes, les carences, les problèmes de comportement ainsi que toutes disciplines appliquées. De plus, l'enseignant peut pareillement faciliter un rapprochement lorsqu'il tient compte des attachements existants (parents, fratrie, autres professeurs) afin de susciter une nouvelle connexion.

En somme, « l'enseignabilité » est ancrée dans les bonnes relations élève-enseignant, où l'enfant puisse attendrir son cœur et vaincre les blocages qu'il éprouve. Par conséquent, l'intelligence de l'enfant, l'accessibilité à la technologie, le perfectionnement des programmes d'études, les divers styles pédagogiques et la gestion du comportement, ne constituent forcément pas les facteurs clés qui sauront prévaloir un enseignement efficace.

Catherine Korah, M.Ed., c.o. est une spécialiste en gestion du comportement au-Commission scolaire English-Montréal.



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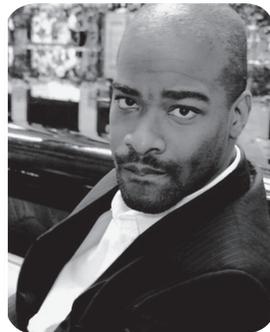
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Building the foundation for your career path

By Ian Smith

As an individual with a disability, starting or continuing your career path is full of challenges. Two obvious challenges are competing with other qualified candidates and having potential employers realize and understand the limitations regarding your disability.

Here are some concrete steps that you can use to plan your career path as a disabled individual.

Have a Plan A, B and C of where you want to go

Once you have identified the career that you

wish to have, it is a good idea to have more than one plan to reach your goal. Although you may know individuals that took the conventional route to a specific career, you may want to consider other routes such as interning, volunteering or working and studying part-time based on your limitations.

Show your expertise via the web

Thanks to the power of the internet, you have the capability to demonstrate what you know regarding your field of interest. By having a blog or a Twitter account, potential employers can go beyond your resume and see what type of expertise that you can bring to their organization. Remember, a profound understanding of a domain and an expertise can be the difference between the organiza-

tion hiring you (who has a disability) and investing time and money in training an “able body” candidate.

Build your network now

Whether you are about to graduate in the upcoming year or looking to change jobs, it is important to stay in contact with classmates and colleagues via Facebook and LinkedIn. These classmates and colleagues will not only serve as references in the future but may be a gateway to job openings if they have a role in hiring. Their experiences working with you either in a group at school or on the job will provide them with the knowledge of your work ethic.

For those who wish to step out of their comfort zone when it comes to networking, con-

sider attending or volunteering at an event. Conferences and networking cocktails can permit you to meet potential employers and explain to them your interest in the field. This is an opportunity for potential employers to remember who you are by your name and especially your disability. Although you maybe not like to be identified by your disability, consider it as an avenue to impress potential employers despite your challenges.

Ian Smith is a social media strategist and competitive intelligence researcher at Intelegia. He has been employed in the public and private sectors for the past 15 years. Ian has cerebral palsy.

Ian can be contacted at iansmith@email.com.

Genetics versus environment

By Despina Vassiliou, Ph.D.

Over one million Canadian children and adults suffer from Attention Deficit Disorder, with or without hyperactivity (ADD). This was the topic of discussion in a packed room of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts Café recently, featuring a panel of psychiatrists specializing in ADD which included Dr. Lily Hechtman from the Montreal Children’s Hospital, Dr. Ridha Joober, from the Douglas Mental Health University Institute and Dr. Philippe Robaey, from Sainte-Justine University Hospital Research Center. CBC Radio One’s Bernard St-Laurent served as the moderator. Although much was discussed that evening, an area of focus was the role of genetics and environment in the cause and manifestation of ADD.

The genetic aspect

Dr. Joober presented the hypothesis that ADD is a highly genetic disorder, citing several twin studies to support this argument. As the rate of ADD in the general population is five percent, studies have shown that if one identical twin has ADD, the probability the other will have ADD is

60 to 70 percent - 12 times higher than in the general population. With fraternal twins the rate was found to be 25 percent, which is five times higher than that of the general population. From this information, geneticists have determined that 70 to 80 percent of the disorder is linked to a genetic cause. The remaining 20 to 30 percent is likely due to a specific environmental cause.

Dr. Hechtman explained that the concept of attention is not a uniform construct and involves different aspects including: sustained attention (how long you can attend to something), focusing of attention, shifting attention (go from one thing to another), and encoding (of focused information into your memory). These varying types of attention are connected to separate parts of the brain via different pathways. As a result, there are a variety of genes that are involved in all of these aspects of attention and their interlinking pathways.

The environmental aspect

As Dr. Joober argued, attention varies across the population. Therefore, if you look at a group of 100 people, each person’s attention span will differ. As well, capacity of one’s attention span will change as a person

develops across the life span. For instance babies have a short attention span whereas adults have a longer one. He argues that attention span or concentration is a capacity that is sensitive to the environment because an event (e.g., toxicity, or extreme violent and traumatic events) can alter one’s concentration level—regardless of one’s genetic predisposition.

Overall, everyone can be thought of as having a predetermined or genetic predisposition to a certain baseline level of attention. This, in turn, can fluctuate or be mediated by the environment. Unfortunately, there is no

known genetic test and no known recipe of the genetics and environmental factors that can help identify ADD. The exact cause or causes remain a mystery.

For more information, including more on treatment, please visit the MUHC website where the full discussion is available for viewing: <http://muhc.ca/cafe-scientifique/article/focus-adhd-answers-through-research-cafe-scientifique-videos>.

Despina Vassiliou is an EMSB psychologist.

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Nutrition with Janna Boloten

Back to school & healthy eating: a balancing act

Another summer has gone by and the school year is in full swing. Students are once again faced with homework and extra-curricular activities. Parents, on the other hand, are responsible for supporting their children with all that they need to succeed during this school year.

Perhaps one of the most challenging tasks for parents is nourishing their children - and doing it right. It can be hard to know what "healthy eating" really means these days. There are so many mixed messages out there - to be vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free, low-carb, high-protein, organic? Which eating habits are best for you and your family? We know that good nutrition plays a major role in a child's growth and development. Parents, teachers, and mostly classmates, can all influence what your child learns is "normal" eating. The most valuable and sensible message you can give your children is that eating is important for health and pleasure, and a well-balanced diet should include a variety of

foods from Canada's Food Guide.

To start, this includes vegetables and fruits in abundance. The more the better! Send your kids to school with carrots and hummus, sliced peppers and salsa, a chopped salad, or a grilled vegetable sandwich. Fresh fruits are ideal, but these days it's easy to find unsweetened, all natural applesauce made from every fruit imaginable, and canned fruits in their own juices are available in all grocery stores. Simply look at the ingredients to be sure that there is no added sugar.

Grain products include breads, rice, pasta, breakfast cereals, quinoa, barley and other whole grains. Whole grains are a great source of fiber, which is key for digestive health. Encourage your teenagers to eat whole grains every day - and even at every meal - by using a hearty 12-grain bread for their favorite sandwich, serving a quinoa pilaf as a side dish for dinner, or a hot bowl of quick-cooking oats for a burst of energy before school.

Milk and alternatives are absolutely essential to your teenager's growth. Milk and fortified soy beverages are fantastic sources of calcium and vitamin D. Your growing teens need lots of calcium - and vitamin D to absorb that calcium - so their bones and teeth can grow strong. Getting enough calcium and vitamin D as a teenager reduces the chances of developing osteoporosis later in life. Two glasses of milk every day, and you can rest assured your teenagers are meeting their daily calcium and vitamin D needs. Yogurt and cheese are also great sources of calcium, and make great, lunch-box friendly, nutritious snacks.

Last but not least, meat and alternatives give us the protein we need to maintain strong muscles, fight infections and for our bodies to function at their best. Chicken, turkey and fish are very lean sources of protein, so stick with these options on a regular basis. Eggs are also great, and are a quick and easy last-minute dinner solution when mixed with veggies in an omelette or frittata. Légumes like soybeans,

chickpeas, lentils and kidney beans must not be ignored. They are full of fiber and many vitamins and minerals that we don't get from other protein sources. Use them in salads or to make rich-tasting dips for veggies or whole wheat crackers.

The bottom line is to encourage a balanced diet that includes a wide variety of foods from all four food groups. This will guarantee that your teens are getting the nutrients, vitamins, and minerals they need to feel their best and reach their full growth potential. Restricting certain foods in an attempt to improve their health can actually do the opposite, by creating nutrient deficiencies and false perceptions of healthy eating. For more guidance on how to tailor to your teenager's personal dietary needs, consult a registered dietitian.

Janna Boloten is a Registered Dietitian working at the Jewish General Hospital and in private practice. Check out her Facebook page for nutrition tips and recipes at www.facebook.com/jannabolotenPDt.

Parenting with the heart of a lion: Empowering parent and child together

By Robin Bernstein

On the second floor of the Queen Elizabeth Health Center lies a room filled with warmth, excitement and possibility. The Learning Disability Association of Quebec (LDAQ) Montreal Chapter 1 is a place where parents of children with ADHD, learning disabilities, Aspergers, ODD, FASD, as well as mood and attachment disorders, can find help and support.

Through the Theraplay Social & Thinking Skills Groups, designed and facilitated by Linda Aber from Tac Tics Resource Services, a wealth of implementable in-

tervention strategies are offered to help youth build social competence, communication skills, positive and appropriate behavior, self-regulation, emotional control, and problem-solving skills.

Based on her training in Nurtured Heart, Theraplay, Attachment Parenting and Family Life Education, Aber designed the program with an especially unique feature: parent participation is required at every session. The goal is that parents and children become empowered together as they become equipped with the skills and strategies needed for success. Throughout the sessions, families learn to speak a whole new language filled with understanding, support and encouragement.

Perhaps, one of the most important skills that they learn is how parents can send a message from their own heart and deliver it directly into the heart of their child. Aber explains: "Children possess wonderful qualities and they need to be made aware of them by the significant adults in their life."

Aber compares the program to the lessons learned from Wizard of Oz: when the characters visit the wizard and ask him to grant them the qualities they think they are missing (a heart, courage, a brain, and the ability to get home), he helps them discover that, in fact, they had these qualities within themselves all along. The Theraplay Social & Thinking Skills Groups

help "transform [the child's] negative portfolio, filled with disappointment, inability and anger, into a successful one, filled with self-control, integrity, taking responsibility and making good choices. Children become convinced of their greatness through the wizard-like adults in their lives who see them, believe in them and cleverly ignite them to do great things."

For more information about the LDAQ and its services, please call (514)-487-3533 or visit <http://www.ldaqmontreal.org/> and www.lindaaber.com.

Robin Bernstein is a Youth Success Coach and Director of Brightside Learning.



A trip of a lifetime

Fifteen students from Summit School tour Italy over the summer

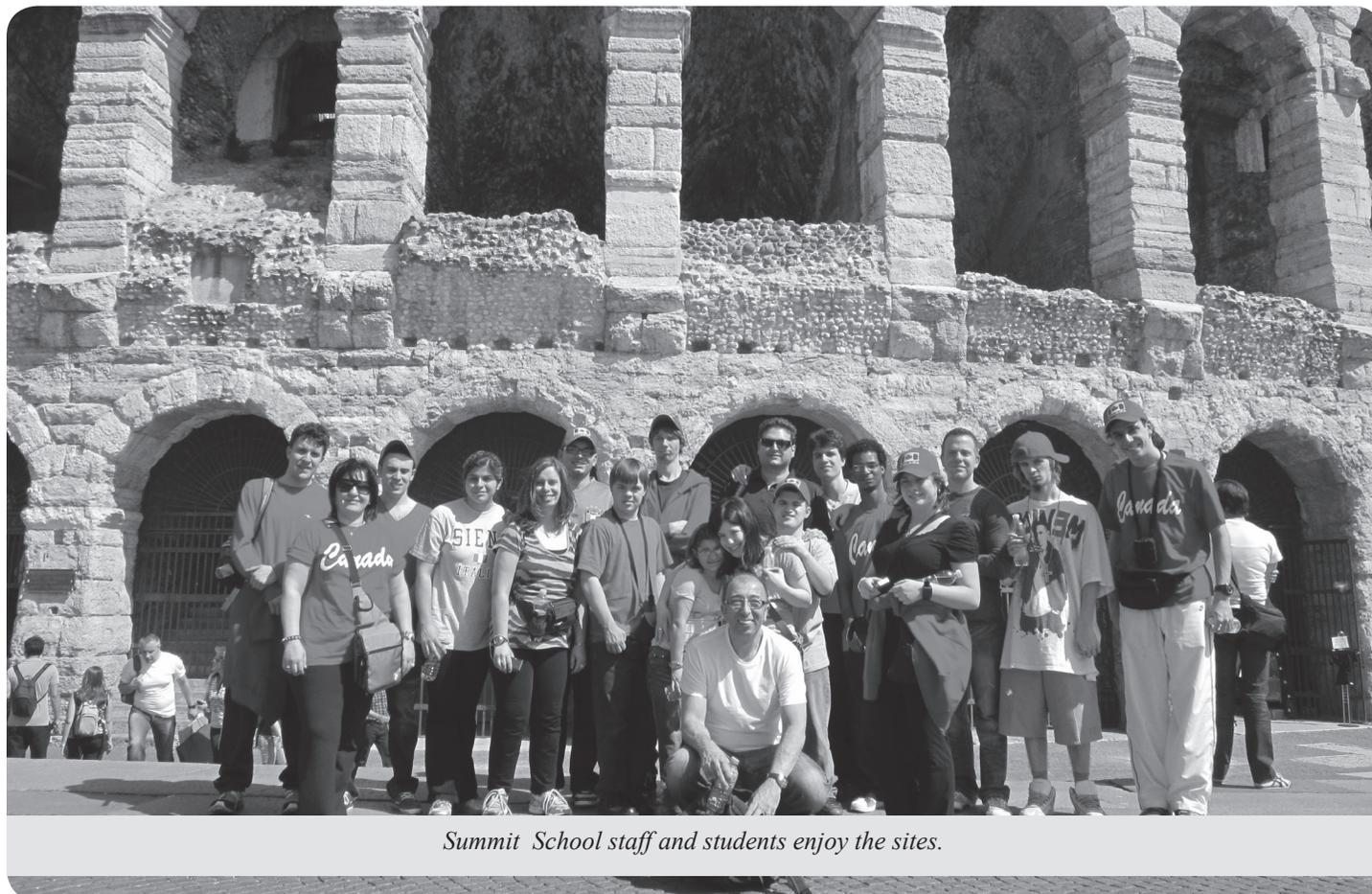
By Jeff Bergman

Everyone waits, with great anticipation, for their summer vacation to start. Some may spend a quiet two weeks at home; others may head to their cottage or perhaps a trip to Maine will suffice. An 11-day whirlwind tour of Italy - most people, in my opinion, would say "yes." That's exactly what the Summit School did for 15 lucky students, between the ages of 17 to 21, who have various forms of special needs, such as: intellectual delay, autism and Down Syndrome, to name a few.

Summit School currently helps over 450 special needs students in the Montreal-area, by creating an individualized and enriching learning environment. The trip was organized by a teacher at the school, Dominic Delisi, who wanted to show a few students an experience outside of Canada.

Indeed, most of the students had never left Canada before, so a trip to Europe would enrich their lives and enable them to see the world like most students their age. Cathy Perez, chairperson of the Parents Committee, was one of four chaperons on the trip: "It was the trip of a lifetime for these students and me," she remarked.

The trip of a lifetime included stops in various cities throughout Italy such as Milan, Venice, Florence, and Rome, to name a few. The students bought souvenirs at the Leaning Tower of Pisa, sat on the Spanish Steps, made a wish at the Trevi Fountain, took pictures of the Coliseum, and ate ice cream while on a



Summit School staff and students enjoy the sites.

gondola. They even managed to squeeze in a trip to the Vatican; unfortunately, no Pope sighting.

Mr. Delisi taught the students about what they would be seeing, he even taught them a few words in Italian over the 2011-2012 academic year. So, when the students arrived in Italy, nothing was unfamiliar to them. All the students loved the trip; however, the 12 hour days of touring left the chaperones more tired than the students. The students had no

problem pushing forward to see more of the sights and sounds of what Italy had to offer.

Ms. Perez has an important piece of advice for any future trips with special needs students: it must be flexible. Prior to the trip, the tour guides should understand, who their clients are; thus, being able to adapt to their needs. Being animated is something the tour guides should be cognizant of while taking any tour of this nature.

The students got an education of Italy, whereas the tour guides got an education of people with special needs. The tour guides got a life lesson that special needs people are adaptable to any situation. They are capable of doing anything, but just in a somewhat different way.

Summer 2013: Japan! Who's in? It would be a trip of a lifetime.



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RAPID making waves on the South Shore

The first-ever strategic planning event for community-based non-profits on the South Shore of Montreal took place this fall. RAPID, a group that serves special needs children and adults hosted the event in early October.

“This was a first for the South Shore,” said Peter MacMillan, president of RAPID. “The idea was to bring all these great people together, give them a chance to get to know each other, find common ground for action, and see if we can work together toward improving services in our community.

“This event energized groups on the South Shore and opened up opportunities to collaborate on an ongoing basis. We need to be able to consult with each other so that everyone can benefit from a bigger pool of expertise,” added MacMillan. At present, groups work in isolation, and the inevitable result is dupli-

cation of some services and a lack in other areas.

RAPID (Resources for the Anglophone Population with Intellectual Disabilities) is a grass-roots organization that promotes the creation and delivery of local services. Recent initiatives include training Red-Cross certified babysitters with a focus on caring for kids with special needs, working toward providing daycare services on pedagogical days during the school year, and facilitating participation in existing activities such as art classes, music therapy, and socialization programs for teens.

The group’s long term goal is to build a community centre devoted entirely to special needs, with social activities for all ages, therapists, a storefront, respite service and a residence for adults.

“At RAPID we can put parents in touch with service providers, and if the service isn’t available in English, we work to de-

velop it,” said MacMillan.

A recent feature article about RAPID in a South Shore community newspaper, District 9, highlighted the growing need for English-language services for children and adults with special needs and their families.

Caryn Shacter, RAPID’s vice-president, commented on another challenge RAPID faces. “Many parents lack information about what’s available in their own community. For example, we offer a summer day camp for kids with special needs, but this summer it was cancelled because we didn’t attract enough participants. We need to raise our public profile in a big way.”

Also on the agenda at RAPID is a drive to acquire financial support for its activities from public and private sources. “We are researching potential funding sources that will help take RAPID to the next level,” says Shacter. “Right now we are in a Catch-22 situation: To attract significant funding you

need to demonstrate that you already have a reliable funding stream. We are reaching out to governments now so that we can gain greater credibility with corporate and private donors going forward.”

For information about RAPID, visit www.rapidsouthshore.org.



AIM CROIT-IAM CARES

By May Polsky

AIM CROIT-IAM CARES is a non-profit organization sponsored by the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAMAW) which provides an employment skills development program to people in the Montreal area who have a physical, sensory or neurological disability. Implemented in Montreal and Vancouver in 1989, the program initially took shape in the United States where it was set up in several large cities during the 1980’s.

Our program is designed to assist our clients in their search for stimulating and financially rewarding employment. The members of the AIM CROIT - IAM CARES team share a common vision: we believe that persons with disabilities are willing to make use of their skills and talents and take their meaningful place in the workforce. With support and understanding, the enthusiasm of job seekers can become a reality.

Our work is premised on building a bond of empathy and trust with each individual client. Professionalism and experience are the cornerstones of these relationships and the

program’s success. Key staff are selected for their vocational rehabilitation expertise and appropriate academic background to accommodate the range of clients and their specific needs. When working with clients, our specialists design customized search strategies and workshops that include such services as the following:

- Information sessions on our services
- Skills assessment, including testing and evaluation where applicable
- Resume drafting, including preparation of introduction and thank-you letters
- Development of self-confidence and self-esteem, and adaptability to change



- Role playing for interviews, development of appropriate attitudes and behaviors, and how to present one’s disability
- Job search assistance in exploring the labor market as well as networking and use of the Internet
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- Employer-oriented consulting services for workstation adaptation, available subsidies, etc.
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Our unique approach has proven to be a powerful force in vocational rehabilitation and employment of people with disabilities. As of October 16 2012, close to 4,500 persons with disabilities have been placed into the competitive labour force. Our success is

built on a solid foundation of a partnership between government, business, labour, education and people with disabilities. Coupling placement objectives with effective collaboration among these parties, AIM CROIT - IAM CARES is committed to maintaining the momentum that has yielded high returns for clients, employers, unions, government, and the economy. Our track record of success is proof that we are ready and able to meet changing labour market needs both now and in the future.

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May Polsky is the director of AIM CROIT - IAM CARES.

AIM CROIT
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Adapted Travel by Mike Cohen



My family recently spent two weeks in various parts of New Hampshire and Maine.

PORTLAND, MAINE

Portland (www.portlandmaine.com) is the ideal base when visiting the popular towns on the Maine beaches. This is Maine's business, financial and retail capital and the largest city in the state. Seascapes and cityscapes blend harmoniously in Portland, perched on a peninsula, jutting out into island-studded Casco Bay. The metropolitan hub of Maine's south coast region, Portland is a progressive, lively city incorporating the character of yesteryear into a modern urban environment. Historic architecture blends gracefully with the new as you stroll along her working waterfront or the cobblestone streets of the restored Old Port section of the city.

With a metro population of 230,000, the Greater Portland area is home to almost one quarter of Maine's total population..

WHERE TO STAY: The Embassy Suites Portland, Maine hotel (www.portland.embassysuites.com) is centrally located and right next to the Portland Jetport. It is close to the famed Old Port, the large Maine

Mall, Crescent and Scarborough public beaches and scenic walking, hiking, and biking destinations.

All accommodations feature two flat screen televisions, a refrigerator, microwave oven and coffee maker, complimentary wireless high-speed Internet access, two telephones and a comfortable work area with a desk. There are 119 suites in the hotel. Only five are of the two-bedroom variety, so book those early.

You can start your day here with a complimentary cooked-to-order breakfast, including omelettes and pancakes. Grab a bagel and coffee on your way to a business event or to Portland's attractions. In the evening, the atrium lobby is the site for the complimentary Manager's Reception. Here you can sip a cocktail or refreshing beverage and enjoy a variety of snacks. You also have the option of savouring fresh local seafood and American cuisine at Café Stroudwater, their casual restaurant.

There is also a fitness center, indoor pool, business center and free parking. The hotel is located at 1050 Westbrook Street. For more information, call 207-775-2200 or 1-800-Embassy. There are a generous number of handicapped parking spots right near the entrance and easy wheelchair access from the sidewalks to the front door.

Even the front desk includes a cut out to make it easier for customers in wheelchairs. There are nine wheelchair accessible suites, each of which is closer to the elevators, have smaller counters, lower peep holes and larger bathrooms, some with roll-in showers.

There are TTY Text Telephones, a device that lets people who are deaf, hard of hearing, or speech-impaired use the telephone to communicate, by allowing them to type messages back and forth to one another instead of talking and listening. A TTY is required at both ends of the conversation in order to communicate.

Hotel general manager Stacy O'Reilly believes in assisting special needs organizations. She did so recently for the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA) via a neat program whereby participants were jokingly being sent to jail and needed to raise bail to help children and adults with muscle disease in the community. She was even picked up at the hotel in a police car, but ended up raising the necessary funds to go free and help a worthy cause. "The Embassy Suites philosophy is to make a difference," she remarked.

DINING: Greater Portland offers a robust selection of restaurants, specialty foods and brewpubs, totalling over 200 dining choices. We were directed towards David's Restaurant (www.david'srestaurant.com), located at 22 Monument Square in the Arts District.

David's has a pretty extensive menu, from an array of soups, salads and appetizers to meat, seafood and pasta dishes. There are also daily specials. One member of our party chose the open faced lobster "ravioli" which included Maine lobster, day boat scallops, Gulf shrimp, herbed ricotta and sherried lobster cream. Given the fact that the other two individuals at the table were having a very difficult time making any selections, we were offered a tasting menu. This was indeed a treat. It started off with some greens (arugula, spiced pecans, blue cheese, shaved red onion and black currant vinaigrette). I actually substituted that portion for a delicious blend of David's clam chowder, containing thyme, brown sugar and bacon. A sampling of lobster was next, butter poached, with chanterelle risotto cake, citrus truffle and micro salad. This was followed by tuna (pepper crusted sushi rare, sesame peanut soba noodles, Szechuan citrus sauce and asparagus), sorbet (honeydew with cucumber vodka), ravioli (forest mushrooms, leeks, shallots, oven dried tomatoes, goat cheese, arugula and Madeira truffle sauce), duck (crispy skin, garlic, ginger and soy with sesame spinach and mushroom risotto) and finally some ice cream (sea salt and caramel, chocolate

sauce and crumbled chocolate cookies). If you are looking for an interesting dining experience, then make a reservation at David's at 207-773-4340. The restaurant is handicapped accessible via the street and all of the tables are on the same level.

OLD ORCHARD BEACH, MAINE

A mere 25 minute drive from Portland is Old Orchard Beach and Palace Playland (www.palaceplayland.com), New England's only beachfront amusement park. It features a giant arcade, beautiful carousel, a kiddieland, a new ferris wheel and the galaxi coaster. It is open Memorial Day to Labor Day and features fireworks every Thursday night by the Pier. What's great about this place is that you do not have to pay for admission, just for the rides. This can be done by buying tickets or a wrist band for unlimited access. There is no particular entrance or exit, so you can take a break anytime you want and explore the Old Orchard beach strip of shops and restaurants or take a walk on the Pier.

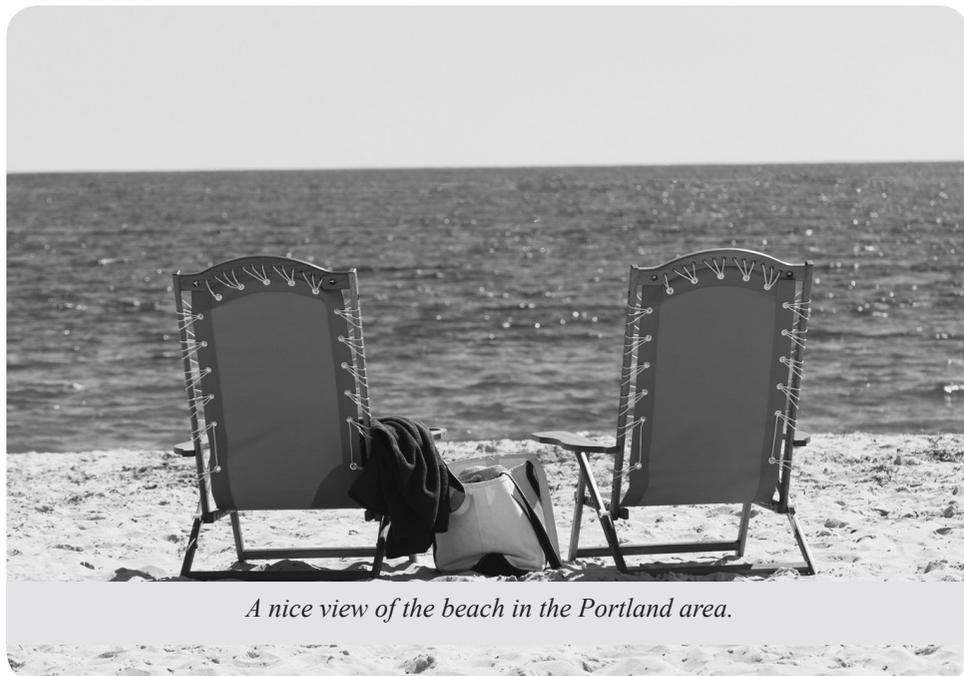
Every effort is made to accommodate special needs patrons. The park itself is easy to navigate in a wheelchair. Individuals with a physical handicap will be given special access to rides when possible. The carousel has a handicap accessible ramp and seat. This year the park added two brand new rides, Riptide and an upgraded kiddie Frog Hopper. Another new addition for the kids is called Dizzy Dragon. It was previously operated at an indoor entertainment center. The new ferris wheel offers a spectacular light show.

PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE

For years I have heard people speak glowingly about Portsmouth, New Hampshire (<http://www.portsmouthnh.com>), a city of roughly 21,000 people that sits near the mouth of the Piscataqua River, which divides New Hampshire and Maine. Settled in 1623, Portsmouth claims to be the nation's third-oldest city. It served as a focal point on the Eastern seaboard until the late 1800s when rail travel did in the shipping industry. John Paul Jones' ship The Ranger was built in Portsmouth, and the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard (which lies across the river in Maine) was established in 1800 as the country's first of its kind.

A trip to Portsmouth during the summer months is certainly not complete without visiting Water Country (www.watercountry.com). This is New England's largest water park, featuring signature thrill rides for a full day of fun for the entire family. Situated at 2300 Lafayette Road, daily admission is \$37 for those 48 inches or taller and \$24.99 for those under that height and seniors. Children two years old and under enter free.

Water Country is one of the few amusement parks in the US to allow and encourage its guests to bring picnic lunches into the park.



A nice view of the beach in the Portland area.



The Homewood Suites in Dover, NH

A number of large picnic areas are available for free at various points throughout the park so guests can eat without having to leave. Owned by Palace Entertainment, Water Country tests the limits on Double Geronimo or Thunder Falls and allows one to take a break in the relaxing Adventure River. There are over 26 acres of fun here. We went on a busy Sunday, opting for the preferred parking option (\$15). This represented a very short walk to the front entrance. We rented a locker, which had plenty of room for the three of us to store all of our gear. The wait in line for different slides was not exceptionally long. Staff here are on the ball and take all safety precautions necessary.

The park does pay close attention to guests with special needs. I saw many people in wheelchairs the day of our visit. Pathways leading to every part of the venue are very much wheelchair accessible.

Says Marketing Manager Danielle Barry: "We've had guests with physical limitations who were unable to enjoy certain attractions in the park with our standard ride tubes, so for these guests we allow them to use a 'double tube' to comfortably accommodate their needs where safely permissible to do so such as the Wavepool, Adventure River and the Whirlpool. We have some pools with a sloped entrance that will allow a guest in a wheelchair to enter the water axel deep – at that point they are submerged enough that they can easily transition from their chair to a tube."

You can rent cabanas here, available for up to eight people. Guests with special needs may contact Guest Relations at (603) 427-1112 for information regarding admission, locker accessibility, and wheelchair usage.

SEACOAST REPERTORY: We were fortunate to be in town when the musical Chicago was playing at the Seacoast Repertory Theatre (www.seacoastrep.org),

located 125 Bow Street and better known as the Rep.

The Rep is a not-for-profit arts and educational institution and has been in business since 1988. Until the 1970s the facility actually served as the warehouse for the Portsmouth Brewing Company. This is the Seacoast's only professional, year-round live theater. It is dedicated to enlightening and entertaining the broadest possible audience through professional Main Stage productions and programs that expose all ages to the experience of live theatre. The Rep's Main Stage season selections blend musical and drama, the familiar and the classic-to-be, the thought provoking and the just plain fun. In addition to this, The Rep supports engagement at all age levels through hands-on programming and performances designed to entertain the very young.

The presentation of Chicago was first class, featuring an excellent cast, great sound and terrific use of a small stage space. I loved the cozy layout of this oval theatre. There is truly not a bad seat in the house. Artistic Director Craig Faulkner opened the show with some words of welcome. He even sold snacks at intermission, interacting with the audience. There are clearly many regulars here, but this is also a popular spot for tourists.

THE OAR HOUSE: With more than 40 restaurants in downtown alone, Portsmouth is one of the eating capitals of New England. The perfect spot for a pre-show dinner turned out to be the Portsmouth Oar House (www.portsmouthoarhouse.com), located at 55 Ceres Street in the historic Merchant's Row building at the edge of Portsmouth's old harbor. This spot serves fine food in a setting filled with mementos of the city's long and proud maritime heritage and features live music inside on Thursdays through Saturdays. The waterfront deck is open in summer and there is on-site valet parking. This turned out to be

a real bonus for us. We were able to leave our car there for the evening and walk a few minutes down the street to the Rep. Both the deck and the first floor of the restaurant are wheelchair accessible. We were thrilled to see one of our favorite New England dishes, the Lazy Man's Lobster Pie, on the menu. The seven ounce Maine lobster, completely cut up, featured sherry butter and seasoned crumbs. The Lobster Bisque turned out to be a delicious appetizer as did the Caesar and Caprese salads. As for the homemade desserts, do not leave without trying the key lime pie.

DOVER, NEW HAMPSHIRE

Well this was a new stop for our family. While we originally looked at staying in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, getting a booking there was no easy task. Most of the rooms were already spoken for by government personnel attached to the Naval Shipyard and these individuals tend to stay there for extended periods of time. Always a fan of the Homewood Suites chain, I found one in the suburb of Dover (www.dovernh.homewoodsuites.com). This is part of the LaFrance Hospitality Group (www.lafrancehospitality.com), which also owns a Comfort Inn and Suites and a Hampton Inn nearby.

Dover (www.dovernh.org) is about 15 minutes from Portsmouth and 25 from beautiful Rye Beach. You are also only a 30 minute drive from the Maine beaches. Dover is easily accessible from all directions. Take the I-95 to Route 16 and use Exits 6 through 9 (8E is recommended for access to downtown).

WHERE TO STAY: I have always enjoyed my stays at The Homewood Suites. In Dover this was no different. Located in the heart of the business district, at 21 Members Way, this hotel is just minutes

from downtown Dover and many fine restaurants and shops. It is the perfect place for short and extended stay accommodations. We were there for five days and it proved to be a great base for our activities. Their sister properties, the Comfort Inn and Suites and the Hampton Inn, also have solid reputations.

This Homewood Suites Dover only opened in 2008 and still looks spanking new. It offers all of this on a complimentary basis: a daily Suite Star hot breakfast buffet; dinner and beverages Monday through Thursday evenings at a Welcome Home Reception; parking; high-speed internet access; shuttle service providing transportation to the surrounding area, including downtown Portsmouth; a business center, with print, photocopy, and fax capabilities; Neutrogena bath products; a fitness center, indoor heated pool, whirlpool and outdoor patio. There is also a 24-hour Suite Shop convenience store.

With its spacious suites, fully equipped kitchens, and separate living and sleeping areas, this hotel is perfect for families who need some space and naturally a good choice for the corporate field and travellers looking to remain productive while on the road.

We really appreciated the fully equipped kitchen in our one-bedroom suite, complete with full-size refrigerator, microwave oven, two-burner stove top, and coffee maker. There were two televisions with a video player, two telephones with data ports, an iron, ironing board and hair dryer. Pets are allowed here (maximum 50 pounds) for a fee of \$50 a night. The third floor of the hotel is reserved for this. Just up the street are a number of restaurants, grocery stores, a Target, Walmart, TJ Maxx and more.

(Continued on page 38)



Hampton Inn & Suites waterslide



(Continued from page 37)

Few area hotels cater to the special needs of guests like the Homewood Suites in Dover. They have designed their accessible suites for ease of mobility and comfort. Some accessible rooms feature roll-in showers, secure grab bars, and kitchens built to lower scale. Also accessible are the parking spaces, the public entrance, the registration desk and the swimming pool. There is closed captioning on the televisions. Service animals are welcome.

WHERE TO DINE: The Orchard Street Chop Shop (www.orchardstreetchopshop.com) gets my vote for the top dining option in Dover. The magnificent dining room is one of the most elegant on the seacoast. It seats more than 200 people over two floors and a patio and features floor-to-ceiling stone fireplace, oversized booths, Brazilian Cherry wood floors, bronze chandeliers, and wines scattered around the open-grill dining room. This room can be separated for private dining rooms or the entire room can be booked for any special occasion. The first floor and the seasonal terrace are both wheelchair accessible.

Open Monday through Saturdays at 5 p.m. for dinner, The Orchard Street Chop Shop is housed in the original Dover Firehouse. The restaurant offers the finest selections of meats and seafood, skillfully prepared with a stunning assortment of traditional steakhouse sides and sumptuous desserts - all house made. We started off our dinner with some salads (wild field green and Tuscan caprese). Two members of our party chose the eight ounce petit filet mignon while I opted for the 14-ounce Delmonico steak. Each main item comes with your choice of two sides. The smashed potatoes won us over.

SHOPPING: Fox Run Mall is a one level enclosed regional shopping center located in Newington, 15 minutes from Dover. It is the only regional shopping center within a 40-mile radius and features national tenants including Macys, JC Penny, LOFT, Abercrombie & Fitch, PacSun, Express, Victoria's Secret, Bath & Body Works, Gap, Men's Wearhouse, American Eagle Outfitters, Pandora and Hollister Co. New Hampshire does not have a sales tax which draws shoppers from neighboring states of Maine and Massachusetts.

ACCESSIBILITY: The State of New Hampshire and businesses and organizations throughout the state have made an effort to make New Hampshire accessible to all. If you are using the www.visitnh.gov website to locate lodging properties or attractions that are accessible for people with disabilities, go to the Advanced Search option from any of the search pages. You can then select « Accessible » as an option to narrow your search.

The New Hampshire Governor's Commission on Disability is an excellent resource for information on the many services, laws, and regulations that affect citizens or visitors with disabilities. They also keep a list of recreation resources in New Hampshire that people with disabilities may be able to enjoy alone or with their families and friends. For winter sports, the Commission on Disability also maintains a list of New Hampshire ski resorts offering adaptive ski programs.

NORTH CONWAY, NEW HAMPSHIRE

If you like to shop, then North Conway, New Hampshire's (www.northconwaynh.com) multiple outlets will keep you hopping. This is also a great spot for skiing,

outdoor activities and attractions like Santa's Village and Storyland.

WHERE TO STAY: One of North Conway New Hampshire's newest hotels, the Hampton Inn and Suites (www.hamptoninnnorthconway.com), boasts a four-story, attached, indoor water parks as well as an onsite fitness center! The hotel only opened in 2006, yet it still looks spanking new. When you check in, there is a large plate of soft chocolate chip cookies to welcome you.

There are 97 rooms and suites here. Our family decided to get connecting rooms, which translated into a very nice suite-like atmosphere. One room had a king size bed and a large walk-in shower; the other two queen beds. We requested a small fridge for the room. A few doors down was an on-site laundry machine, with plenty of machines. People tend to come here for extended stays to enjoy all of the attractions in the area, so having such an option can be a real bonus.

The hotel has complimentary wireless high-speed Internet access, a hot breakfast buffet served until 10 a.m. each day, "on the run" breakfast bags for folks on the go, an onsite fitness center, a business center with computers and a printer, an onsite suite shop convenience store and even a babysitting service.

Hampton's new Cloud Nine bedding boasts pillow top mattresses and all white duvets. I really appreciated the small portable cushioned laptop tables, which makes typing while sitting in bed or in a chair a real breeze. There is no extra charge here to bring your pet. Ditto for cribs or rollaways.

The hotel plans different activities, such as movie nights and BINGO games.

Rates here include unlimited use of the indoor water park, home to Fernando the Frog, a six-foot amphibian, with a mini waterslide connected to a heated pool. The water park features dozens of interactive water activities and slides, twisting flumes, a raining umbrella, and more! I must have gone down the opened yellow slide more than a dozen times, lying flat on my back and plunging at a rapid speed. It was a blast. Afterwards I decompressed in the nice and warm jacuzzi. There is nothing quite like having access to such a facility and being able to go back and forth to your room in the same building.

Water parks have been known to be popular activities for children with autism.

"For the water park, I would suggest this only for a child who would not be over stimulated by the environment," says Tania Piperni, an Autism Spectrum Disorder consultant at the English Montreal School Board. "If planning to go to an indoor water park, I would suggest parents try going to a local water park first, in order to see what reactions are elicited and it would

help them prepare for a future visit.

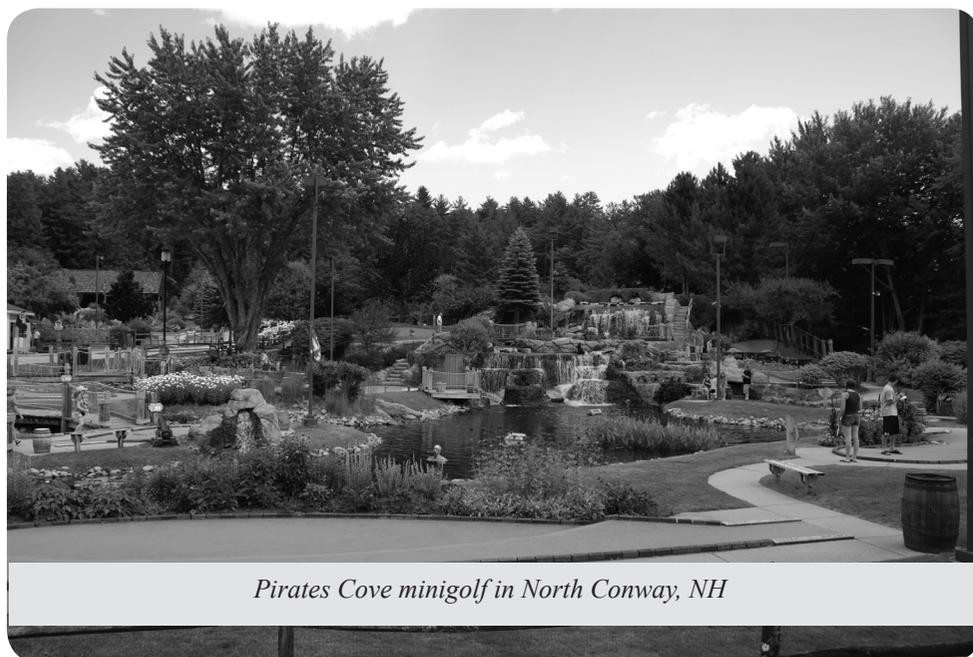
The hotel itself has a number of hand-capped accessible rooms.

MINI GOLF: Whenever our family goes on summer vacation, we always seek out a good spot for miniature golf. The much respected Pirates Cove Adventure Golf (www.piratescove.net) chain is present here in North Conway at 2001 White Mountain Highway with not one, but two 18 hole courses. Some people do both of them back to back. Our plan was to do so over two evenings. We started off on what was considered the more challenging course, featuring a neat mountain cave, cascading waterfalls and some tricky holes. It was a great deal of fun. The course itself was nicely arranged and the pirate theme was present throughout. If you are headed to North Conway with a group and wish to arrange a mini-golf tournament, call ahead to Josh Power at 603-356-8807. Oh yes, regrettably it rained the second evening we were there so we will just have to head back to this impressive course on our next trip. This was the first time I played mini golf in two years and I was excited to sink two holes-in-one. There are nine holes on the front course that are accessible and can be played twice.

DINING: Closer to the Hampton Inn and Suites is Merlino's Steakhouse (www.merlinosteakhouse.com), independently owned and operated by the Luciano family since 1967. There is handicapped access at the first level. Merlino's features only Certified Angus Beef, which assures customers the finest quality beef available. They also serve some of the finest Italian food, using time tested family recipes, chops and ribs, fish and poultry.

Merlino's has a great children's menu, featuring ziti with jumbo meatballs, kids smoothies, hot dogs, cheeseburgers, chicken fingers and pizza. You can even get a kids smoothie. There is a generous assortment of appetizers, soups and salads. I strongly recommend the Prime Rib, which comes in six, 12 and 18 ounce portions. The garlic mashed potatoes on the side are delicious. If Caesar salad is to your liking, a large bowl will be brought to the table for everyone to share. They even serve lobster, in the shell or a lazy man style (all cut up). The lobster macaroni and cheese is a new creation. I had the 14-ounce Delmonico steak and it was tender and juicy. Our server Dan, recognizing that we were from Quebec, brushed up on some of the French he learned in high school and gave us a nice "Bonjour" upon taking our orders and even a "Merci." The two-floor facility was busy on the evening we came, including a spirited engagement party just across the room from us.

Mike Cohen can be reached at mcohen@inspirationsnews.com. Follow on Twitter @mikecohensl.



Pirates Cove minigolf in North Conway, NH



Des hauts, des bas, des Jeux paralympiques de Londres 2012

Par Isabelle Sinclair

Les athlètes aujourd'hui de retour au pays, l'équipe de Parasports Québec tient en tout premier lieu à les féliciter de leur travail, leur détermination et leur succès dans le cadre des Jeux paralympiques de Londres 2012. Voici d'ailleurs une récapitulation des résultats de nos athlètes à Londres.

Basketball en fauteuil roulant Les hommes en or

Au basketball masculin, nos deux athlètes québécois, David Eng et Yvon Rouillard ainsi que leurs coéquipiers ont remporté la médaille d'or. Ils ont non seulement gagné l'or, mais reviennent au pays avec une fiche parfaite de huit victoires et aucun revers.

Une sixième place pour les femmes

De leur côté, les femmes ont dû se contenter d'une sixième position à ces Jeux. La formation canadienne avait terminé au cinquième rang lors des précédents, dont faisait d'ailleurs partie Cindy Ouellet. Pour leur part, Maude Jacques et Elaine Allard en étaient quant à elles à leur première expérience.

Rugby en fauteuil roulant Du bronze à l'argent

Patrice Simard et Fabien Lavoie ne peuvent

que se réjouir du dénouement de la compétition. Après être revenus avec une médaille de bronze lors des Jeux de Pékin, ils repartent maintenant de Londres avec l'argent autour du coup. Ils n'ont pu venir à bout des Australiens lors de la finale, ce qui leur a fait échapper la médaille d'or.

Tennis en fauteuil roulant Bédard défait par le cinquième mondial

Philippe Bédard, pour sa première expérience paralympique a été battu par l'Argentin Gustavo Fernandez classé cinquième au monde en deux manches. Il a néanmoins remporté son premier match qui l'opposait au Marocain Lhaj Boukartacha en double, Bédard et son coéquipier Joel Dembe ont perdu leur premier engagement contre le duo britannique.

Athlétisme Lakatos en argent par trois fois

Brent Lakatos a connu des Jeux remarquables avec une récolte de trois médailles d'argent, soit au 200m, au 400 m et au 800 m en T53. Diane Roy de son côté a connu son meilleur résultat au 1500m avec une quatrième position. Michel Filteau a quant à lui terminé 26e au marathon, alors que Colin Mathieson, Alexandre Dupont et Eric Gauthier n'ont pu se rendre plus loin que la première ronde de leurs épreuves respectives.



David Eng et Pierre Mainville.
Photo : Jean-Baptiste Benavent

Paracyclisme et tir à l'arc Jeux difficiles pour Beggs, Labbé et Lyne Tremblay

Robert Labbé a conclu sa participation à Londres avec une 6e position de la course en ligne dans la catégorie HI, son meilleur résultat à ces Jeux. Mark Beggs a de son côté fini au cinquième rang au relais, son plus haut rendement. En ce qui concerne Lyne Tremblay au tir à l'arc, elle a vu son parcours prendre fin en seizième de finale à l'épreuve d'arc recourbé en fauteuil roulant W1/W2.

Escrime Pierre Mainville termine 5e au sabre

À l'épée, Pierre Mainville a terminé son cheminement en huitième de finale, alors que Sylvie Morel a été éliminée lors de la ronde préliminaire. Mainville s'est toutefois repris au sabre, il s'est mérité le cinquième rang.

Isabelle est la coordonnatrice aux communications et sports pour Parasports Québec. Pour plus de renseignements, contactez Isabelle à isinclair@parasportsquebec.com ou visitez le site web : www.parasportsquebec.com



Cindy Ouellet, Elaine Allard et Maude Jacques.
Photo : Jean-Baptiste Benavent



Les athlètes para olympique David Eng et Cindy Ouellet partagent leur inspiration au comité Canadien paralympique des super athlètes lancées à Montréal.

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