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INSPIRATIONS

Promoting inclusion and mental well-being / Promouvoir l'inclusion et le mieux-être mental



STUDENTS DAZZLE AT FUN FASHION FOR ALL SHOW

SELF-CARE: THE ANTIDOTE TO COMPASSION FATIGUE

PARA TAEKWONDO ATHLETE GIVES BACK TO SPORT



Former Mackay Centre School students Nevina and Fadi accompany each other down the runway at the Fun Fashion for All Show on June 9. Photo: Etienne Béland, Pickle Creative Agency Inc.



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Editor's message

Mike Cohen

Welcome to the Fall 2022 - Winter 2023 edition of *Inspirations* newspaper. Let me begin by thanking our management team of Wendy Singer, Kristin McNeill, Zülfiye Erdem and Mark Bergman and their cadre of contributors. This publication is a labour of love for all of us.

While focusing on the special needs community continues to be our main mandate, with this edition we are officially adding the subject of mental health and wellness to the agenda. *Inspirations* is published by the Marketing and Communications and Student Services departments of the English Montreal School Board. We are fortunate to be able to count on various experts in the areas of special needs, and now mental health as well.

Inspirations is produced very much thanks to the tremendous support of our sponsors and advertisers. Fashion icon Simon Chang continues to be the lead sponsor for our special needs component. We welcome like-minded sponsors that have a vested interest in both special needs and positive mental health.

In this wonderful edition you will read about the magnificent Fun Fashion for All Show at the Mackay Centre School, in which Simon Chang acted as fashion advisor. Simon is more than a mere sponsor. He has insisted on being an active player with our newspaper, visiting schools regularly, introducing his Difference Maker Award and a whole lot more.

Thanks as well to Henry Zavriyev, a young business owner whose Entrepreneurial Award continues to light up the lives of some innovative individuals in our community.

We welcome a new advertiser, MNA Elisabeth Prass, newly elected in D'Arcy McGee. *Inspirations* has special significance for her as the mom of an autistic child.

I am pleased to be a contributor to *Inspirations* as well via my Report from Parliament Hill, as well as restaurant and travel columns.

Happy reading everyone, and by all means continue to share your feedback.

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INSPIRATIONS

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Editor

Mike Cohen

Managing Editor

Wendy Singer

News Editor

Kristin McNeill

Manager, Marketing & Outreach

Mark Bergman

Layout & Design

Zülfiye Erdem

Consulting Editor

Julie René de Cotret

Copy Editors

Kristin McNeill

Manon Bourassa

Proofreaders

Gillian Book

Randy Pinsky

Anita Szabadi-Gottesman

Special Advisors

Joanne Charron

Nick Katalifos

Lew Lewis

Advertising & Sponsorship

Lorri Benedik

Rikee Gutherz-Madoff

Jack Rudnicki

Administration

Liliane Abitbol

Ivana Bahdo

Phone: 514-483-7200, ext. 7244

Fax: 514-483-7213

Email: info@inspirationsnews.com

Website: www.inspirationsnews.com

Facebook: [inspirationsnews](https://www.facebook.com/inspirationsnews)

Twitter: [inspirationsmtl](https://twitter.com/inspirationsmtl)

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



Dynamic duo at Parkdale wins

by *Randy Pinsky*

“I can’t think of two more deserving people,” said Karolyn Liverman, staff assistant at the English Montreal School Board’s Parkdale Elementary School in Saint-Laurent, of this edition’s winners of the Simon Chang Difference Maker Award. Teacher Cynthia Yee and behavioural technician Natalina Melillo were honoured for their work with special needs youth.

Simon Chang and his business partner Faye Swift visited Parkdale on September 16. “When I saw Simon Chang in the principal’s office, I knew something exciting was going to happen!” exclaimed Melillo.

Sponsored by the Simon Chang Foundation for Change, this award recognizes individuals who have demonstrated exceptional commitment in the special needs community.

“We are so grateful for the Foundation and all their wonderful efforts,” said Liverman. “This will provide Parkdale students with further opportunities to grow and discover

Always on the lookout for external assistance, Melillo wrote to the Simon Chang Foundation for Change when she saw an ad in *Inspirations*, impressing them with her persistence in seeking out donations of supplies for special projects.

Melillo and Yee co-teach a WINGS class for Grades 3-4, a self-contained class designed for students with autism spectrum disorder or special needs. As the class requires more specialized attention and adapted teaching, the educators tailor their style for the students’ needs, abilities and challenges. Especially valuable is the fact that they have the same students for two consecutive years so they can build a close rapport with the families. Not only does this limit the anxiety of changing teachers every year, the team can develop an understanding of the child’s triggers and goals and plan accordingly.

Yee has a Certificate in Inclusive Education and an Education degree from McGill, and Melillo has a degree in Special Care counselling from Vanier College.

“Nat has the biggest heart. We work so well together,” said Yee. “She goes above and beyond for the kids. She inspires me so much, to be better.”

The adapted teaching methods at Parkdale focus on building life skills and autonomy, such as through their mock store and Yee’s famous baking classes. Such indirect ways of teaching provide a solid base while also exploring concepts of math, science and teamwork.

Liverman is inspired by the team’s innovativeness and connection with the students. “I see amazing children who may otherwise struggle, become explorers, creators, communicators and independent learners.”

Of particular use are “social stories” or drawings of scenarios such as riding the bus, dealing with anger and managing behaviour during recess that students can review. Parkdale has a digital collection of social stories thanks to a grant from LEARN (2017-18). By “going through” the experiences, anxiety about the unexpected is lessened.

► *Continued on p. 7*



Behavioural technician Natalina Melillo, back left, and teacher Cynthia Yee, back right, of Parkdale Elementary School were honoured as this edition’s Simon Chang Difference Makers at a festive celebration in the school’s gymnasium on November 2. They are seen here with their students and Simon Chang, front row middle.

the world around them in ways they would normally only dream of.”

Principal George Koutsoulis noted, “Natalina and Cynthia demonstrate every day the values of Parkdale’s mission statement, which are that every student can attain their full potential in a safe, caring and respectful educational environment.”

More about Parkdale

The goal for Parkdale’s neurodiverse students is improving communication, social behaviour, emotional regulation and sensory-motor skills. The school has five self-contained classrooms for special needs students and three for students diagnosed with developmental language disorders. They are designed particularly for students in Grades 1 to 6 with severe language disorders, where they receive specific and intensive language stimulation.

Parkdale, along with Hampstead Elementary School, are the two EMSB schools that offer the Success for All

program. This is a whole-school reform strategy that engages students from Kindergarten to Grade 6, and transforms instruction, learning and school culture, using reading as a cornerstone.

“Through the use of best practices and the firm belief that our students can and will reach their potential, partial and full integration into classrooms has become a reality for many of our students. I am very proud of the dedication demonstrated by all of our special needs teachers, special education technicians and pupil attendants at Parkdale,” said George Koutsoulis, principal, Parkdale Elementary School.

- W.S.

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Students dazzle at Fun Fashion for All Show

by *Wendy Singer*

What happens when Mackay Centre School Grade 5 and 6 students, their educators, rehab staff and administrators, a choreographer and a fashion designer collaborate? Pure magic! The school community discovered this at the Fun Fashion for All Show.



Mackay Centre School students are led through a warm-up by Luca "Lazylegz" Patuelli before the Fun Fashion for All Show on June 9. Photos: Etienne Béland, Pickle Creative Agency Inc.



Arsalan, in Grade 5 at the time, entertains with his cool moves on the runway.

On June 9, excitement filled the air at this English Montreal School Board (EMSB) school located in NDG. Upon arrival, students were greeted by a team of Laurier Macdonald Career Centre (EMSB) Hairdressing and Aesthetics students. They had already set up a makeshift salon in classrooms and were ready to put the finishing touches on the student models before they walked the runway.

The Fun Fashion for All project was conceptualized and spearheaded by Bella Flanz, who at the time of the show was a Grade 5 reverse integration student at the Mackay Centre School. Bella was inspired by Canadian fashion designer Izzy Camilleri, whose IZ Adaptive line, created in 2009, is designed specifically for wheelchair users.

Bella's mission was to make fun fashion accessible to her Cycle 3 classmates. "I realized that clothes may be hard to put on

for many students. My grandmother has Parkinson's, and it's hard for her as well," she said. "So, I thought why not bring colour, fashion and accessibility together and share it with everybody."

Montreal designer Simon Chang was thrilled to be invited to join the team as guest fashion advisor. As he got to know the students over several months, he was continuously impressed by their focus, creativity and growth. Chang encouraged them to use fashion as a tool to tell their own unique stories. "I told the students to take chances and create something new with their own vision. There is no wrong way to be creative."

Chang provided painting and colour story demonstrations and accessorized the students' outfits with cool pieces like



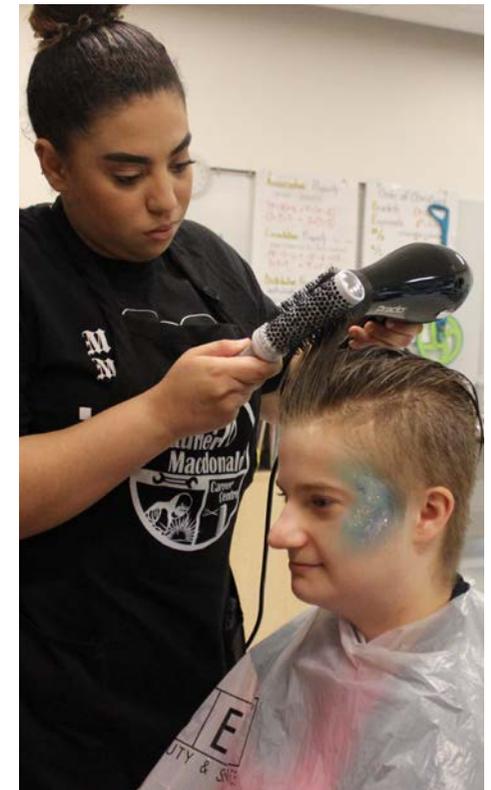
Simon Chang chats with student Arcangelo (in Grade 5 at the time), who is a huge Elvis fan. Chang prepared a special Elvis-themed jacket for him to model at the show.



Creator of the Fun Fashion for All Show, Bella, second from right, with her parents Robert Flanz and Alana Cymerman on her left, and Simon Chang, right, celebrating after the show. Photos: W. Singer



Teacher Christina Sollazzo models a prop microphone that accompanied Arcangelo's Elvis-themed outfit.



Laurier MacDonald Career Centre Hairdressing student Abir Oukhiat creates a fabulous look for Grade 6 student Vincenzo before the show.

an Elvis-themed jacket, a superhero cape, hats and shades, and an LED bag on a wheelchair.

The show began with a group number choreographed by Luca “Lazylegz” Patuelli, followed by show-stopping solo and duo struts down the runway. Patuelli guided the students in formulating their own moves based on their personalities. “Students could express themselves through their fashion, and if they were shy about fashion, they could express themselves through dance or movement,” he said. “Every student shone in their own way. That’s the beauty of art. It gives you that moment to be you.”

Bella, whose slowly executed back flip move on the runway allowed for ample time to admire her poppy-themed outfit, learned some unexpected lessons in planning the show. “No matter if something is perfect or not, it is always beautiful. I like to make the clothes look perfect, but I needed to forget about that! What matters is the effort you put into something,” she said.

Bella’s teacher Christina Sollazzo witnessed remarkable progression in her students. She recalled how their apprehension to create turned to excitement the moment their hands touched the materials Chang provided them with. “It was one of the only

projects I’ve seen where all the students were happy to be involved throughout the whole process. No one backed down even if they were nervous,” she said. “It was more than just a fashion show. It was a project that included everyone and showed that fashion can be accessible for all.”

“In our society today, there is very much a sea of sameness. In this show, each student made their own individual statement. You are talented, brave individuals. I am so proud of you.”

– Simon Chang

“Be extremely proud of what you accomplished. You are the future for all of us!”

– Luca “Lazylegz” Patuelli

“Keep shining, keep being you and showing yourself through your projects. Work together in a team because that’s how we build a community. This project definitely showed a community.”

– Christina Sollazzo

Final words from Bella sum it all up: “Everyone should get a chance to do something fun. Who doesn’t like fun?” ■

Watch CTV National News’ report: <https://www.ctvnews.ca/lifestyle/fun-fashion-for-all-montreal-students-strut-designs-they-created-themselves-1.5950425>.

◀ Cont’d from p. 4

Dynamic duo at Parkdale wins

Yee routinely throws in “mini-changes” to help the students develop adaptability and problem-solving skills. “We have to cause trouble sometimes,” laughed Melillo.

The team has witnessed some incredible breakthroughs over the years. Angelito Suarez, father of Agape, shared, “Our son has improved from being non-verbal to someone who expresses his love to his teachers every day.” Echoed Yana Polyakova, mom of Gani, “My very shy and insecure [son] met a gentle Miss Cynthia and brave Miss Nat, and transformation started from there.”

“Cynthia and Natalina are making a real difference in the lives of their students, and I was delighted to see this interaction first-hand when we visited Parkdale,” said Chang. “Despite their limited resources, these two extremely creative women do as much as they can, every

day, to inspire and connect with their students. I am proud to add them to our list of Difference Makers!”

When asked what advice she would give about kids with special needs, Melillo replied, “Let them lead and then follow. Given the chance, they will surprise you. They’ve taught me so many things.” ■

The Difference Makers were celebrated at Parkdale School on November 2. In attendance were George Koutsoulis, principal; Carolyn Liverman, staff assistant; the entire Parkdale student body and staff; Nick Katalifos, director general and Pela Nickoletopoulos, assistant director general of the English Montreal School Board; and James Kromida, commissioner for Ward 5. Yee and Melillo were applauded for their creativity and passion in the classroom and received funding to create sensory kits for each of the school’s classrooms and personalized Big Blue Hug paintings.

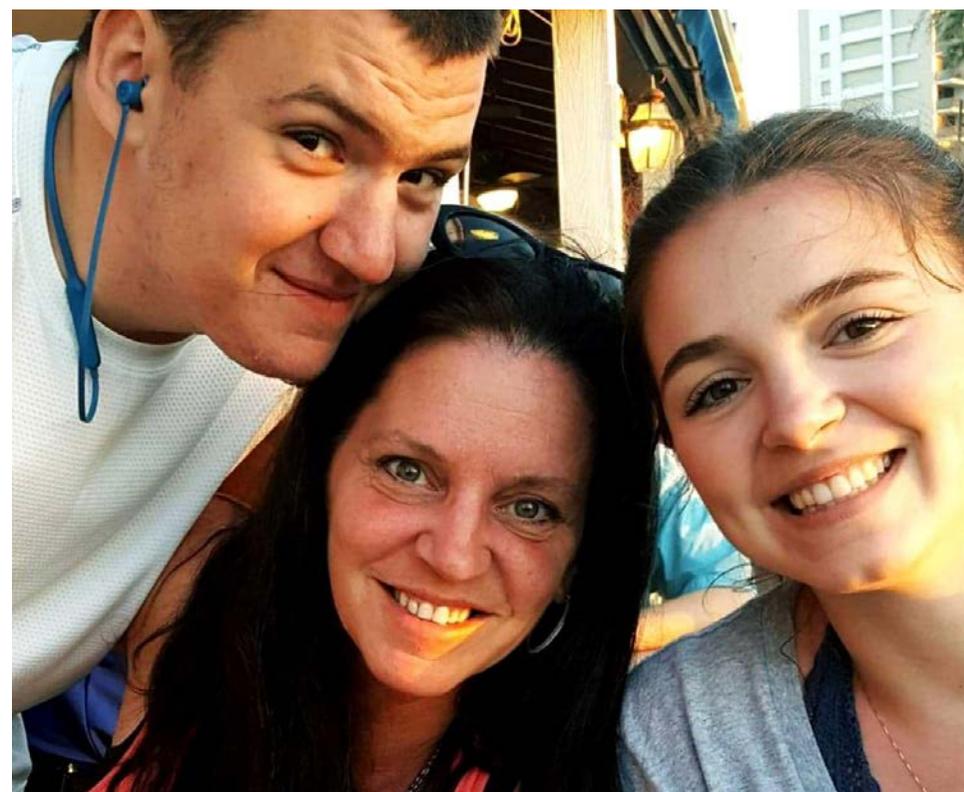
Proud mom Lori-Ann Zemanovich and big sister Rosetta Cammalleri were over the moon with joy and excitement when they welcomed baby Pietro Cammalleri home. By the age of three, it became clear that Pietro was not meeting his developmental milestones. “I knew then that I had to explore a brand-new world and start to understand Pietro’s perception of the world around him,” said Zemanovich.

At first, she thought that Pietro had a problem with his hearing. Slowly she began noticing that he had reduced verbal development, was sensitive to touch and seemed overly focused when playing with his toys. “Pietro would not look me in the eye,” she said. “So many of his behaviours led me to my first encounter with autism when he was definitively diagnosed with PDD (Pervasive Developmental Delay) and less than a year later with ASD (autism spectrum disorder).”

Zemanovich looked for support in the community to better understand Pietro

and found it with teams of special education teachers and consultants. “I began by learning his unique language and way of communicating,” she recalled. “From there I developed what I call a ‘Pietro Reference Manual,’ outlining his coping mechanisms, the key phrases that he prefers and [descriptions of] his unique behavioural issues.”

With her infectious smile and exuberance, Pietro’s mom was always focused on supporting not only him, but all those around him. “I took whatever classes I could, such as ABA [Applied Behaviour Analysis Therapy], amongst others, to constantly be by his side supporting him,” she said. Zemanovich became immersed in the community serving as an active volunteer on governing boards, along with many hands-on roles. As well, she is the founding president of the Montreal Autism Community Lions Club, the first Autism Community Lions Club in the Americas, Asia, Europe and Africa. In her role, Zemanovich will be attending various Lions Club conferences and conventions to spread sensitivity and advocacy for the autistic community.



Lori-Ann Zemanovich, middle, her son Pietro Cammalleri, left, and her daughter Rosetta Cammalleri. Photo courtesy of L. Zemanovich

“I feel rich when I give of myself measuring my wealth by how much I enrich the lives of others,” she said.

Pietro, now 22, is a proud graduate of Summit School. He also attended Peter Hall School and has benefitted from

many Miriam Foundation services. “I have always felt blessed as Pietro has [taught me], and continues to teach me, far more than I could have ever taught him,” said Zemanovich. “I will continue guiding him towards as much independence as possible.” ■

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TMR-based Lions Club first to focus on autism pillar

by Martin C. Barry

In April, the Town of Mount Royal resident held a launch event for the Montreal Autism Community Lions Club (MACLC), of which Lori-Ann Zemanovich is president. The new chapter of this well-known community service organization advocates for improvements and better support for the autistic community.

As a derivative of Lions Clubs International, the MACLC has become part of a network that includes 1.4 million volunteers and over 50,000 clubs around the world, which serve their communities and help those in need.

MACLC aims to support and mobilize with the Montreal autistic community to champion the gifts of autistic people, while supporting their needs and challenges, explained Zemanovich.

While the Lions Clubs International’s five pillars of service includes diabetes, vision, hunger, environment and childhood cancer, the MACLC is the first specialized Lions Club to commit to “the Advocacy, Celebration, Support and Service of our Autistic Community,” according to MACLC’s Facebook page. ■

Hearing from a Deaf artist

by *Randy Pinsky*

Art is a medium by which Montreal-based Deaf artist Sera Kassab expresses herself in a mostly hearing-centred world. Her artwork reveals stories about her life: her origins, through paintings of Lebanon; her challenges, represented by intricate jewelry; and her ambitions, revealed in a self-portrait of her dreaming.

In addition to being a freelance artist, Kassab is also a businesswoman and advocate. She shared her perspective about what it's like navigating the world as a Deaf person.

Born in Lebanon, “my parents were heartbroken and completely lost” when they learned she was deaf. There were few resources, and teachers resented the additional work expected of them. “I felt like it was always the same story and the same problems,” shared Kassab in “Seek the World: An Amazing Deaf Artist” produced by the *National Deaf News* (February 2020).

Recognizing Kassab's eagerness to learn, the family moved to Montreal so she could attend the English Montreal School Board's (EMSB) Mackay Centre School, which specializes in deaf education, among other services. Learning American Sign Language (ASL) “gave me a sense of belonging to a community,” explained Kassab. “I grew up forced to do oral speech, which I absolutely hated...Mackay, in a way, saved my life with ASL.”

At F.A.C.E. High School of the EMSB, she was fortunate to meet a committed tutor and pursue her passion for art, instilled by her grandmother.

In an interview with the Deaf, *what?* YouTube docu-series (April 2022), Kassab described her favourite (and recently sold) painting of a hand reaching upwards.

“Hands are life,” she observed, particularly for Deaf individuals as they are often the main means for communicating.

To further refine her art skills, Kassab submitted a piece to Concordia University's Faculty of Fine Arts in 2010. “They took a chance on me,” she marveled. With assistance from the Access Centre for Students with Disabilities' interpreters and note-takers, she perfected her talents in a variety of mediums.

Proving her skills to the hearing world is a daily effort. “I am constantly reminded of how uncomfortable hearing people are with me and other Deaf people,” commented Kassab. Individuals would respond with “shock and pity...and most importantly, awkwardness because they don't know what to do.”

As a board member and ASL teacher at Seeing Voices Montreal, an organization dedicated to bridging the gap between the hearing and the Deaf, Kassab is intent on challenging misconceptions and encouraging individuals to learn basic sign language. She quipped, “We have a saying in the Deaf community: ‘If I can figure out how to talk to you but you can't figure out how to talk to me, why do they call me disabled?’”

In 2014, Seeing Voices broached the daring idea of theatrical performances with both hearing and Deaf actors (and interpreters), making it a thoroughly immersive and inclusive experience. An actress in the inaugural play, Kassab moved to set design in subsequent productions. Particularly powerful was the 2015 presentation of *The Little Mermaid* where the humans on land were hearing while those living under the sea were Deaf.

Yet there are still difficulties on a daily basis. “As a Deaf artist...I constantly face shock and disbelief when [people] see my artwork,” shared Kassab. “[When people] ask me if I work full-time as an artist, the answer is no because employers don't know how to work with Deaf people...There are

solutions to communicate together, but they don't want to, they don't care and they're afraid.”

While there has been greater awareness with the recent Oscar-winning film *CODA* (featuring a Deaf family) and the *Deaf U* Netflix reality show, “Things have not changed...I still see the same reactions.”

Kassab's resilient and determined nature has helped her persevere and prove things are possible to doubters. In media interviews, she repeatedly used the sign for “courage:” pulling at her shoulders up and out, with her hands ending in fists. “Always keep on being brave,” reinforced Kassab. “Don't give up.” ■

Sera Kassab in her art studio.
Photo courtesy of S. Kassab





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by *Nicole Proano*

Meet Benoit Labrèche

Benoit Labrèche is the winner of this edition's *Inspirations* Entrepreneurial Award. The award, sponsored by local business owner Henry Zavriyev, is given to an outstanding individual with special needs who is succeeding at their place of work or who has started their own business. Labrèche's demonstrated strong work ethic coupled with his perseverance and positive outlook throughout his life have earned him the tribute. "For me, it was a total surprise and also a huge honour," Labrèche said. "I accept it with humility."

Diagnosed with autism in October 2020, Labrèche said he's faced a lot of discrimination including when applying for jobs. There were periods in his life in which he was particularly discouraged, like after sur-

geries for his muscular dystrophy that didn't go well. Labrèche has four children and because of his physical challenge he cannot have his three youngest over at the same time. Rather than letting these hardships bring him down, Labrèche sees them as making him stronger.

Labrèche has continued to invest in his own professional development through education. In 2010, he obtained his Secondary 5 equivalency. Then, three years later, he went on to earn a skills training certificate (STC) in debt collection and collection services, making top grades in some of his classes. Despite these achievements, Labrèche struggled to find employment in his field because of difficulties getting past the interview process. Earning a living wage remains

one of his main goals. He says he wants to work and earn his way "to have a better quality of life."

Labrèche has been working at a Jean Coutu pharmacy as a customer service agent since 2018, but one day he hopes to own his own business. Becoming an entrepreneur is one of his many aspirations, which also include writing a book and hosting a radio show. A common thread in each of his dreams is to use the platform his achievements give him to advocate for people with special needs. "I'd like to write a biography," he said. "But also, a book about autism – to be a voice for people with autism and be a defender of them. Like a Greta Thunberg but for people with autism." ■

Nominate your entrepreneur at info@inspirationsnews.com.



Winner of the *Inspirations* Entrepreneurial Award, Benoit Labrèche, poses for a photo in NDG on August 30. Photo: N. Proano

Labrèche's development with Social Tree

by *Nicole Proano*

Since joining the Social Tree Foundation two years ago, Benoit Labrèche's professional development has grown by leaps and bounds. Labrèche credits much of his newfound confidence to the foundation and its vice-president, Patricia Lucarelli, who's been working with him on developing his skills related to the hiring process. Interviews were previously one of Labrèche's weaknesses, so they focus a lot of attention on building up his confidence in that area through simulations and videos. "At the work level, all my life I had a lot of difficulties," Labrèche said. "For nearly 30 years...I had a hard time...but with Patricia, things advanced. They fight for the underdog."

The Social Tree also aims to support companies that hire individuals on the autism spectrum by training employers on inclusion. "We don't want it all to be on the individual [with autism]," the foundation's founder and president Francesca Dansereau said. "We need a proper work force environment. And the environment, at this point is, I think, the next step."

Career development is just one area the Social Tree Foundation targets. Dansereau and her team seek to implement a holistic approach to improve the quality of life of autistic individuals. Dansereau says they focus on the person's physical health, psychological well-being, level of independence, social interactions, personal beliefs and the characteristics of their environment. There are several programs within the Social Tree Foundation that address each sphere.

Labrèche also takes advantage of the social events organized by the foundation and says he enjoys the community he's found. "For those of us in the foundation," Labrèche said, "we really don't feel abandoned because Patricia and the others at the Social Tree are really there for us." The foundation has an open-door policy so if members step away for a time and decide they want to return for support they will be welcomed back. ■

For information, visit www.thesocialtreeautism.org.

Another book for Lachapelle

by *Wendy Singer*

Benjamin Lachapelle's paintings and picture books immediately captured the interest of *Inspirations'* Entrepreneurial Award sponsor Henry Zavriyev. They were the reason behind his choice of Lachapelle as the Spring/Summer 2022 recipient of the award.

On August 25, Lachapelle, along with his mother Julie Chou, met Zavriyev via videoconference to celebrate the award and receive his prize. Zavriyev will cover a portion of the publishing costs of Lachapelle's new softcover picture book titled *Pace-Ants*, which is now available for purchase on Amazon.

Zavriyev was curious to learn more about Lachapelle and *Pace-Ants*, so the 20-year-old author treated him to a book reading. Zavriyev was both impressed and touched by the picture book, which whimsically features various animals who explore the virtue of patience. "Your book is amazing," said Zavriyev to Lachapelle. "Aside from it being sweet and beautiful, it will be an excellent teaching tool."



Julie Chou and Benjamin Lachapelle (top) show the cover of *Pace-Ants* to Henry Zavriyev (bottom) on a videoconference call on August 25.

Chou explained how passionate her son is about animals and the environment and how he uses his art to cope with the stresses of life. "When Benjamin finds out that an animal has gone on the endangered species list, he paints his heart out. Art is his way of coping and destressing." ■

Galileo Adult Education Centre's SVI program continues to expand

by *Jordan Stoopler*



Alejandro Percopo exercises patience, precision and concentration to assemble driller toggles in the Work Preparation Class at Galileo on October 4.
Photo: Luciana Franceschini

Nancy Leopardi's day-to-day tasks at the non-profit foundation Friends 4 Cause consist of assembling baskets comprised of speciality Italian products, which are later sold at the Montreal-North boutique. All profits from store purchases are donated to local charities and causes, including the English Montreal School Board's Galileo Adult Education Centre, where Leopardi is a student.

Leopardi takes great pride in giving back to the community, but also appreciates the recognition shown to her by her employers.

"We are like a family over there," she said. "It may be small, but they are all really nice people. They don't look at me as if I have a learning disability; they look at me as a person. That makes me happy."

Leopardi's job at Friends 4 Cause came about thanks to Galileo's Sociovocational Integration Services program (SVI). She, along with 60 of her peers all aged 21 years and older, develop work, communication and social skills throughout the hybrid program. Students split their time between on-

site internships, work placements and the classroom, where they share their personal experiences at their respective workplaces and continue to refine the skills needed for such positions.

"What they learn in class is put into practice in their internships," said Michel Massé, work integration teacher of the SVI program at Galileo. "Those 21 years and older have access to less and less services. It's important to develop skills and ultimately transition to working life. They need to be validated outside of the classroom and most importantly, that they [be] happy."

Massé first began work on the program in October of 2016, eventually integrating three SVI students in individual internships the following March. The program has since continually expanded year after year, with 12 students currently in individual internships with another three at group internships located across three workplace sites. Massé is confident five of his students can one day achieve paid employment, and this, within the next two to three years.

"The SVI program has completely changed the atmosphere of the school," he said. "I have students coming up to me asking if they can work another two to three days a week. They are confident in themselves."

Leopardi says she has learned maturity, punctuality, how to act responsibly and appropriately at the workplace, as well as the value of taking initiative on the job. She has even begun helping fellow students integrate and adapt to their new responsibilities at Friends 4 Cause.

"Initially, I was nervous about joining the work program," she said. "Slowly, I got used to it. Now, I love coming to work. I am helping out the community by doing my part. I feel important." ■

Galileo SVI students currently intern at Home Depot, Café Brossard, Canadian Tire, Maxi, Friends 4 Cause, Prostyle, and Promo21. Massé is in search of additional contracts from local companies willing to integrate students into their job sites. Please contact mmasse@emsb.qc.ca if you are interested in having your company participate in the program.

Podcaster hosts neurodiversity awareness event

by *Randy Pinsky*

On September 12, podcaster Melly Moore of The ADHD Melly Show hosted the first edition of the Neurodiversity Awareness Event with a complement of speakers, some of whom are neurodiverse.

Presented both in-person at Centre St-Pierre and online, Pierre Bissonnette from Neuro Plus, management consultant Haeila Vroye and founder of Kändea consulting, Melissa St-Louis shared their personal journeys and discussed challenges in the workplace and accommodation requests.

"For a long time, I was scared to be who I truly was...fearful of what people would think about me," shared Moore. "But that's finished now. I have decided to accept my diversity."

Moore has made it her mission to open up the discussion about mental health through weekly podcasts and has over 6,000 followers on LinkedIn. She shares struggles many neurodivergent individuals grapple with, such as a lack of viable opportunities. "It's harder for me. I need to make 1,000 times more effort to get a result."

Speakers validated the experience and shared their own insights. While commonly associated with autism, neurodiversity also includes Attention-Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and dyslexia. Through widening the understanding, more may find services for their particular situation.

"Normal is overrated," joked Vroye in her presentation, noting, "If something from my journey resonated with you, then I've done my job."

Finding employment can be difficult for those who identify as neurodiverse, who often seek accommodations for issues such as social anxiety, noise distraction or multitasking. It is thus critical to "know ourselves to be able to vocalize our needs," Vroye said.

"The world has always run for the majority...so it's not always adapted to us," she continued. "It's always on our shoulders to try to pass as neurotypical, and it can be exhausting."

St-Louis described how neurodiverse individuals must also contend with misrepresentations in shows such as *The Big Bang Theory* and *The Good Doctor* featuring overachieving, socially-awkward autistics. Beyond reinforcing stereotypes, "biases are a critical roadblock to inclusion," she noted.

She observed how a lack of diversity representation and "arc-free unidimensional caricaturing" contribute to misconceptions and hint that accommodations would be time-consuming and financially draining. Challenging "about us without us" also includes hiring neurodiverse actors. "We need to do better," St-Louis reinforced.

"People have to understand we can't just take our identities off at work and leave them at the coat check," she quipped. "We need to work towards neuro-inclusion and stop wasting talents."

Sponsors included Kändea, the Attention Deficit Disorder Association and Blue Sky Learning. ■

Next edition is May 1, 2023 at Centre St-Pierre. Tickets can be purchased at www.theadhdmellyshow.com/neurodivergent-event-in-montreal.

Le RAPLIQ, un organisme qui fait une réelle différence

par Joëlle Grundman

RAPLIQ (Regroupement des activistes pour l'inclusion au Québec) offre ses services à toutes personnes en situation de handicap, et ce, quel que soit le handicap, à l'exception de troubles de santé mentale ou déficience intellectuelle modérée ou profonde, pour la simple raison qu'il s'agit de limitations complexes pour lesquelles nous ne possédons pas l'expertise nécessaire. Nous préférons donc les diriger vers un organisme compétent en la matière.

L'association a été fondée en 2009 dans le but, notamment, d'inciter les propriétaires et gestionnaires des cliniques médicales et dentaires, les commerçants et toutes places d'affaires, les écoles, églises, maisons d'hébergement pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale, sans oublier le transport (adapté, bus réguliers, métro), à rendre leur établissement universellement accessible. L'accès à des établissements ouverts au public est un droit fondamental prescrit par la *Charte des droits et libertés de la personne* en vertu de l'article 15.

M. Steven Laperrière, directeur général de l'organisme, a commencé à s'intéresser à la politique municipale en 2011 et à l'occasion de sa rencontre à l'Hôtel de ville de Montréal avec Linda Gauthier,

présidente du RAPLIQ, il a été renversé d'apprendre que le réseau du métro de Montréal ne comptait que huit (8) stations accessibles par ascenseur sur soixante-huit (68). Ce fut une incroyable révélation pour lui. Bien qu'il ne soit pas lui-même en situation de handicap, il se sent victime de discrimination par ricochet : « *En côtoyant des personnes en fauteuil roulant, je me trouve face à des situations où la personne en fauteuil ne pourra pas accéder à l'endroit où ensemble nous voulions aller. Il faut toujours s'organiser à l'avance pour trouver un endroit accessible et favorable, pour tous, à une rencontre* », déplore M. Laperrière.

M^{me} Gauthier explique que RAPLIQ fait face à plusieurs enjeux : en transport, que ce soit par bus, métro, transport ferroviaire ou aérien, il se peut que l'accessibilité favorise certaines personnes handicapées au détriment de d'autres. De plus, elle ajoute qu'une étude menée par le RAPLIQ auprès de cliniques et hôpitaux du Centre de dépistage désigné (CDD) par le ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux (MSSS) révèle que 52 % des femmes en fauteuil roulant se voient refuser l'examen de mammographie, sous divers prétextes surréalistes, et ce, même si ladite clinique est universellement accessible. Les cabinets de dentistes et tout immeuble

abritant des professionnels en dentisterie devraient se mettre au pas et exécuter des travaux de mise en accessibilité.

« *Puis, à l'échelle provinciale, 50 % des commerces et places d'affaires ne peuvent pas accueillir des personnes en fauteuil roulant. Souvent, les préjugés sont à l'origine de ces « refus d'accès* », volontaires ou non et, qui plus est, cette inaccessibilité est souvent systémique », d'ajouter M^{me} Gauthier.

Les gens consultent le RAPLIQ pour diverses raisons. Par exemple : refus de faire passer certains examens médicaux, refus d'obtenir un logement vu leur situation de handicap. Des familles ont également fait appel au RAPLIQ lorsque leur enfant a été refusé dans une école spécialisée, sous prétexte que sa place n'était pas à l'école, mais à l'hôpital. Pour M. Laperrière, « *défendre les droits des personnes handicapées n'est pas un travail, mais une mission au quotidien* ».

Le RAPLIQ est un organisme important puisqu'il apporte de vrais changements. De plus, il est le seul à assister en défense individuelle, à la grande fierté de ses membres. Le RAPLIQ a aussi accès à une banque d'avocats spécialisés.

D'autre part, le RAPLIQ encadre régulièrement des groupes d'étudiantes



Linda Gauthier au porte-voix, entourée d'elle, des militants et sympathisants et à l'arrière des policiers, lors de la manifestation du RAPLIQ pour démontrer l'inaccessibilité du métro. Courtoisie du RAPLIQ

et d'étudiants de trois universités montréalaises dans le cadre de leur formation en travail social. Ainsi, les difficultés que rencontrent les personnes handicapées sont exposées aux étudiantes et aux étudiants qui pourront apporter des changements significatifs au sein de la société actuelle. ■

Pour plus d'informations, visitez www.rapliq.org.

Fairmount hotels embracing autism in partnership with Giant Steps

by Jordan Stoopler

Recently, two Fairmount hotels, The Queen Elizabeth in downtown Montreal and the Fairmont Tremblant, began a pilot project in collaboration with Giant Steps School. "There are 8,000 job openings in the hotel industry right now, with many hotels forced

to close off entire floors due to staff shortages," said Andre Pereira, director of marketing and communications & project manager for employment initiatives at Giant Steps, last June. "This program is a way of tapping into a new profile of employees that they may not have considered in the past, who may be able to help them fill some of the positions as part of the labour shortage right now," he said.

Read the full article here: <http://www.inspirationsnews.com/inspirations/articles/fairmount-hotels-embracing-autism-in-first-of-its-kind-partnership-with-giant-steps>



www.inspirationsnews.com

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Adam's P.A.C.E. shares their news



Adam's P.A.C.E. (Performance, Action, Community, Effort) students were recently tasked by their teacher, Natalie Henri, to write an article for *Inspirations* about their program. Henri showed her students the publication and pointed out the different steps involved in writing a news article. Their assignment was to include a personal angle in their article. To read samples of their articles, visit www.inspirationsnews.com. Seen here, from left: Donnick Patrice, Johnny Viron, Paige Nimis, Matthew Delellis, Sarah Bouchard and Charles Gkeivelopoulos. Photo: Natalie Henri

Aspis Rencontres : des rencontres hebdomadaires au combat politique

par *Estelle Morissette*

Créé en février 2022, l'organisme à but non lucratif Aspis Rencontres a pour objectif de faire une différence dans la vie des personnes ayant un trouble du spectre de l'autisme (TSA). L'approche concrète, terre à terre et créative qu'adoptent dans leur administration le président de l'organisme, Sylvain Bernier, ainsi que son vice-président, Jean-Gabriel De Bané, leur permet d'intervenir auprès des membres de manière beaucoup plus personnalisée que ce qu'ils auraient pu imaginer lors de la création de l'organisme. Leur vécu en tant que personnes ayant un TSA ajoute une touche singulière à l'organisme étant donné la compréhension qu'ils éprouvent envers la situation des membres.

D'une part, les rencontres hebdomadaires, dans leur tout nouveau local aménagé à même l'église Saint-Jean-Berchmans, ne sont qu'un exemple des activités qu'offre l'organisme afin de permettre à la communauté autiste de se rencontrer, de socialiser et de s'entraider. Toutes les personnes adultes, ayant ou non un TSA, peuvent participer. De plus, un service

de garderie est nouvellement disponible pour rendre les rencontres plus facilement accessibles aux parents. À l'ordre du jour, toutes sortes d'activités sont planifiées en passant des cours d'arts martiaux et des jeux de société au théâtre et à diverses formations.

Leur Salon des artistes, des artisans et des entrepreneurs autistes, tenu le 26 août dernier, a permis de mettre en valeur les talents et le minutieux travail de 21 exposants vivant avec un TSA. « Tous les exposants ont vécu des choses extraordinaires lors de l'événement », s'est exclamé Sylvain Bernier en expliquant comment le salon représentait une occasion en or pour les exposants de se faire connaître, eux, leur art et/ou leur entreprise, mais aussi de sensibiliser le public aux réalités auxquelles font face les personnes autistes.

D'autres événements sont à venir : le 26 novembre prochain aura lieu leur gala où toutes sortes de prestations sont prévues, notamment une chorégraphie du célèbre danseur Eddy Toussaint, mais

aussi des prestations humoristiques, des spectacles de chant et de karaté, et plus encore.

D'autre part, « les revenus générés par la publicité faite dans le bulletin mensuel par les événements, par les dons de différents députés ainsi que par les campagnes de sociofinancement sont réinvestis afin de venir directement en aide aux personnes autistes, en plus de financer les activités hebdomadaires », de renchérir Sylvain.

L'organisme est ainsi en mesure de soutenir financièrement les personnes autistes en aidant, entre autres, celles qui souhaitent obtenir un permis de conduire et qui, par conséquent, doivent déboursier de leurs poches près de 500 \$ supplémentaires pour effectuer une évaluation en ergothérapie obligatoire.

Un autre exemple de soutien financier apporté par l'organisme vise l'une de leurs membres nécessitant un chien d'assistance MIRA : elle n'a pas pu obtenir la subvention annuelle de 2 500 \$ habituellement offerte aux personnes non voyantes pour

subvenir aux besoins du chien, vu certains critères d'admissibilité nébuleux. « Sans le soutien d'Aspis Rencontres, elle aurait eu à sacrifier ses propres besoins alimentaires pour prendre soin de son chien accompagnateur », rapporte le président.

En ce moment, il est possible de soutenir l'organisme notamment en se procurant des billets pour le tirage d'une peinture de l'artiste Patricia Dy, vivant elle-même avec un TSA. Aspis Rencontres a acheté cette toile au prix de 500 \$ pour soutenir financièrement l'artiste et amasser des fonds au profit de l'organisme.

En somme, il y a dans le soutien social et financier qu'apporte l'OBNL un combat politique contre l'isolement, le rejet, la discrimination et la souffrance économique des personnes ayant un trouble du spectre de l'autisme, qui permet d'alléger le poids des limites auxquelles elles sont souvent confrontées. ■

Pour plus d'informations, composez le 514-775-1016 ou consultez la page Facebook d'Aspis Rencontres : www.facebook.com/Aspis-Rencontres-108200348462012.

Lethbridge-Layton-Mackay Users' Committee recruiting

by *Nicole Proano*

In a bid to better represent people with a physical or intellectual disability, Lethbridge-Layton-Mackay Rehabilitation Centre (LLMRC) invited its users to participate in the Users' Committee membership elections, which took place during its annual general assembly held by videoconference September 14. It was the biggest turnout in years, according to the committee's interim president, Joanne Charron, which she credited to moving the meeting online.

One of the committee's functions is to make recommendations on how LLMRC services

can be improved and made accessible for individuals with different disabilities. It is also called on for consultation, on occasion, for initiatives within the greater CIUSSS West-Central network.

Charron said they are currently being asked for feedback on the development of an app designed to help patients navigate the Jewish General Hospital. "We get to have input in these things," she said. "When they're advising the government or are making requests to the government, we get to be consulted, because we represent the most vulnerable in the network."

Up to 15 members can form the committee. According to Users' Committee interim vice-president Diane States, membership currently lacks representation from the Deaf community. "We need people to be part of the committee because this is what's going to help our sites," States said. She added that while it can take a long time to see results on a particular issue, taking part in a project that is seen through to completion is very gratifying.

The committee also exists to inform LLMRC users of their rights, what services they are eligible for and to assist in filing

complaints. "We can assist them in writing the complaint," States said. "We don't do the work for them, but we help them to follow through with the complaint."

The committee is formatted with real-time captioning and ASL interpretation to accommodate people with different impairments. ■

To reach the Users' Committee by email: userscommittee.llmrc@ssss.gouv.qc.ca or by phone: MAB and Mackay sites: 514.488.5552, ext. 2023; Constance-Lethbridge site and Satellite Centre: 514.487.1891, ext. 234.

Self-care: The antidote to compassion fatigue

by Janet Perlis and Despina Vassiliou

As parents or guardians, we give much of our energy to care for others. However, to be able to continue to do so, we need to replenish our stores of energy by taking care of ourselves and engaging in activities that nourish us. Self-care refers to things we can do on a regular basis to promote physical and mental health.

It includes employing regular maintenance and preventive tasks to address the stressors we face. We ensure our cell phone is working optimally by recharging it; we must do the same for ourselves. We do not only engage in self-care to be stronger ourselves, but to be able to care for our children and others. If we do not strengthen ourselves, we will not be able to care for those who need us the most. Therefore, self-care can be described as the antidote to stress or compassion fatigue – caring for others until we are depleted. There are a few steps we can take:

Step 1: Build a repertoire of activities that are calming, soothing or relaxing. There are four types of self-care: (a) Physical: exercising, eating and sleeping well; (b) Emotional: finding something to laugh about, being able to say no to requests; (c) Social: connecting with friends and family, avoiding isolation; and (d) Spiritual: engaging in religious activities or turning inward

and engaging in self-reflection. Every person benefits from one or a combination of them. It is a very personal choice.

Step 2: Practice. Engage in routines from your repertoire that promote self-care. By doing so daily, we strengthen ourselves emotionally and physically so that when a stressor does come up, we are more fortified. Much like doing exercise helps strengthen our muscles, engaging in self-care activities helps us build strength physically and emotionally.

Step 3: Identify the signs of stress such as feeling tired, snapping at family and friends, being indecisive, coping with changes in sleep or appetite, suffering from headaches or stomachaches or not being able to concentrate on tasks. As soon as we feel any of these things, there is something wrong and we must take action to care for ourselves. With younger children, teach them how to identify and label these feelings and coach them in self-soothing techniques.

Step 4: Adjust routines to make time to care for ourselves. When stressors come into play, the first thing we do is abandon our own self-care because everything else seems to be more important. However, balancing a stressor with a self-care technique helps us re-charge our battery to be able to face

whatever challenge has been placed in front of us. If we have a stressor like a heavy workload, we may have to remind ourselves to eat something, take a break, have a bath or go for a run – something that helps us re-centre ourselves. What we choose will likely depend on the situation and the time we have, but simply taking a moment (for example, a few seconds to practice breathing exercises) may be enough to help us get through the next step.

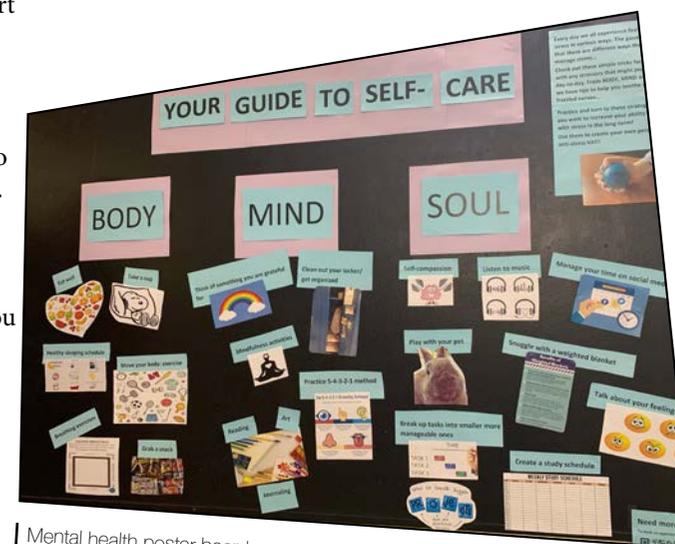
Step 5: Seek help before things become too overwhelming. Reach out to a friend, family member or to a professional, such as a therapist, to help support you.

Self-care is a sign of strength and self-respect, and it is an opportunity to model this to your family. We hope that we have inspired you to find ways to engage in self-care to continue to be the best you that you can be. ■

Janet Perlis, M.Ed. and Despina Vassiliou, Ph.D. are psychologists with the English Montreal School Board.



Mental health poster board created by LINKS student Kayla Ungaro in May.



Mental health poster board created by Vincent Massey Collegiate students in May.

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Youth Mental Health Awareness Week explores self-care with creativity, song

by *Jordan Stoopler*

This past May, English Montreal School Board (EMSB) students participated in Youth Mental Health Awareness Week. Coordinated by the EMSB's Student Services Department's Mental Health Resource Centre (MHRC) and its Spiritual and Community Animation Service, it was designed to encourage ways of self-care, with a special focus on how to connect with others. It ran in conjunction with Canada-wide mental health initiatives.

During the week, students were invited to share their best self-care tips. A special emphasis was made on how to connect with others, all the while taking the time to care for themselves. Many of the tips were displayed on school bulletin boards at Elizabeth Ballantyne and Willingdon elementary schools, LINKS High School and Vincent Massey Collegiate, among others.

Elizabeth Ballantyne, Westmount Park and Roslyn elementary schools took part in musical workshops led by award-winning singer/songwriter Rob Lutes. Students were charged with writing a song that might lift their spirits up or someone else's.

"Songs reflect the human experience," said Dr. Despina Vassiliou, school psychologist and the coordinator of the MHRC. "The

workshop allowed students to explore the ways in which songs can be helpful in coping with life's difficulties."

Jessica Wilson, spiritual and community animator, who coordinated the initiative for several EMSB schools, described Lutes' mental health workshops as educational and innovative. "We have all been told that music heals the soul, but to see it come to life in the students was incredible," she said. "The students were engaged and invested in learning about the history of song writing. They then came up with their own meaningful and relevant lyrics. The songs they created about mental health were nothing short of inspirational!"

Alison Lydynia's Grade 5 class at Elizabeth Ballantyne wrote an inspirational track

aimed at letting others know they are "not alone" in their respective problems. The song encourages listeners to "go outside" or "scream and shout," in an effort to put your problems aside.

"It was phenomenal," raved Lydynia. "All the students were very engaged!"

Meanwhile, Westmount Park students in Sandra Petrucci's Grade 5 class came up with an ode to a treasured lost pet.

"After two years in the pandemic, we all needed to refocus on ourselves and reconnect with others," said Vassiliou. "Self-care skills are critical in helping us manage difficult situations, which make us resilient and strengthen our mental health." ■

EMSB student leaders participate in Headstrong mental health summit

by *Jordan Stoopler*



Laurier Macdonald students working on the Headstrong project, from left: Grade 7 students Chahd Kassem and Astrid Gapmann, along with Grade 9 students Danika Paulauskas and Sienna Conte.
Photo courtesy of Laurier Macdonald High School

"Be Brave! Speak Up! Reach Out!" Such chants emanated from nine English Montreal School Board (EMSB) high schools in October as they took part in the Headstrong summit. The virtual program, offered by the Mental Health Commission of Canada, aimed to spread awareness and reduce stigma and stereotypes often associated with mental health.

Throughout the three-day summit, students from Royal Vale, Royal West, F.A.C.E., Westmount High, Marymount, John F. Kennedy, Rosemount, Lester B. Pearson and Laurier Macdonald high schools heard the personal stories of individuals who have dealt with and recovered from mental-health-related challenges and participated in activities and workshops related to mental illness and stigmatization. Sessions took place over tea and chocolate, with Play-Doh and colouring kits also available to students throughout the program.

"The summit gives student leaders the confidence and tools to champion mental health initiatives in their school commu-

nity," said Victoria Della Cioppa, project development officer for School Climate within the Student Services Department at the EMSB. "The summit aims to inspire youth to spread the word about positive mental health through powerful stories of resilience and stigma-challenging activities that they take part in throughout the week."

"I wanted to speak up for other people," said Eva Rybakov, a Grade 10 student. "I don't want people to feel alone."

"Schools don't typically make it a priority to discuss mental health," said Grade 9 student, Eliane Goldstein. "They talk about special hotlines and guidance counselors, but nothing to motivate others to ask for help. Even if you are just feeling a little bit sad or alone, it's still good to seek help."

While the summit may have only officially lasted for three days, its impact will carry on throughout the school year. Each of the individual school's Headstrong summit participants will take part in monthly meetings as they work to develop an action plan

for their school that will encourage others to seek help. "With this initiative we make a conscientious effort of letting students know that resources are available to them," said Dr. Despina Vassiliou, school psychologist and the coordinator of the MHRC.

For student Chahd Kassem, it was important for her to learn more about mental health not only for herself, but for those around her. "When I am older, I want to be a therapist," said the Grade 7 student. "I also have a couple of friends who suffer from mental illnesses."

"The ongoing and long-term actions are created by youth for their peers, having a greater impact on reducing negative attitudes and increasing empathy," said Della Cioppa. "Therefore, the scope of the summit extends beyond the students who participated to reach the entire school population, which makes it an important initiative to participate in."

"People need to know they can get help and that they are not alone," said Kassem. ■

How to instill healthy media consumption in youth

by *Victoria Della Cioppa*

It is no surprise that the rise of social media has infiltrated our daily lives. This occurrence is especially true for youth, who are growing up in the digital era. It has never been more important to have open and ongoing conversations with our children about healthy media consumption and its effect on mental well-being.

There are many positive aspects to screen-time, a point that I hope brings reassurance to caregivers. The Internet provides youth with opportunities to become socially engaged and informed citizens; it allows them to find a community of like-minded individuals; and it gives them the ability to stay connected with friends and family. According to the Canadian Pediatric Society in a 2019 article “Digital media:

Promoting healthy screen use in school-aged children and adolescents,” in fact, recreational screentime of one hour per day is associated with lower levels of depression compared to no screentime. Negative aspects occur when youth spend vast amounts of time on their devices and/or engage with inappropriate content.

The Canadian Pediatric Society defines acceptable recreational screentime as no more than two hours daily for children ages 6 and up. Constantly being on social media can contribute to feelings of alienation and social exclusion (UNICEF, 2019), most notably FOMO or the “fear of missing out,” where individuals perceive others as having richer life experiences. The comparison of self to others may lead to self-esteem problems. Moreover, according to Lauren Hale and colleagues in a 2018 paper, youth who keep their devices in their bedrooms overnight are often awakened by notifications, meaning both less and worse sleep, which can affect general mental health and

brain development. Therefore, how can we help youth navigate the digital world?

Primarily, adults must have conversations with young people about social media usage. Dinner time, car rides or while doing household chores are perfect opportunities to have difficult conversations with youth as they feel less pressure to have the right answers. Older youth may benefit from conversations about quality versus quantity screentime. Help young people to make explicit why they choose screentime: is it to learn something? To interact with friends? Or to take a break? Remember, most reasons are valid, but the quantity is what changes the benefits. A ten-minute social media study break is acceptable, while 40 minutes is not.

Try co-viewing with your children – watch their favourite TV show, listen to their favourite music or play their favourite video game with them. Not only is it important to spend time with them doing something

they enjoy, but you can also use this time to ask questions that help them think critically about the media they consume.

Find opportunities to encourage fun screentime alternatives, which do not feel like punishment. Activities like family board game nights, bedtime routines or special dinners can be “media-free times.” Designate media-free locations, especially in the bedrooms, resulting in the charging of devices in a common room of the house. Younger children may benefit from creating a “First Device Contract,” where adults and children write their expectations as a condition of having a personal device. Even though adults believe their children are not watching them use their own devices, they are. It’s important to role-model appropriate and positive behaviours for your child. Lead by example. ■

Victoria Della Cioppa, M.A., is project development officer – School Climate for the English Montreal School Board.

Sleep, play, emotional check-ins ease transitions

by *Stéphanie Paquette*

Parents of school-aged children have recently undergone a transition: the transition from summer to school. For some, their youngest humans have undergone a significant life transition and started pre-Kindergarten or Kindergarten. This big step can contribute to a variety of emotions for children and parents alike.

I was completely sidelined by my child’s integration into kindergarten. His difficulty separating from me triggered my own anxious reactions, leading to tumultuous morning goodbyes and epic evening meltdowns. After an agonizing week, I integrated and implemented knowledge from my training as a mental health professional

with my own child. The suggestions listed below are helping my family find an equilibrium and are contributing to a happier, healthier and calmer home environment.

Adjust the sleep schedule: A long and restful sleep will help ease your child’s emotional dysregulation, as well as your own. They may be transitioning from a daycare, where afternoon naps were the norm. They are adapting to a new physical space, meeting new people and adjusting to a new routine. This is exhausting for them. Getting them to bed earlier will support their emotional, physical and cognitive development.

An earlier bedtime is also great for your mental health! When you have time to wind down, you can relax, organize the family space and engage in activities that nurture your well-being.

Be emotionally responsive: Validate your child’s experience and acknowledge that change can be difficult. Integrating storytelling, both from books and your own personal experience, regarding periods of change, can lead to meaningful conversations about why change happens, how we experience it and tips on how to navigate it.

It is healthy to acknowledge your own difficulties with change, and model strategies that are emotionally responsive towards yourself. Naming your emotion is a great start, along with taking a moment to pause, tune in to where the emotion is situated in your body, and engage in a practice that helps lessen the intensity of the emotion.

Relieve after-school overload: Children’s senses have been stimulated all day and by the time they get home, they may be ready to unleash all their pent-up emotions.

Exercise, play or a few minutes of one-on-one time engaging in a preferred activity are healthy ways to re-connect with your child after time apart. This is also an opportunity for you to tune in to your child’s emotional state and your own.

At any time, parents anywhere in Quebec, can contact LigneParents’ professional counsellors by telephone with questions or to discuss situations. This service is free and confidential. Telephone: 1.800.361.-5085 or chat: ligneparents.com. ■

Stéphanie Paquette, MSW, is a social worker with the English Montreal School Board.



by *Nick Katalifos*

Board-wide initiative encourages respect and empathy

The topic of mental health is the concern of many these days, and different sectors of our society are striving to achieve a better mental well-being for patients, family members, friends, students. The English Montreal School Board (EMSB) is no exception.

For most, “school” is a place of learning, accomplishing, making friends – a place where the youngest to the oldest students feel safe, cared for and enlightened. To create this type of place takes an incredibly dedicated group of people: teachers, support staff, administrators, school secretaries and caretakers – people who have the best interests of our students in mind, who take care of them and the buildings they go to every day. They are also our family members, friends, neighbours and colleagues – and can have struggles of their own.

Living through a pandemic has taught us some hard lessons. But we come through it with one we can celebrate, which is that we’ll never turn back from taking care of mental health – our own and that of those around us. And it starts with the smallest gestures of civility: addressing the person who answers the phone politely, behaving with self-control when faced with a difficult situation, employing ways of working with

each other that are open-minded. Just as children absorb those behavioural gestures at home, so do our students absorb a culture of respect when they are at school. As a society, we are likely to see a betterment to mental well-being if we can practise civility and be caring to ourselves and others.

At the end of the day, it’s our students who thrive, in all aspects of health, if “school” is a place infused with positivity and respect. This is one reason why we launched our board-wide Respect campaign.

We have learned that we must continually strive to look after one another, provide support early on and make our resources known and accessible. We are proud to announce that in December, we are launching an online, on-demand resource for our employees that will include extensive expert education and advice on a variety of subjects including well-being, life skills, guided meditation, breathing exercises and more.

This platform, called Lifespeak, will complement our existing partnership with Lifeworks and the Employee Assistance Program.

We are also providing mentoring/coaching services for our in-school administrators, with particular emphasis on principals who do not have a V.P.

The board is supporting the Recognition Committee, which acknowledges the work of our employees who have gone above and beyond.

I am pleased that *Inspirations* is folding in the focus on mental health and look forward to many informative editions moving forward. ■

Nick Katalifos is the director general of the English Montreal School Board, board member of the Transforming Autism Care Consortium and special advisor to Inspirations.



by *Joanne Charron*

When my son protested

The expanding focus of *Inspirations* to include mental health topics got me thinking about my own experiences with my son and what I have observed within our population – and there are many.

Whether it be behavioural, questioning your own mortality, trauma or anxiety, the list goes on. There is also the lack of support and education for our community on how to deal with and offer services to our population given all the barriers, one being communication, if they are non-verbal. Trying to find services is an exercise in futility and leaves us as parents to come up with ways to support our children through their difficulties. This must change but as parents we cannot wait. I have many stories I can share from my own experiences, but I can only pick one for this article.

All parents must deal with certain issues regardless of a disability or not. Children have limited capacity to express themselves. It’s even harder when they are non-verbal, so they usually express themselves through their behaviour. Sometimes when we think

we are helping them we are actually hurting them, and all they really want is connection. This was a lesson I learnt from my son and the story I wish to share: “When my son protested.”

My son who is heavily handicapped and non-verbal is my first child. After giving birth to my third, I was worried and felt bad that I was not giving him enough time and that I could no longer give him my 100-percent attention, so I got help to care for him. Things were okay in the beginning, but then the protests began. He became agitated when he came home from school. Then it started that he didn’t want to eat. I was starting to wonder what was going on. Then, he started wanting to go to bed as soon as he came home. I was trying to figure all this out and was at a total loss because he could not tell me what was going on.

I knew this could not go on any longer and that I had to do something drastic and soon because this was no way to live. He was obviously suffering. So, I stopped all my help from coming to the house – and then he went back to himself. I came to realize that I guess he felt that I was pawing him off on other people. I realized that he did not want all of my attention, that he just wanted to be around 100 percent of the time and be a part of everything going on in the house even if it meant waiting his turn. He is a selfless and proud older brother, and he wanted to perform his role! If he had not protested, I would not have known, and I thank him for this lesson. ■

Joanne Charron is the president of The C.A.R.E. Centre and special advisor to Inspirations. Contact her at charronjoanne@gmail.com.



by
Steven Atme

A sign of hope through *Precious Memories*

Last Fall, I was deciding on plans to commemorate the “Special People Have Dreams” 10th anniversary. During that time, I received calls regarding two boys with autism, whom I’ve known since they were little. When the parents and social worker mentioned certain incidents that happened at school, and especially hearing a mother’s agonized voice echoing in my head, I was hurt, angry and outraged.

These boys are extremely gifted, bright, talented, ambitious, determined and perseverant. Their schools either discouraged them in pursuing goals when they were asked, “What do you want to do in the future?” or they were impatient because of their different learning paces.

It was at that moment that an idea came to mind: Make another film, a short documentary! The film is titled *Precious Memories: A Decade in the Making*. It began in January 2022. I gathered archival footage, filmed around specific areas in Montreal and my office, sharing stories behind my “Special People Have Dreams” speech and how it influenced others throughout 10 years. One different approach was looking straight at the camera and talking as though having a conversation with someone. No script. No rehearsal. Strictly personal.

A month and a half later, the 26-minute film was completed. On May 7, 2022, I held a VIP Fundraiser Premiere on Zoom with 50 people attending. We raised \$1,000! A major success on both ends – the film and

funds raised. Three weeks later, I went to Starlight Children’s Foundation Canada to donate the money. Why Starlight? Like parents, the organization works with their heart and loves all individuals and families in spite of everything they face. Their devotion and commitment to brightening days through activities and constant visits, and making dreams come true sets an example of what society needs.

This project was challenging and personal. By sharing my memories through images, videos, original compositions and messages in this film, you’ll witness an evolution of not only one person but all people and society. I hope after people watch *Precious Memories* that everybody and everyone can shine like starlight to create their own precious memories. ■

You can watch *Precious Memories: A Decade in the Making* on Steven Atme’s Facebook page or order a copy on DVD.

Steven Atme is a pianist and composer, gives private piano lessons and is a public speaker, enlightening on his experience growing up and living with autism. Contact him at atmepianosphd@hotmail.com.



The Starlight Children’s Foundation Canada received their cheque in May. Photo: S. Atme

Advertorial

Technology makes homes smarter, safer and sensory-friendly

by *Ben Levine*



Ben Levine showing a new Kohler shower faucet at a trade show on November 1. Photo courtesy of Levine Bros.

As the world seems to be advancing in technology and we, as a population, seem to be inundated with sensory overload, there has also been advances for those who have sensory sensitivities. In the plumbing industry many products have been created and updated in a manner that can be extremely beneficial for those with specific sensory requirements.

With new technologies the “smart” home has now moved into the bathroom and kitchen. The smart shower enables the user to adjust the temperature to within a degree. There is no more guessing if the water has reached a desired temperature. Now you can be alerted on your phone when your shower is exactly how you like it. You can even turn your shower on from your phone so by the time you enter the bathroom the shower is ready for you to your specifications.

The toilet can also be modified for those who are sensory sensitive. Kohler and

Toto have created toilets that have heated seats as some individuals are sensitive to the cold (they also help increase the speed of bowel movements). A bidet can be added to the toilet as well for individuals who don’t like the feel of toilet paper (the temperature of the outgoing water can be adjusted to individual preferences).

For individuals that are sensory seeking you can now add coloured lights to your bath and shower. You can even have music playing underwater in your bathtub or have it coming from your showerhead. Some systems allow you to add an aromatherapy component to it by adding essential oils to the showerhead adding the sense of smell to showering.

When it comes to the kitchen, Moen has introduced a Smart faucet that can be set to a specific temperature and volume. This can be controlled by your voice, an App, touch, or manually. It even has a hand-washing preset, turning on briefly

to wet your hands followed by a 20 pause for soap, then water continues for optimal washing time.

The days of noisy garburators are long gone. Now users can put in a “quiet” garburator that uses increased level of insulation and tighter seals to block the noise level coming from their machine.

As the evolution of technology continues to advance in the plumbing industry, so to are the sensory experiences these products provide, making fixtures more accessible to those with individual needs.

Levine Bros. Plumbing has a long history of taking care of its customers – let us help you make your home safer and more accessible.

Ben Levine is the president of Levine Bros. Plumbing.

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New arts program launches at Miriam Foundation this Fall

by *Anita Szabadi-Gottesman*

Set to launch in November is the Recreational and Therapeutic Arts Centre as part of the Gold Learning Centre at the Miriam Foundation. A newly dedicated, fully appointed 4,000 square foot space at the Miriam Foundation's Ferrier St. location in the city's west end will serve as the creative hub for the Centre.



The Arts Centre's ground level hosts the visual arts activities, music and dance studio, a lounge area, kitchen, cleaning area and storage room. The mezzanine is equipped for digital storytelling and theatre. Photo: Ranya E. Saad

Part of the Centre's offerings includes a new creative arts program. It will focus on several art forms, which will be rolled out in three phases throughout three semesters serving over 40 students. "We are so proud to highlight that the program is the first and only one providing an art-based educational and therapeutic curriculum for autistic and intellectually challenged adults in Montreal," said the Centre's program coordinator Ranya Saad, who is also a PhD candidate, art educator and mixed media artist.

Saad explained that the program is run as an inclusive space reaching out to the greater community. "Our overriding goal was to look towards the construction of a safe environment focused on a creative, inclusive space allowing for self-expression, social interaction and personal growth for our students," she said.

The program will run for two-hour sessions of six students and one educator twice a week for a three-month semester. Instructors are educators specialized in education, art education or art therapy and have a minimum of two years' experience working with autistic adults.

The addition of the arts centre continues the mission of the not-for-profit Miriam Foundation to provide services to the autistic and intellectually challenged in Montreal. It was established in 1973.

The Fall session begins with visual arts including painting, mixed media and photography. November adds music and dance, and January introduces improvisational theatre, drama and digital story telling.

"My passion for the arts was the starting point as it was with Charles Bitton, and together with his family, we commenced the journey of fundraising for the Centre," said Warren Greenstone, president and CEO, Miriam Foundation. ■

For more information: www.miriamfoundation.ca/en/innovation/creative-arts.html.

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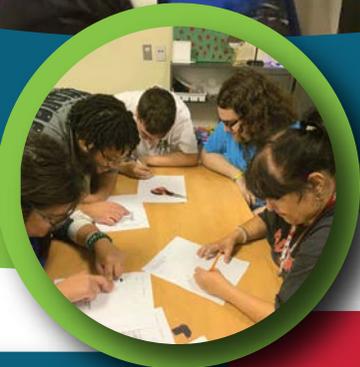
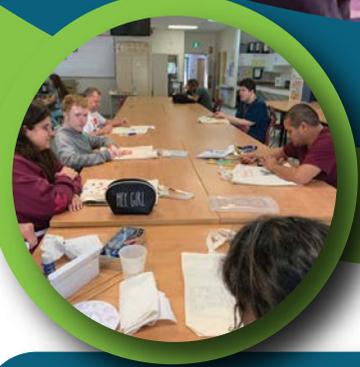
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The forest as your classroom

by *Randy Pinsky*

A four-week nature camp for kids, teens and young adults was the exciting next step of a pilot project launched by Giant Steps School in 2021.

“At first, it was hard to convince my daughter to try it out because it did not involve an iPad,” laughed mom Julie Kristof, reflecting on the Forest School initiative. “But the whole experience was really quite wonderful.”

Launched by Giant Steps’ director of Innovation and Special Projects, Thomas Henderson, the camp developed from a week-long discovery in nature that began last spring. The Forest School educational model challenges the conventional concepts of education and advocates for child-led and explorative learning outdoors. Henderson observed this is particularly

valuable for autistic youth, who tend to be overprotected and thereby lose out on many formative experiences. Through climbing, hiking, staring at the sky and enjoying the elements, youth developed a connection with the ever-changing yet peaceful natural world around them.

As stated by Henderson, “taking risks is very important and playing in the mud and rain can be super fun!”

Each week welcomed a different age group, with participants coming from both Giant Steps and the wider community. Base camp was Angrignon Park with Friday field trips taking place off the island of Montreal. With a roughly 1:2 staff-to-participant ratio, parents could feel reassured this was a safe yet free space.



Youth at Giant Steps Forest School learn how to make a fire with Thomas Henderson, director of Innovation and Special Projects. Photo: Giant Steps

According to *Autism Parenting Magazine*, being in nature and engaging in explorative play encourages curiosity, adaptability and self-reliance. These skills are particularly critical for autistic individuals who often struggle with change. Rather than be evaluated on how well they completed tasks, Henderson noted, campers had to solve challenges, be it building a fort or doing an art activity. While for many this was a very new experience, “we found there were some full-on engineers out there,” stated Henderson, with skills they might not have otherwise known they possessed.

At its core, the Giant Steps Forest School (an approach in which Henderson is certified through the Child and Nature Alliance of Canada) is based on the principles of freedom, trust and reciprocal relationships. In starting and ending each day with a message of gratitude, “participants connected with the land, themselves and with the others around them,” observed Henderson,

especially in workshops led by Kahnawake Elder Kevin Deer.

More and more schools are seeing the value of incorporating the outdoors into their curriculum. “This approach has the potential of being transformative for both adults and kids,” Henderson said. “Everyone intuitively understands the importance of outdoor learning and play but don’t or can’t apply it.”

When Giant Steps moves into its new location in Rosemont, students will visit a nearby wooded area during regular school days.

“The energy was so pure and beautiful, everyone felt included,” reflected Kristof.

“Nature as a classroom provides a full sensory experience better than any sensory room I’ve ever seen,” said Henderson. ■



As the parent of an 8-year old son living with mitochondrial disease, I go to bed every night and wake up every morning with a pit in my stomach, tears in my eyes and fear about an uncertain future. Liam has shown great courage during his ongoing battle with Mitochondrial Disease. He is my hero, and he is a true warrior!

Mitochondrial disease is a group of disorders caused by dysfunctional mitochondria. It can affect multiple systems in the body including the liver, kidneys, pancreas, brain and digestive tract. Symptoms can range from mild to severe, involve one or more organs and can occur at any age.

The Liam Foundation funds research and clinical trials for many children like Liam, who suffer daily from this horrible disease. Every donation helps the Mito-warriors, and gives them a chance at living a better and longer life!

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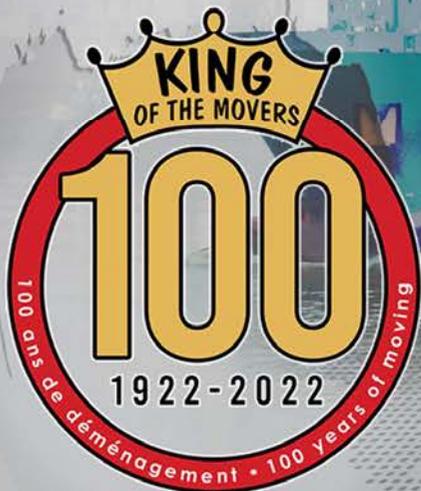
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Music therapy and zotherapy a hit at Peter Hall

by *Jay Jones Doyle*

The students at Peter Hall School have had something special since January 2022. During COVID, the school's administration applied for, and received, special funding from the Quebec government to pilot two new programs at their school: a music therapy program and a zotherapy program.

"The impact of both programs on our students is magnificent," said Valérie Arsenault, principal, Côte-Vertu Campus of Peter Hall School.



Student at Peter Hall celebrated Saint Patrick's Day by playing Irish songs on the autoharp with music therapist, Katie Komorek. Photos courtesy of Peter Hall School

Peter Hall's music therapy program is run by Katie Komorek at the Côte-Vertu Campus, whose boundless energy, creativity, musical prowess and dedication have combined to make for a music therapy experience that is nothing short of TV-worthy. During the pandemic, Komorek took it upon herself to record videos of her lessons for her students so that they could continue benefitting from home during lockdown periods. This was extremely well received by parents, many of whom have reached out to express their gratitude, according to Arsenault. I was lucky enough to participate in one of these classes and I was simultaneously blown away by, and not surprised in the least by, how the students gravitated to Katie's infectious joy for teaching. Funding for the program has been renewed for this school year.

The zotherapy program has also been a tremendous success. In addition to being very helpful in teaching communication and emotional regulation, it's also useful for students with family pets to learn the practical skills needed to care for animals

at home. This has translated into some students being able to take on more responsibilities as well as stimulating relatable conversation points. A particular success story that emerged from the program was that of a student new to the school, who was having trouble integrating. The process of leaving her old school had resulted in feelings of abandonment and rejection, and so she was continuously expressing that the new school was going to "throw her out/get rid of her." When she started to interact with the animals, the teachers and administration indicated that "a whole new student emerged," and the impacts were extremely positive, Arsenault explained.

"To see a student blossom during zotherapy or participating with his group for the first time during musicotherapy are moments that we really cherish and shows us the full potential of our students," said Arsenault. ■

Jay Jones Doyle holds a B.A in psychology, Master's in business, and is the executive director of Capitals Hub Canada. He enjoys mentoring, backwoods canoe camping and is the proud father of a Dawson student. And he has cerebral palsy.

A personal experience



Zackary Pratt-Mac Nicol, left, and Mithusan Sivalingam discovering zotherapy with Lili the dog in January.

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Summit students and Maimonides residents meet at the café

by *Anita Szabadi-Gottesman*



From left: Café employee Onder Doogun; Lisa Kasner, Maimonides development officer; Thomas Saviolidis, job integration specialist; and *Inspirations*' podcast host Mark Bergman at the Ethel and Morty Fruchter Summit Café at the Donald Berman Maimonides Geriatric Centre in May. Photo: M. Bergman

The doors swing open promptly at 8:30 am at the Ethel and Morty Fruchter Summit Café at the Donald Berman Maimonides Geriatric Centre. The crew of students from Summit School has been there since early morning prepping for the residents, caregivers and staff arriving to enjoy a cup of coffee, muffin or freshly made sandwich at the fully appointed café.

Operational since March 2022, the café is part of the Transitional Educational Career Centre (TECC) program, run through the Summit School network and led by vice-principal, Josh Cunningham. It's part of Summit School's Work Skills Program, which serves 100 students between the ages of 16 and 21, propelling them to graduate from Summit and go on to work in various businesses throughout the greater Montreal community. "Working at the café is a unique opportunity for our students, providing a whole experience truly running a business from all aspects," said Cunningham. "From stocking, prepping, serving and running the cash, our students learn to run a business from start to finish."

Customers are enthusiastically greeted by the students alongside their Summit School job coaches, Cathy Perez and Thomas Saviolidis. "The program serves 11 students with three to four students working each day, Monday to Friday," pointed out Cunningham. "While learning and acquiring a myriad of life skills, students are also completing stage hours and required competencies to graduate with a government certificate."

For Cunningham and his team watching the students integrate into the Maimonides community, they witness relationships developing between the students, residents and staff. "The opportunity for our students to work at the café truly provides a whole overall experience while simultaneously building each participants' confidence along the way." ■

Listen to our podcast on the Summit Café here:
<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/welcome-to-the-summit-caf%C3%A9/id1481355086?i=1000561662301>



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Have you listened to our podcast? Our host is Mark Bergman, Montreal media personality and radio host and *Inspirations*' manager of marketing and outreach, and his podcasts are engaging, entertaining, informative and diverse.

"The *Inspirations* News Podcast is a chance for the special needs community to have their voices amplified and help make the world a more inclusive place, one episode at a time," shared Bergman. "I'm inspired every day by the incredible parents, kids, and professionals who join us on the show, and promise that you will be as well!"

It is now easier than ever to access our podcast! Search "Inspirations News" on your favourite podcast app (Apple, Google, iHeart Radio, Buzzsprout and more) or listen directly from our website. Enjoy!



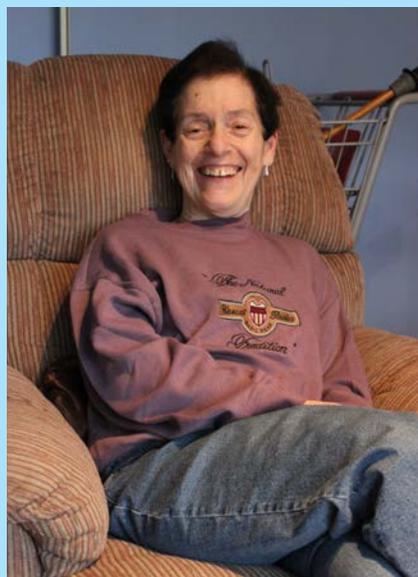
From left: Steven Atme, Mark Bergman and Fareed Gul recording a podcast at the English Montreal School Board in February 2020.

'Knowledge is power.' Database shares over 500 resources

The English Montreal School Board's Database of Special Needs Resources is hosted on the *Inspirations*' website. It is accessible to all, and frequently consulted by professionals, educators, families, caregivers and people with special needs. With just a couple of clicks you can search for resources by section, be they for therapy, recreational activities, vocational, camps and respite care or financial services and more.

Our exceptional volunteer, Fay Schipper, has meticulously revamped and has been updating the database for many years. "I am very pleased with what I have produced. Our database is very informative. It covers a wide spectrum from A to Z," she said.

Schipper recognizes that parents are overwhelmed and don't know where to turn, and is happy to support them by keeping the database current. She fondly recalls one father thanking her for her work. "My son went to a sum-



Fay Schipper, taken at her home in Côte Saint-Luc on October 13. Photos: Wendy Singer

mer camp that he really enjoyed," he said. "Without the database I wouldn't have known about it."

"Knowledge is power," said Schipper. "One hand helps the other hand."

Consult our database at www.inspirationsnews.com and click on Special Needs Database.

If you have a resource to share, email info@inspirationsnews.com.

Readership survey supports new direction

In the month of June, *Inspirations* conducted a readership survey to identify your interests and concerns. We asked what topics you find most helpful, and if content on the topic of positive mental health would be of interest and benefit to you.

Your feedback has provided us with invaluable direction in the areas of both special needs and positive mental health, with some pointing out how the two topics intermingle. One parent expressed, "Caring for a special needs child is all about mental health."

We thank you for taking the time to complete our survey, for your encouraging words and valued feedback. We have taken note of your suggestions in order to address them in future editions. If you have comments to share, email us at info@inspirationsnews.com.

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accessiBe's Non-profit Partnership Program provides their basic accessibility features at no cost to non-profits that serve people with disabilities. Special thanks to Sheldon Lewis from accessiBe for bringing this to *Inspirations*.

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As the MNA for D'Arcy-McGee and as the mother of a special needs child, I have so much admiration for the schools and staff that work tirelessly to help these young people to achieve their abilities. As a society and as a community we need to work together to make sure that all of our children have the opportunity to go to school and be kids.

En tant que députée de D'Arcy-McGee et en tant que mère d'un enfant ayant des besoins spéciaux, j'ai beaucoup d'admiration pour les écoles et le personnel qui travaillent sans relâche pour aider ces jeunes à atteindre leur plein potentiel. En tant que société et en tant que communauté, nous devons travailler ensemble pour nous assurer que tous nos enfants ont la possibilité d'aller à l'école et d'être eux-mêmes.



ELISABETH PRASS
MNA FOR / DÉPUTÉE POUR D'ARCY-MCGEE



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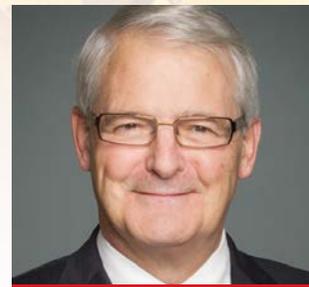
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FAYÇAL EL-KHOURY

MP / Député
Laval–Les Îles

Faycal.El-Khoury@parl.gc.ca
(450) 689-4594



HON. MARC GARNEAU

MP / Député
Notre-Dame-de-Grâce–
Westmount

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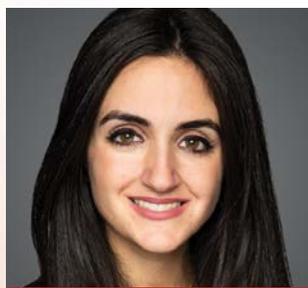
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ANTHONY HOUSEFATHER

MP / Député
Mount Royal / Mont-Royal

Anthony.Housefather@parl.gc.ca
(514) 283-0171



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MP / Députée
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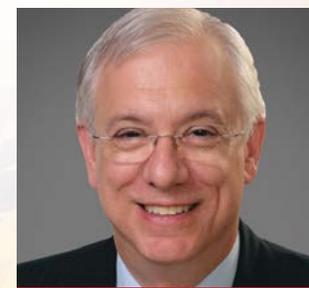
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PATRICIA LATTANZIO

MP / Députée
Saint-Léonard–Saint-Michel

Patricia.Lattanzio@parl.gc.ca
(514) 256-4548



FRANCIS SCARPALEGGIA

MP / Député
Lac-Saint-Louis

Francis.Scarpaleggia@parl.gc.ca
(514) 695-6661



SAMEER ZUBERI

MP / Député
Pierrefonds–Dollard

Sameer.Zuberi@parl.gc.ca
(514) 624-5725

Camuka Transport adds wheelchair-accessible van to fleet

by *Nicole Proano*

Camuka Transport added its first wheelchair-accessible van to its fleet this summer, giving wheelchair users in Montreal a new, flexible transportation option. With plans to include more wheelchair-accessible vehicles, including one more by as early as next spring, Camuka's cofounders hope to provide reasonably priced rental services to people from different communities and abilities.



A wheelchair accessible van.
Photo courtesy of Camuka Transport

The company was founded by brothers Gift Tshuma, Paul Tshuma and family friend Sobekan Pushparajah. Gift and Paul, who are both wheelchair users, recognized the need and decided to start the company to address the gap. Gift Tshuma said the initial idea was to start a car rental company solely made up of wheelchair-accessible vehicles. When they realized these specialized vans might be difficult to maintain financially, they decided to include standard cars and vans in their fleet. Now, one year into the company's inception, the company rents seven regular vehicles and one wheelchair-accessible van. "Having an accessible vehicle was very important to us," Tshuma said, "because there's only actually one other company [that offers this service]."

The rate for Camuka's wheelchair-accessible van is \$90 a day. Renters must make their bookings online on the Turo car-sharing app. Those who require assistance in making their reservation are invited to contact Camuka by email, Zoom or phone. "It can be a barrier for some," he said, "so we just try to make that process as easily accessible as possible."

According to Tshuma, wheelchair-accessible van rentals offer a flexibility and spontaneity to people with limited mobility that cannot be matched by public transit or paratransit services. Not all the STM's metro stations are fully wheelchair accessible, and each paratransit trip must be booked in advance. Paratransit is also notorious for being late. Tshuma said the more accessible people with reduced mobility have to accessible vehicles, the better quality of life that may create for them.

The term "Camuka" means community in Tamil, which is a value at the centre of the business. Each of the company's cofounders was raised in first-generation immigrant families, who witnessed the power of community growing up. "We wanted to continue that legacy through opening up this business as well," he said. All the vehicles were acquired through personal invest-



Gift Tshuma. Photo: Sara Anjanie, Aphronoir |

ments sourced mainly from the cofounders, but also from friends and supporters, and they welcome support from the public in any capacity. ■

For information, visit
<https://camukatransport.ca>



by *Mike Cohen*

Report from Parliament Hill

Federal government appoints first ever mental health minister

As we introduce the expansion of our mandate here at *Inspirations* newspaper to also focus on mental health, I thought it would be interesting to share with readers the fact that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau appointed Carolyn Bennett as this country's first ever minister of Mental Health and Addictions after the last election, September 2021.

Dr. Bennett was first elected to the House of Commons in 1997 and re-elected in eight successive elections, representing Toronto-St. Paul's. She previously served as minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, minister of Indigenous and

Northern Affairs, and minister of state for Public Health.

Prior to her election, she was a family physician and a founding partner of Bedford Medical Associates in downtown Toronto. She was also an assistant professor in the Department of Family and Community Medicine at the University of Toronto. Her fight to save the Women's College Hospital of Toronto inspired her to enter politics.

"Working in family medicine you hear about people's difficulties everyday," Bennett said in an interview published on the Mental Health Commission Canada's

website. "I remember seeing executive reports come in, knowing the patient was struggling with family problems and other issues, but none of those things were included. Someone's cardiogram or body mass index doesn't paint a full picture of how well that person is."

She added that such a disjointed approach contributes to the stigma around mental illness. COVID-19, she remarked, has provided a new opportunity to make a change for the better. "With COVID, people have gotten better about admitting when they're struggling," she explained. "If even one out of every two people can speak up when

their mental health is deteriorating, it will reduce the stigma and we'll be in a much better position to address the issues long term.

"We aim to have a mental health strategy that everyone can see themselves in. That will mean looking to national standards and establishing minimum expectations to build on," she explained. "Out of that, we'll ensure that money meant for mental health goes to mental health through transfers, and collect more research and data in the process. Understanding those outcomes will be critical in making the best decisions in the future." ▶ *Continued on p. 32*

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◀ Cont'd from p. 31

Report from Parliament Hill

Working with the minister of Health, and with the support of the deputy prime minister and minister of Finance, Bennett has been tasked with expanding the delivery of high-quality, accessible and free mental health services, including for prevention and treatment. Some other goals include: implementing a three-digit suicide prevention hotline, introducing a new fund for student mental health that will support the hiring of new mental health care counsellors, improve wait times for services, increase access overall and enable targeted supports to Black and racialized students at post-secondary institutions across Canada, and support the minister of Veterans Affairs to ensure Canadian Armed Forces members and veterans have access to adequate mental health resources, services and training programs.

Last May, the final report of the Expert Panel on Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID) and Mental Illness was tabled in Parliament and released publicly. The panel made 19 recommendations "laying out a broad set of principles that could structure the practice of MAID for persons with a mental disorder or where concerns may arise related to incurability, irreversibility, capacity, suicidality, and/or the impact of structural vulnerability, regardless of diagnoses," according to a government of Canada July press release. "We understand the importance of ensuring that our government moves forward with MAID for persons with a mental disorder in a way that is respectful of their autonomy, but also grounded in compassion," said Bennett. "The Expert Panel's recommendations support our objective of having a safe and consistent approach to accessing MAID, regardless of one's medical condition. We are committed to implementing them in a way that reflects our commitment to freedom of choice for people in Canada."

Disability benefit bill reintroduced

The federal government has reintroduced legislation to create a monthly benefit payment for working-age Canadians with disabilities. "The purpose of this law and this benefit ... is to reduce poverty and create financial security for working-age Canadians with disabilities," said minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Carla Qualtrough.



Carolyn Bennett |

She added that children with disabilities can get support through the Canada Child Benefit, and seniors with disabilities can access Old Age Security and the Guaranteed Income Supplement, but working Canadians have been left to fend for themselves. "We're changing that," she said. There are concerns as to when the bill will become law. Jane Deeks, spokesperson for Qualtrough, said in a statement that alongside the legislative process to create the Canada Disability Benefit, the government has to work closely with the disability community to inform the benefit's design, work that is "well underway."

Renovation update

The restoration of Centre Block on Parliament Hill, which started in 2019, continues. A trompe l'oeil has been installed on Centre Block as masonry work continues through 2022 and beyond, allowing visitors to get a sense of what the building looks like behind the tarps. In the meantime, a "temporary" House of Commons has been constructed in the West Block and a "temporary" Senate chamber is in the former train station next to the Rideau Canal. Free guided tours of these architecturally impressive spaces resumed in May. I took a nice walk outside Parliament over the summertime to view a photo exhibit placed on billboards, providing a nice history of the property and our country. The walkway is completely wheelchair accessible. In a promotional video for the new Parliament Welcome Centre, currently under construction, it is strongly emphasized that the complex will indeed be very accessible for those with mobility issues. ■

Putting emotions into words: Speech and language centre offers new kits this Fall

by *Razan Khobieh*

Research has shown that more than 80 percent of students with emotional and behavioural difficulties also have significant unidentified communication needs, according to the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists. These needs go unrecognized because they are often masked by challenging behaviours, which can occur because the student is struggling with:

- Understanding what others are saying
- Explaining their actions clearly
- Having limited vocabulary to express their feelings
- Joining a conversation, taking turns, asking to share a toy or join in play, or other areas of social communication.

Speech-language pathologists help support students with their communication needs to improve their social emotional well-being. This Fall, the Centre of Excellence for Speech and Language Development

(COESLD) is providing kits to the pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten classes in some EMSB schools to help children of this age be healthy socially and emotionally.

These kits are designed to help students recognize, understand and find better ways to cope with their emotions. Some children feel stronger emotions than others and have a harder time dealing with them. They may not know how to express how they feel if they haven't learned the vocabulary. It is important to validate our students' feelings and teach them the vocabulary so that they can truly express themselves. We can then work together to find productive and healthy ways to help them manage their emotions.

Each kit includes several books and toys. The books also have extension activities that can be used before, during and after reading the book. Finally, strategies on how to promote language skills are provided.

The launch

The kits were distributed in November to the English core and bilingual schools that have pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten classes. Currently, the books are in English, and the hope is to make them available in French as well in the future.

A Q&A virtual session was being planned for mid-January to answer questions from teachers regarding the kit and its use. The team at COESLD is always open to feedback on the activities in the kits and, in collaboration with the schools' speech-language pathologists, are available for follow-up sessions and any support needed. ■

Razan Khobieh is a speech-language pathologist at the English Montreal School Board, and coordinator at the Centre of Excellence for Speech and Language Development. The kits were prepared by Razan Khobieh and speech-language pathologist Amanda Hajaly.



Photo courtesy of R. Khobieh |

Terminology can be a personal choice

by *Tania Piperni*

Inclusivity is at the forefront of our current culture. The messages we are taught about being kind, respectful and treating others as we want to be treated, apply to everyone, and particularly those with special needs and their families. The way we address and describe one another is a large part of inclusivity that is garnering much attention, and rightly so.

We notice that over time language evolves and shapes our perception of the world. Terms commonly used years ago are no longer acceptable, and even within our own communities there are differences of opinion. So, we continue to raise awareness

about the different types of language we can use when talking to or about people with disabilities. We want to strive to avoid terminology that is exclusionary or not representative of the wishes of the person being addressed.

According to the *United Nations Disability-Inclusive Language Guidelines*, published as part of its Disability Inclusion Strategy launched in 2019, one perspective on inclusive language is the “people-first” approach, where emphasis is placed on the person and their humanity rather than on the disability, illness or diagnosis. This is achieved by placing the words in a certain order. For example, it suggests saying, “a student with autism” rather than “an autistic student” or “a person with an intellectual disability” rather than “an intellectually disabled person” or “a child with dyslexia” rather than “a dyslexic child.” Many academic

journals and government documents have adopted this approach in an effort to be more inclusive.

However, not everyone prefers the people-first approach. Some may wish to be addressed by using “identity first” terminology. For example, some people on the autism spectrum may prefer the term “autistic,” for example, “an autistic adult.” In the Deaf community, this approach is generally favoured over people-first terms, according to the US government National Library of Medicine, for example being identified as “Deaf” or as a “Deaf person.” Members of that community feel strongly that their positive cultural identity aligns best with identity-first terminology.

The best way to address someone appropriately is simply to ask them which term they prefer or to listen to how they refer to themselves. A 14-year-old boy on the

autism spectrum told me he prefers not to be labelled at all and would rather conceal his diagnosis when initially meeting people. Steven Atme, a man on the autism spectrum, told me this, “Every individual has rights as to how they wish to be addressed without feeling labelled. I never liked being addressed as autistic. There’s no right or wrong answer as long as people respect and understand their wishes. After all, we’re human.”

Words matter. Terminology is important but being respectful is of the utmost importance. We celebrate diversity by removing barriers so everyone can fully participate in conversations and daily activities. ■

Share your thoughts with us at info@inspirationsnews.com.

Tania Piperni M.Ed is an autism spectrum disorder consultant at the English Montreal School Board.

Transitioning to high school: The path unknown

by Sarah Lynch

Starting high school is an exciting and daunting experience for both families and students. It entails saying goodbye to some childhood friends and teachers, and leaving behind the familiar setting of elementary school. It also marks an important step in the journey towards adulthood.

For parents of children with special needs, this transition is an emotional milestone to celebrate as we continue our journey along a different, unmarked path.

As a mother of a 12-year-old son with a moderate intellectual disability in the context of Down syndrome, our journey has included a series of turns, obstacles, triumphs and heartache. I often fought back tears listening to other parents discuss their child's "typical" path to high school. Discussions often focused on how inconvenient it was to write various entrance exams to elite programs or how

their children learned how to take the train or bus with ease. We related to the stress of these experiences because we had lived them with my older son. However, taking the journey with a special needs child is a completely different, at times isolating experience. I often remained silent, wishing that I could share the same concerns and worries.

We prepared my son for high school in ways that were important and unique to his needs. Although he is not capable of taking public transportation to school, we still celebrated his hard work while on his school bus, when his harness was removed. He started high school with pride as he learned how to shower independently and accepted to have his first-ever haircut at the barber. He came home from school and began to do homework on his own, focusing on writing his full name and trying to write a sentence with support. He accepted a new snack for his lunch, slept the whole night in his bed and expressed his love for his crush. Most importantly, he got himself ready, got dressed, organized his bag and complied when we wouldn't let him pack Nerf guns

for the ride to school. I am overcome with emotion as I watch him leave each morning, acting like a true pre-teen as he heads for the back of his bus without waving goodbye.

We need to celebrate the successes of all families while being gentle towards others that are following a path that no one prepared us for. Although our children will always have challenges, their individual accomplishments need to be valued by others and recognized for their significance. As I continue to listen to others speak about the high school honour roll or the stress of looking into CEGEPs, I can't help but feel blessed as I take my son's hand and continue this journey together, without a roadmap, and look forward to what lies ahead. ■

Sarah Lynch is special education consultant at the English Montreal School Board and coordinator, Centre of Excellence for the Physically, Intellectually, and Multi-Challenged.



A look of pride on Kian's face as he receives his first haircut in August. Photo courtesy of S. Lynch

Pediatric Low Vision Clinic simulates classroom

by Wendy Singer

On September 21, the Lethbridge-Layton-Mackay Rehabilitation Centre (LLMRC), a part of the CIUSSS Centre-Ouest, launched its new Pediatric Low Vision Clinic at its MAB site in NDG. Funded by the Habilitas Foundation, it consists of a welcoming waiting area with a colourful, engaging and tactile sea-themed mural; an upgraded assessment room equipped with the latest in vision assessment charts, tests and tools; a new blackout therapy room used to assess and work with children with cortical visual

impairments with an array of glowing, dynamic and interactive tools and toys; and an adjoining simulated classroom.

The classroom provides children who are blind or have visual impairments with the

opportunity to learn and practice everything from how to raise your hand in class, master a combination lock, zip up a jacket, and use adapted technology to better see the content on a Smartboard. "It is the first classroom of its kind in Quebec," said Christina Nadon, a vision rehabilitation specialist, with the Youth Program 8-24, LLMRC, Centre CIUSSS Centre-Ouest, while presenting the classroom to guests.

Eight-year-old student Sophia Saghati was on hand at the launch event to explain how she uses a closed-circuit television, which projects magnified images onto a monitor, to see what her teacher displays on the Smartboard and to do her schoolwork.

"This simulated classroom allows us to evaluate these tools in the classroom setting to get a sense of what's going to be really optimal for the child in the upcoming school year," said Nadon. "We often

use the summer as our time to evaluate and work with our kids intensively so they can feel ready come September."

While the clinic aims to provide children with as much self-assurance and autonomy as possible, it also supports the parents. It has been outfitted with books to help them better understand and support their child's diagnosis and journey.

Habilitas Foundation's executive director Theodora Brinckman made clear how important and appreciated donor contributions are. "We are grateful for our donor's generosity and are particularly touched that so many individuals and foundations came together to make this impressive new clinic a reality. The space is a joyful testament both to the importance of the children we serve, as well as to the kindness of those who contributed." ■



Christina Nadon, right, and Sophia Saghati demonstrate how to use tools to enhance vision in the simulated classroom at the Lethbridge-Layton-Mackay Rehabilitation Centre's new Pediatric Low Vision Clinic for children on September 22. Photo: Wendy Singer

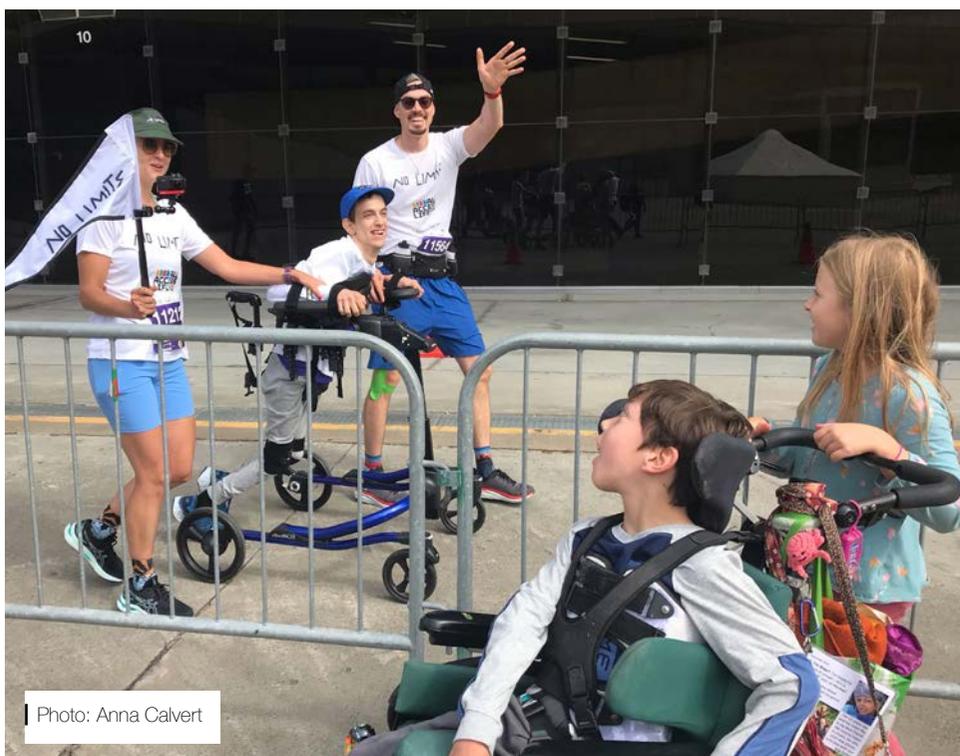


Photo: Anna Calvert

Crossing the finish line of the Montreal Marathon

Bradley Heaven, middle, and **Dan O'Connor**, right, crossed the finish line of the 2022 Montreal Marathon on September 25. Cheering them on were **River Fraser**, 12, a student at Mackay Centre School and his sister **Sky**, 9. Heaven, O'Connor and their team of runners ran the 42.2-kilometers event as part of a fundraising mission to raise money for their non-profit company, All Access Life. The website provides information on the latest trends in adaptive products.

"We strive to provide hope and inspiration by accomplishing this type of major challenge. It is also part of our No Limits mindset, which is all about showing to people that anything is possible with the right mindset. Don't let people define you, set your goals high and conquer!" said Heaven. The pair's goal was to raise \$1 for every meter they ran before the end of October. Heaven and O'Connor were the recipients of the Simon Chang Difference Maker Award in November 2020.

- Kristin McNeill



Photo: Ann Marie Brace

EMSB teacher wins national teaching award

Gail Bernstein, teacher at L.I.N.K.S. High School of the English Montreal School Board, was the recipient of the Prime Minister's National Award for Teaching Excellence in 2022. She was the only Quebecer to win in this category this year among the 10 winners chosen from across Canada. "Her commitment to excellence and advocacy for students with special needs is the pillar to all

our learners and staff at L.I.N.K.S.," said the school's principal **Maria Caldarella**. Bernstein is seen here in October with, from left, (top): students: Joseph Clarizio, Christina Fernando and Alessio Pizzuto; (middle): principal Maria Caldarella; (bottom): Gail Bernstein between students Ashley Heerrelal-Navarette and Zuhair Shahid.

- Kristin McNeill

Comedian Rick Green addresses 'quirky minds'



Photo courtesy of Rick Green.

You may know **Rick Green** as a Canadian comedian, writer, director and producer. He is most recognized for his work on *The Red Green Show*, which began airing in the 1980s and stars Canadian comedian and actor **Patrick McKenna**. Green and McKenna came back into the limelight in 2008 with the production of *ADD and Loving It?!*, a documentary that reflects on McKenna's life with ADHD pre- and post-diagnosis. Both comedians were diagnosed with ADHD in adulthood.

On October 19, Green presented "Making the most of a quirky mind" to the Montreal Centre for Learning Disabilities via videoconference. In his funny and poignant presentation, he spoke about how his ADHD diagnosis has helped him to understand, accept and embrace who

he is. He provided multiple tips, like breaking down tasks into small chunks, making lists and setting a timer to stay on schedule. Green used his sense of humour throughout his presentation, making this a most fun and engaging experience.

Attendees with ADHD commented that the movie changed their lives as it enhanced their families' understanding of them, that they identified with Green's experience, and others left with a deeper understanding of the benefits and challenges of having ADHD.

- Wendy Singer

ADD and *Loving It?! And many other videos* can be viewed on Green's website: www.rickwantstoknow.com.

Celebrating 25 years of adapted sailing

by *Wendy Singer*

The Quebec Adapted Sailing Association (AQVA) celebrated its 25th anniversary at the Chalet Baie-de-Valois in Pointe-Claire on September 10. The warm and jovial evening included mingling, speeches, a delicious array of food, the honouring of volunteers and one incredible surprise.

A volunteer-driven organization, AQVA provides people with physical and/or sensory disabilities the opportunity to enjoy the sport of sailing and the freedom it brings with it.

AQVA founder **René Dallaire**, president of the board of directors **Pierre Richard**, executive director **Geneviève Prévost**, vice-president **Paula Stone** and volunteer **Éric Gouin** took turns talking about AQVA and its volunteers.

The surprise highlight of the evening came when attendees were asked to look out the window into the parking lot. There rested a brand-new Martin 16, a Canadian sail-

boat designed specifically for people with mobility impairments, with the name **Fay Schipper** written across its hull.

“I was ecstatic when I found out that the boat was dedicated in my name. This type of thing doesn’t happen every day!” said Schipper, who has been involved with AQVA since its inception in 1995. At that time, she was working as volunteer coordinator at the Mackay Rehabilitation Centre. She was instrumental in the planning of the AQVA’s Mobility Cup regatta in 2000, and had previously been honoured by the organization when they named the Coupe du Québec regatta winner’s trophy the “Fay Schipper Cup.” Stone explained that the executive committee chose to honour her in a more visible way on the occasion of their 25th anniversary.

“One of Fay’s biggest contributions to the beginnings of AQVA was the use of her incredible ability to motivate people,” said Stone in her speech. “She effectively used



Fay Schipper standing with the Martin 16 that was named in her honour at the Chalet Baie-de-Valois in Pointe-Claire on September 10. Photo: Éric Gouin

her talents to recruit at least 20 of her colleagues to volunteer. AQVA would never have taken off as it did without the contributions of all of these volunteers.”

“Twenty-five years later, the AQVA is still sailing in the wind. We never imagined that

it would grow to become what it is today,” said Schipper. “I feel proud that we started this and that so many people have been able to enjoy the sport because of it.” ■

| *Fay Schipper is also Inspirations’ volunteer database coordinator.*



From left: Vincenzo Guzzo, president and CEO of Cinémas Guzzo; Isabelle Hudon, president and chief executive officer of the Business Development Bank of Canada and guest of honour of Notte in Bianco 2022; Maria Farella Guzzo, honorary chair of the Mgr. Arthur Deschênes Foundation; and Gilles Coulombe. Photo: Pascale Vallée

Notte in Bianco back in a big way

by *Jordan Stoopler*

It may have been three years waiting to happen, but the 13th edition of **Maria and Vincenzo Guzzo’s** Notte in Bianco was well worth the wait.

More than 400 guests, all dressed in white, attended the cocktail and reception soirée at the Guzzo’s private residence in Terrebonne on September 8. The event raised a record-breaking amount in support of the Jewish General Hospital’s Emergency Department, the Imaging Department at the Shriners Hospital for Children and youth mental health initiatives across Montreal. Fundraising efforts were specifically directed this year at those dealing with isolation, depression and other mental health issues stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic.

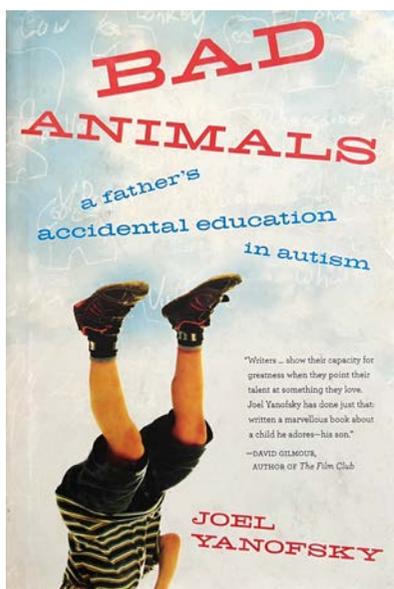
“During the pandemic, our partners dealt with an increased demand for their services, with a reduced influx of funds,” said Maria Guzzo, honorary chair of the Mgr. Arthur Deschênes Foundation. “The needs are greater than ever, since mental health problems facing our young people were exacerbated by the pandemic.

It’s important for all of us to do our part to fund these initiatives to help them, and we are doing our part.”

The event also recognized guest of honour **Isabelle Hudon**, president and chief executive officer of the Business Development Bank of Canada. ■

Honesty, humanity, humour in Yanofsky's *Bad Animals*

by *Roanne Weisman*



When they learned their son was autistic just before he turned four, the world of his parents, Cynthia Davis and the late Joel Yanofsky, turned upside down. Despair was a luxury they could no longer afford, said Yanofsky in a CBC interview. He also described how someone like him, a professional writer, tries to turn private troubles into public betterment, to create increased awareness and empathy, at least for autism. He has done just that in his extraordinary book *Bad Animals: A Father's Accidental Education in Autism* (published by Penguin Group, 2011). Yanofsky was well known as an accomplished writer of fiction, non-fiction, memoir, musical theatre and literary criticism.

The book details the early chaotic years, before Jonah began attending a regular school with a “shadow,” a trained practitioner in Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA, a therapy for children with autism). Most of the book, however, is focused on Jonah's experiences during the fifth and sixth grades. When he was 11, Jonah had progressed enough so that the shadow was no longer necessary, his academic performance had

improved, he was learning Hebrew for his Bar Mitzvah, the tantrums had diminished, and he was working with his father to write a children's book called *Bad Animals*.

This is how the book ends, on a hopeful and positive note, but that is only one part of the whole story. Throughout the entire book, including the preschool and school years, Yanofsky gives parents an unflinching and fiercely honest narrative, filled with humanity, and garnished at the appropriate times with Yanofsky's characteristic razor wit and loving humour.

Throughout the narrative, Yanofsky invites the reader into his mind and deepest emotions. He writes, for example. “The uninspiring everydayness of living with autism, its routine weirdness, its unbearable bearableness, its incremental ups and downs... what so often go[es] unstated. Memoirs skip this part. So, for that matter, do news reports and documentaries...How do you make it clear to readers that you are both coping and not coping at the same time? How can both things be true?” He also tries to explain “the tightrope you walk every day between despair and hope, embarrass-

ment and persistence.” A professional book reviewer, Yanofsky also includes details and opinions about many books on the history and treatment of autism, including interviews with authors.

But even from the depths of despair, Yanofsky offers eloquent kernels about Jonah's growing intelligence, quirky sense of humour and charming personality. We read details about how Yanofsky and his wife juggle the ABA instructions as well as Relationship Development Intervention, a family-based, behavioral treatment model. At the same time, we also learn about Jonah's creative (and persistent) use of knock-knock jokes, his pointed criticism of Dr. Seuss, and his growing ability to understand and use sarcasm appropriately. (When to say “Yeah, right!” for example.)

We're left wanting to know how Jonah has grown up, what he has accomplished, and how he has used the skills, gifts and tools – especially the humour of his late father and the unconditional love of his mother. This book is not only about autism, it is also about what really matters in life. ■

Extraordinary Attorney Woo makes Netflix Top 10 for weeks

by *Ishini Fernando*

Extraordinary Attorney Woo, the South Korean legal drama directed by Yoo In-shik that came out on Netflix this summer, quickly made fans of viewers across the globe. The show follows the story of a brilliant new attorney who is autistic, Woo Young-woo (played by Park Eun-Bin), as she begins her career in law.

Woo gets a job at a big law firm called Hanbada, an exceptional opportunity after struggling to find a job after graduating, despite having been a top student in law school. Woo's socially awkward tendencies and quirks at first make it difficult for her to fit in at her new workplace. She is pushed out of her comfort zone and presented with many challenges as a junior lawyer. However, while her capabilities are initially questioned by her neurotypical colleagues,

Woo Young-woo has great determination, a high IQ, a photographic memory, and an obsession with whales that makes her endearing to those close to her.

While she inevitably faces prejudice in her line of work, she quickly proves her value to the firm and her team with her strong work ethic and unique way of doing things. She makes strides with her creative, out-of-the-box approach to problem-solving, despite struggling with day-to-day interactions with clients and colleagues. Although she eventually forms bonds with her peers as they get to know and understand her, she also makes a few enemies. Episode by episode, legal case after legal case, the audience gets to follow along as the protagonist navigates workplace politics, legal dilemmas, family secrets, new friendships and

even love. The show is entertaining and engaging, and its characters bring light-heartedness to many serious topics.

While the legal drama was a massive hit, having earned its spot on the top 10 in Canada list on Netflix and remained there for weeks, it also garnered some criticism for leaning into stereotypes of autistic individuals often portrayed on television. Many feel that the show missed a great opportunity for education and proper representation. However, *Extraordinary Attorney Woo* still raised a lot of awareness on an international scale, which is no small feat. Due to its immense popularity, the show has already been renewed for a second season. ■

Barrell returns to arts scene with third solo exhibition

by *Jordan Stoopler*

2020 proved to be a trying year for Alana Barrell. The 39-year-old, diagnosed with schizophrenia some 25 years ago, found herself hospitalized on three separate occasions for a total of three months. Once back home, she would sleep for upwards of 18 hours a day, only leaving her bed every now and then for a quick bite to eat.

It was also during this time that Barrell stepped away entirely from painting, a passion she has had since she was 15.

“Because of her cyclical illness, she has her own personal pandemic every couple of years,” said Alana’s sister Liesl Barrell. “If she is unwell, she cannot paint. She can’t touch anything.”

Alana would pick up the paintbrush again last year, producing dozens of new works that were the focus of her third solo exhibition, the “Fabulous Bestiary.” The exhibit, put on as part of the le Centre d’apprentissage parallèle de Montréal (CAP)’s Mental Health Ambassadors Series, featured a wide variety of works, depicting everything from an elephant to birds, a platypus and a dinosaur, among others. CAP supports people living with mental health problems through art and art therapy.

“Part of the thrust of the exhibit is this idea of the bestiary life: the real, the imagined, the combined,” said Liesl. “It tackles schizophrenia and the power of psychosis in terms of this bestiary.”

Many of the smaller paintings originated from the CAP gallery itself, where Alana has painted weekly for a decade. The inclusive space, located at 4865 St-Laurent Blvd., offers alternatives to traditional clinical therapies in the form of painting, theatre, dance and music, among others.

“There were a lot of visitors for this exhibit,” said CAP’s artistic director Xavier Bonpout. “Many visitors came who were interested in the work. Alana is very loyal to us and produces amazing work. We will continue to support her.”

Some of the larger paintings, meanwhile, emanated from her mother’s house.

“My mom is very supportive,” said Alana. “She lets me paint at her home in a small little area. I have my own easel and inks there, as well as all the other materials you can imagine. She helps me sometimes with coming up with ideas or gives her opinion. She has been a good mentor for me.”



Alana Barrell poses in front of her “Birds” painting at CAP Gallery in Montreal, on display as part of her Fabulous Bestiary exhibition. Photo: J. Stoopler

Alana has since moved out of her mother’s home and into the Forward House community living residence in Notre-Dame-de-Grace, marking the first time she has lived without family in her lifetime. She has taken up improv, creative writing, singing and other activities at the residence.

“When she is feeling well and in her element, she unleashes this creativity,” said Liesl. “It is very therapeutic. She is able to process a lot of her emotions. For her, it seemed very motivating to make people feel good and smile through bright colours.” ■

Kristin Govers’ return with *The Awkward Ballerina*

by *Ishini Fernando*

After winning the hearts of audiences with her performances at the Montreal Fringe Festival this year and getting nominations for awards in the Best English Production and Most Promising Emerging Artist categories, Kristin Govers returned with additional shows in September at Salle Pauline-Julien in the West Island.

The Awkward Ballerina – written and performed by Govers, directed by TJ Dawe and presented by Two Left Feet Productions MTL – is about Govers’ own

struggles growing up with spastic cerebral palsy and a dream of becoming a ballerina.

The production is described as a coming-of-age story, one that led Govers to accepting her disability and reimagining her dreams. The autobiographical one-woman show details the hardships she had to overcome from a young age due to her physical limitations as well as relentless bullying she endured for being different. From recounting traumatic memories of being shoved into a garbage can as a child and not being able to get out on her own to

the verbal abuse she suffered as she grew older, Govers does not hold back in sharing heartbreaking experiences of her past and present. We learn that the bullying wasn’t always intentional, but nonetheless impactful. It is not all sorrow, however, as her 70-minute show also describes the joys and triumphs of her youth along with the growing pains.

Rave reviews noted on Govers LinkedIn page, even following her first shows, indicate that Govers is a talented storyteller, able to balance humour and seriousness in

her performances. They make it clear that her touching and raw delivery brings her audience on a rollercoaster ride of emotions, sometimes evoking uncontrollable laughter and other times utter devastation. She is inspiring and motivational in describing her perseverant pursuit of her dreams, all the while remaining honest and vulnerable about the unique trials she has overcome. Through her shows, she seeks to raise awareness about cerebral palsy and the damaging impact of bullying in modern society. ■

by *Jordan Stoopler*

“I was totally inspired and fascinated by martial arts. I joined the club – and the rest is history.”- Anthony Cappello

Anthony Cappello remembers the moment as if it occurred just yesterday. The then-10-year-old had tagged along with his mother and two older brothers on a visit to the Raymond Mourad Taekwondo Academy in NDG in search of an after-school activity for his siblings. He recalls taking a seat on the sidelines and watching the class in astonishment.

“I was just enamored by it right away,” said Cappello, now 31. “I was totally inspired and fascinated by martial arts. I joined the club – and the rest is history.”

Despite being born with shorter arms, a left arm without an elbow and two fingers on each of his hands, Cappello remained undeterred. He enrolled in taekwondo courses at the gym, ultimately earning his green belt before trying his hand at soccer.



However, he was cut from a local little league team at the age of 18, prompting a natural shift back to his first love of taekwondo.

“All the skills transferred seamlessly,” he said. “I was kind of hurt by organized team sports because I felt like I could do way more in soccer. Unfortunately, there is competition between

Para taekwondo athlete gives back to sport

hundreds of players whereas, in taekwondo, it is the individual that has the ability to push themselves to new heights. If you stick to it and dedicate yourself, you can make it anywhere. That really stuck with me.”

Cappello’s dedication to the sport led him to the World Para Taekwondo Championships, where he earned a bronze medal in 2017, as well as a silver medal and MVP award at the 2019 event in Antalya, Turkey.

Cappello was in prime position to represent Canada at the 2020 Paralympic Games in Tokyo, the first time Para taekwondo would be included at the Games. However, a blow to the head suffered at the Para Pan-American Games in Lima, Peru months before prevented him from qualifying. He sought an exemption and wildcard into the Games, but to no avail.

He credits his weekly visits to a sports psychologist, coupled with the support of family and friends with helping him stay grounded during his Paralympic exclusion.

“They helped me a lot,” he said. “My focus turned to staying in shape and keeping to my daily schedule and regimen.”

Cappello’s focus these days has shifted more and more to coaching, out of that same Sherbrooke St. gym he grew up training in himself.

“Coaching has always been a major motivation for me,” he said. “I want to help grow the para-community in Canada. Right now, Canada does not have a ton of athletes for Para taekwondo specifically. I’ve been working with Taekwondo Canada to try to change that. I want to help develop more athletes and show them that this sport can do for them exactly what it did for me.” ■

Alouette an example of perseverance

by *Jordan Stoopler*

Much uncertainty clouded Chandler Worthy’s first seven years in professional football. The return specialist bounced around from practice to main-team rosters, was released outright on five separate occasions and dealt with his fair share of injuries.

Now a regular in the Montreal Alouettes lineup, Worthy is able to put those rough patches into perspective.

“It taught me to focus on what I can control,” said Worthy. “A lot of times, being cut from the team or getting injured are things out of my control. It’s just something

that comes out of life. I chose not to let those moments bring me down, but instead focus on what I can control like studying, working hard, stretching and being a good teammate. I feel that I am the best just because even through those dark times, I kept working and believing.”

First signed by the Houston Texans of the NFL in 2015, Worthy dressed for all of three games before seeing his contract go unrenewed. He signed on with the New York Jets the following year, making it to the tail end of training camp before being one of the team’s final roster cuts.

“After I had made it to the the NFL, I was making a bunch of money, but I was the most depressed I had ever been,” said Worthy. “I didn’t have a purpose. I had worked my whole life and sacrificed everything to get to that pinnacle, but it didn’t bring me satisfaction.”

Worthy joined the Toronto Argonauts of the Canadian Football League (CFL) in 2017, only to be used sparingly as he

dealt with a recurring ankle injury. In all, Worthy was released from the Argonauts organization four times, including for the final time in May 2022, only to be picked up by the Alouettes two days later.

Worthy admits it was not always easy, almost quitting “four, five times,” but ultimately found the silver lining in each setback.

“Even though I wasn’t playing much at the start of my career and things weren’t going the way I wanted them to, I just believed in my heart that if I stayed consistent and kept believing in myself, one day will be my day,” he said. “The beauty of going through those rough times is that it prepares you to be great when your moment does come. If you use those bad times as fuel to keep pushing you, you’ll go so much further than everybody else.”

Worthy is savouring the moment now in Montreal, all the while continuing to reflect upon the hardships of the past.



Chandler Worthy (middle) chats with James Lyng High School Secondary II students, Regan Vitale, left, and Daren Willson Taku Mbame on October 4.
Photo: Mike Cohen

“It is refreshing to have people who believe in you, but I also have to remember when I was at that low point,” said Worthy. “That’s the hunger that keeps driving this engine to never be satisfied. Even though I have had a couple of good returns, I have to do it again and again. Going through those bad times built that core value in me.” ■

Appetite for Ottawa

by *Mike Cohen*

I received such a warm response from readers who were pleased with previous articles on Ottawa restaurants. Just over two hours away from Montreal, the nation's capital has grown in popularity among many of us.

Zak's Diner

Mark down Zak's Diner as simply a fun place to eat when in Ottawa, with locations at Byward Market, Elgin Street, Carleton Place and Kanata.

The Byward location is open 24/7 and offers all-day breakfast, unbeatable burgers, sandwiches, world famous milkshakes and much more. Zak's is noted for its burgers, so the Zak Attack looked like a good option: Two patties with bacon, swiss cheddar cheese and thousand islands dressing. All burger meals are served with coleslaw, a pickle and either fries, curly fries, soup, salad or onion rings. I had both the curly

fries, along with garlic mayo for dipping, and a piping hot bowl of tomato bisque soup. And no, I could not finish everything on my plate. I was delighted to learn that they have a lactose-free milkshake option, so I went for the banana chocolate flavour with a nice serving of whipped cream and a cherry on top. In fact, you get the equivalent of a full second serving as well so there is plenty to share.

The Byward Market location is wheelchair accessible. Call ahead of time and they will make a ramp available for indoor dining. The patio is at street level. Washrooms via Zak's Cantina next door are also accessible.

Info: www.zaksdiner.com.



Iconic Al's

Located on Elgin Street, Al's Steakhouse was established in 1967 by the late Halim "Al" Saikali. The restaurant seats 130 inside, 80 in a private banquet room and 80 on the beautiful seasonal outdoor patio.

We began with some drinks. The menu has a wide array of appetizers. I started off with a piping hot bowl of chicken noodle soup. Some freshly baked rolls, with soft butter, arrived at the table. Then the sharing began: Escargots au Gratin, with in-house garlic butter; a dozen outstanding P.E.I. oysters with different sauces; a burrata salad for two, including heirloom tomatoes, extra virgin olive oil, house balsamic, fresh basil, Maldon

sea salt and crispy pieces of French bread; and tuna tartare, served with avocado, pickled radish, Asian dressing and crispy wontons. The ladies shared a 14-inch rib steak, cooked to perfection and already sliced, with a side of mashed potatoes. I chose the 12-ounce New York strip, which was to die for. On the side I ordered some garlic rice. And yes, we saved just enough room for some of their homemade desserts. We shared the lemon tart and the coconut cream pie.

The rear entrance from the parking lot is fully wheelchair accessible, as are the seasonal patio and the washrooms. Curbside pickup is also available.

Info: www.alssteakhouse.com.

Métropolitain Brasserie

Conveniently located next to the Byward Market at 700 Sussex, just steps away from Parliament Hill, Métropolitain Brasserie is home to Ottawa's largest raw bar. Open seven days a week, serving lunch, dinner and brunch on weekends, we had a wonderful summer Saturday evening dinner on their spacious patio.



We started off the evening with some drinks and then took a good hard look at all of the options available among the appetizers. Some breads, rolls and butter and an order of outstanding mushroom Flatbread, with spinach, ricotta, Gruyère and truffle oil, started things off. Then came one of our favorites: a seafood platter for two (which was more than enough for three): shrimp, oysters, mus-

sels, snow crab, cod croquettes and scallop crudo. This could have been a meal itself. I savoured every morsel. There is a larger platter for four available.

There is a nice selection of main courses. The Duck Confit caught my eye, an item I do not see available at too many restaurants I frequent. It was superbly prepared, with crispy skin and served with warm fingerling salad, roasted peppers, grilled onions, black olives, fresh basil, apricot harissa toss and lime crema. As for the others, they opted for the steak frites petit (five ounces), heart of Angus ribeye and maître d' hotel butter and Coquille St. Jacques, with seared scallops, mashed potatoes, wilted spinach, Mornay sauce, melted Gruyère and toasted Panko bread crumbs.

While we were quite full, it was pretty hard to resist the dessert menu. We agreed to share the flourless chocolate cake, with caramel sauce and raspberry preserves. It literally melted in my mouth.

The seasonal patio and main entrance are wheelchair accessible, as are the washrooms. There is plenty of street parking and paid lots close by. If you park in the indoor lot next door and remain at the first level, you can gain direct entrance to the restaurant.

Info: www.metropolitainbrasserie.com.



The Hilton Lac-Leamy is a great place to stay in the Outaouais region

by *Mike Cohen*

The Hilton Lac-Leamy in Gatineau, Quebec, just across the river from Ottawa, is a one-of-a-kind destination. Surrounded by waterways, woodlands and recreational trails, it offers the atmosphere of an urban resort in an enchanting environment. Among all the hotels in the Hilton chain, this one is ranked first in Canada, by the chain, and among the top 10 across the Americas. In fact, it has an AAA five-star hotel with four diamonds rating since its opening in 2001.

We were very fortunate to spend the day there recently, and what a treat that was.

Upon entering the hotel lobby, I was dazzled by the work of world-famous artist

Dale Chihuly: four blown glass chandeliers and six islands of red flowers at the back of the reception area. In addition, a coil composed of small glass works surrounds the column of the grand staircase leading to the upper floor of the hotel.

Connected to the Lac-Leamy Casino, the hotel features a fitness centre, outdoor heated pool, indoor pool, spa and wellness center and a variety of dining options.

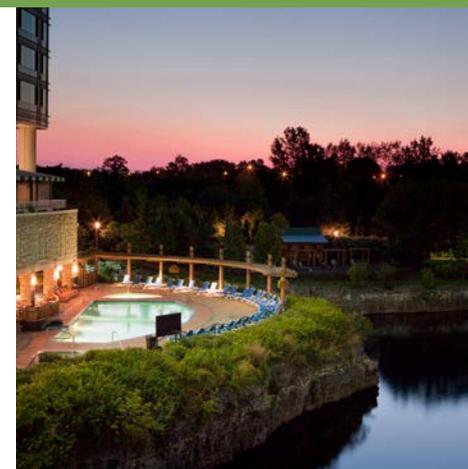
Unquestionably, the outdoor pool is a big draw here. We were seated poolside on comfortable lounge chairs, with a large umbrella to shade us from the sun. The pool itself was perfectly heated as I floated about relaxingly, resting on the noodles

they provide to each guest. There are also two large hot tubs, just the tonic for some aching bones.

We took advantage of the room-service menu poolside, enjoying chicken quesadillas, a pizza and some chips and drinks. There is a nice shady eating area at the pool. We hope to go back someday and try some of the fine dining options.

The hotel has a first-class casino on site, a 1,000-seat theatre, and a 2,500-seat ballroom and conference hall.

Accessibility is omnipresent at this hotel at the business centre, concierge desk, restaurants, meeting rooms, on the elevators and in the guest rooms, whose



| The beautiful poolside area.

doors are 32-inches wide. There are valet and accessible parking services, a clear path to the entrance, ramps leading to the passageway to the casino and accessible routes to the fitness facilities and pools. The hotel says the alarms are audible and braille is available on the elevators and for room numbers. Service support animals are welcome. ■

A return to beautiful Nice, France

by *Alexandra Cohen*

The capital of the French Riviera, Nice is a perfect city for a relaxing getaway. This past summer, I returned to Nice for the first time in eight years and was able to enjoy a fantastic few days by the Mediterranean.

For those who have not yet visited, Nice is the fifth largest city in France, with 350,000 citizens and more than 1 million people living in the surrounding areas.

Where to Stay

During my trip, I stayed at the gorgeous Hyatt Regency Nice Palais de la Méditerranée in a spectacular king room with a full sea view. This historic and luxurious five-star hotel is located on the legendary Promenade des Anglais, directly across the street from the sea. There are 187 spacious guestrooms and suites, complimentary Wi-Fi, the option for mobile entry with your room key available through your smart phone, a beautiful indoor-outdoor pool, as well as a gym, sauna, and Turkish bath. The hotel restaurant, le 3e, includes a lovely terrace which overlooks the Mediterranean, as well as the outdoor pool, includes a large and delicious breakfast buffet, which I was able to enjoy every morning. The hotel also features a business and conference center on site. Dogs under 15 kilograms are permitted on the premises for an additional fee.

During my stay, I was very impressed with the hotel's customer service. Their concierge service is able to reserve seats for hotel guests at the nearby beach. They will give you a voucher and charge it to your room. Response to requests for room service and other needs was always swift.

In terms of accessibility, six rooms (including one suite) are adapted with walk-in showers (equipped with a seat on the wall

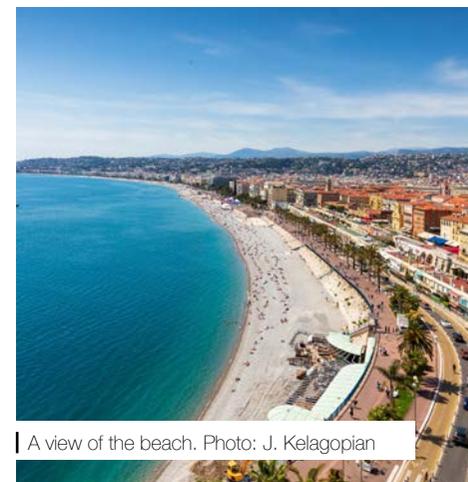
and a grab rail), a sink accessible for those in wheelchairs, height equipment (bed, mini bar, safe box, toilet) for wheelchair access, as well as a wardrobe with a telescopic rod.

You can e-mail nice.regency@hyatt.com or call +33 4 93 27 12 34 prior to your trip with any questions.

Dining out:

There are many fantastic dining options in Nice. During my previous trip in 2014, I dined at Le Grand Balcon (www.legrandbalcon.net), located at 10 rue St. François de Paule near the opera house. Having had such a great experience, I was looking forward to returning, and it did not disappoint. Since my last visit, their terrace seems to have more than doubled in size, and all of their tables were full. While their menu offers numerous options, I personally enjoyed their sea bream ceviche with pomelo, the scallops with truffles and homemade mashed potatoes, and the parmesan cheese risotto. For dessert, I had a tasty, restyled lemon meringue pie. Undoubtedly, should you choose to visit, you will enjoy their creative and delicious cuisine. Le Grand Balcon is wheelchair accessible.

Another excellent restaurant worth visiting is Bocca Nissa (www.boccanissa.com), a trendy restaurant and tapas bar locat-



| A view of the beach. Photo: J. Kelagopian

ed at 3 rue St. François de Paule. At first glance, the building resembles a beautiful Mediterranean town house. You will enter by walking down a hallway with walls lined entirely by greenery. Their rooftop terrace provides views of Vieux Nice and is also lined with plants and twinkle lights. Their menu contains a large array of tapas to share. I tried their tortilla dish, as well as their fried squid and sardines, sea bream ceviche, and beef ravioli. For dessert, their chocolate bombs were a real treat. For those less interested in tapas, their menu also boasts larger meals that one may choose to share, such as lamb chops and beef ribs. This property is also wheelchair accessible. ■



Services éducatifs / Educational services

Intervention précoce / 0 à 3 ans

Cet âge est essentiel pour engager et développer les voies neuronales du cerveau qui sont si importantes pour le langage parlé. Les familles reçoivent un accompagnement hebdomadaire — à domicile ou à la garderie — afin de soutenir le développement de l'écoute et du langage parlé auprès de leur enfant. Grâce à l'utilisation de technologies auditives, tels que les appareils auditifs ou les implants cochléaires, et avec une stimulation auditive intense, les capacités de votre enfant s'épanouiront.

Early Intervention / Ages 0 – 3

This age is key to engage and develop the brain's neural pathways that are so important to spoken language. Families are coached weekly — in their home or at daycare — on how to help their child listen and speak. With the use of hearing technology, such as hearing aids or cochlear implants, and intensive auditory stimulation your child's capacity will bloom.

Précolaire / 3 à 5 ans

Votre enfant jouera et apprendra avec des camarades entendants dans un cadre préscolaire naturel et dynamique. Nous proposons des séances individuelles quotidiennes qui se concentrent sur le développement de l'écoute et du langage parlé. Nous assurons également un suivi étroit de la technologie auditive de votre enfant. Les frères et sœurs sont les bienvenus.

Preschool / Ages 3- 5

Your child will play and learn with hearing peers in a natural and vibrant preschool setting. We provide daily one-on-one sessions that focus on developing listening and spoken language skills. We also provide close monitoring of your child's hearing technology. Siblings welcome.

École primaire / de la 1re à la 6e année

Nos petites classes suivent le programme scolaire québécois avec des spécialistes en français, en musique et en activité physique, avec un accent particulier sur l'apprentissage de la lecture. Chaque élève bénéficie d'un plan d'intervention individuel répondant à ses besoins spécifiques. Nous continuons de développer les capacités d'écoute et de langage parlé de votre enfant tout en optimisant sa technologie auditive. Notre objectif est de combler l'écart linguistique afin de préparer votre enfant à rejoindre le milieu scolaire régulier.

Elementary school / Grades 1 – 6

Our small classes follow the Quebec curriculum, and include French, music and gym, with an extra emphasis on literacy. Each student has an individualized education plan (IEP) to address their specific needs. We continue to develop your child's listening and spoken language skills while optimizing their hearing technology. Our goal is to close the language gap in preparation for your child to join the mainstream.

Soutien aux élèves en vue de leur intégration en milieu scolaire régulier

Lorsque le moment sera venu, nous aiderons votre enfant à intégrer son école de quartier. Nous nous rendons actuellement chaque semaine dans plus de 100 écoles, anglophones et francophones, pour soutenir plus de 150 élèves présentant une déficience auditive. Nous travaillons en partenariat avec l'équipe-école pour permettre à votre enfant d'apprendre aux côtés de ses camarades.

Student support for mainstream schooling

When the time is right, we'll help your child integrate into your community school. We currently visit over 100 schools, English and French, each week to provide support to over 150 students with hearing loss. We work in partnership with the school team to ensure your child learns alongside their peers.

Plus de 80 % de nos élèves poursuivent des études postsecondaires.

More than 80 percent of our students go on to post-secondary studies.

Soutien à votre famille

- Entraînement auditif-verbal individuel pour votre enfant
- Service d'audiologie sur place
- Transport scolaire pour élèves du préscolaire et du primaire
- Séances d'accompagnement pour les parents
- Soutien pour les technologies auditives
- Services en ligne
- Groupe pour adolescents

Supporting your family

- One-on-one auditory-verbal training for your child
- On-site audiology department
- Transport service for preschool and elementary school
- Parent coaching sessions
- Support for hearing technology
- Online services
- Teen group

Nos programmes et services sont soutenus financièrement par la fondation de l'ÉOMS et par le gouvernement du Québec.

Our programs and services are financially supported by the MOSD Foundation and the Government of Québec.



École orale de Montréal pour les sourds
Montreal Oral School for the Deaf

4670, rue Sainte-Catherine Ouest Westmount (Quebec) H3Z 1S5
Téléphone / télécopieur : 514-488-4946
Télécopieur / Fax: 514-488-5398

L'ensemble de nos services sont offerts en étroite collaboration avec vos professionnels de la santé. Services are provided in close collaboration with your family's health professionals.

info@montrealoralschool.com
www.montrealoralschool.com



Commission scolaire English-Montréal
English Montreal School Board

EMSB proudly supports
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and our special needs
community.



emsb.qc.ca | 514-483-7200 | @EnglishMTL



Mental Health Resource Centre
Working together to support the mental health needs of the EMSB community

A multi-disciplinary group of professionals from the Student Services Department at the English Montreal School Board that promotes mental health awareness and aims to decrease stigma.

Our goal is to increase knowledge and enhance the skill level within the EMSB community, supporting professionals, school staff and parents in this domain.

Mental Health Library
Student Workbook
Podcast Resources...and more!

www.mhrc.emsb.qc.ca/mhrc



Commission scolaire English-Montréal
English Montreal School Board



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L'école Peter Hall accueille depuis plus de 80 ans des élèves de 4 à 21 ans présentant une déficience intellectuelle ou des troubles du spectre de l'autisme. Notre programme éducatif est centré sur les besoins spécifiques de chaque élève. L'enseignement y est dispensé en français et en anglais.

For over 80 years, Peter Hall School has welcomed students between the ages of 4 and 21 with intellectual disabilities or autism spectrum disorders. Offered in French and English, our educational program is centered on the specific needs of each student.

840, boul. de la Côte-Vertu, Saint-Laurent
514-748-6727



Carlyle Elementary School

An inclusive, internationally-minded community

IB World School / École du Monde

Pre-K students from all regions of Montreal are eligible to register for Carlyle's fully bilingual program

Carlyle Elementary School of the English Montreal School Board is a gem located in the quaint Town of Mount-Royal. Their **International Baccalaureate Programme (IB)** fosters the development of the whole child; personal, social and academic. Internationally-minded, inquiry-based curriculum, coupled with ongoing reflection and assessment, links active classroom experience to action-based local and global issues.

At Carlyle, special needs, gifted and average students are integrated into every aspect of the

school and IB programme, including the Grade 6 IB-PYP Exhibition Project. The school psychologist, speech and occupational therapist, special education and ASD consultants are available to consult upon request.

"When you focus on the abilities, no one has disabilities. Special needs students get extra time, support and more contextual assignments," said Dina Vourdouis, principal of Carlyle. "It's a beautiful place to learn and grow in a safe and nurturing environment."

Additional Programs

- ▶ Bilingual pre-K and Kindergarten classes
- ▶ Integration of special needs students in all programs, including the IB-Primary Years Programme
- ▶ Resource support
- ▶ Early literacy intervention
- ▶ STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics)
- ▶ Fully equipped Sensory Room
- ▶ Intergenerational Program
- ▶ Intermural sports
- ▶ Leadership Program
- ▶ A fully equipped Games Room



Registration takes place all year long.

- International parents who have a work permit or are studying at any Montreal university may be eligible for their child(ren) to obtain a temporary certificate of eligibility for English core education.
- Take advantage of learning in the beautiful surroundings of TMR with Carlyle's zoning permissions for pre-K and Kindergarten students. Children are welcomed from all regions of Montreal so long as their own transportation is provided.



109 Carlyle Avenue
Town of Mount-Royal,
Quebec H3R 1S8
Tel: 514-738-1256

www.carlyle.emsb.qc.ca

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Congratulations to Simon Chang Difference Makers for the Fall 2022 edition Natalina Melillo, behavioural technician, left, and Cynthia Yee, teacher, right, with Simon Chang at an award ceremony at Parkdale Elementary School on November 2.

The Simon Chang Foundation for Change

Proud sponsor of the *Inspirations* Difference Maker Award



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www.simonchang.com