

INSPIRATIONS

Summer / Été 2018

ARTS & LEISURE

Célébrons nos communautés inclusives

Celebrating inclusive communities



Autism Speaks Canada's Montreal walk brings the community together

The eighth annual Autism Speaks Canada Montreal Walk was held on May 27 at the Tomlinson Fieldhouse on the McGill University campus. It welcomed 65 teams and over 1,000 participants who walked three kilometers in support of autism awareness and to raise funds for world-leading research and community family services.

(Read the full story on page 15)

Inside this edition

- The St-Ambroise Montreal Fringe Festival inspires [page 3](#)
- Artists display creative bent at Sylvan Adams YM-YWHA [page 4](#)
- Poetry by Denise Landry [page 6](#)
- Ron Suskind visits Montreal to share his family story [page 8](#)
- The Fundamentals of Caring on Netflix [page 9](#)
- LBPSB entrepreneurs share exciting projects [page 11](#)
- Doubletree Resorts by Hilton Hollywood Beach [page 12](#)
- One perfect week in China [page 13](#)



Steven Baranoff, Quinn Baranoff, Jack Baranoff, and Donna Greenspon at the Autism Speaks Canada Montreal Walk 2018. Quinn and Jack are the 2018 National Walk Ambassadors and the Montreal Walk Ambassadors for Autism Speaks Canada. (Photo, Wendy Singer)



"Every day is the best day ever" video celebrates student's positive outlook

Shylheim Eloï Ramdhaney graduated from the Mackay Centre School this year after having attended the centre for 17 years. To celebrate his graduation, he wanted to make a movie to inspire everyone around him. Teacher Dana Strohl, her Senior Class, and computer teacher Gaye McConnell, were happy to fulfill this 21-year-old's request. The video shares Shy's positive attitude about life in the face of his physical disability, and how he never gives up, he just "keeps going and going and going." The video shares the profound influence that his smile and his sense of humour have had on the Mackay staff and his fellow students.



Shylheim Eloï Ramdhaney shares his smile and positive outlook in his video. (Photo, Mackay Centre School)

As you watch it, you will smile too, and learn how his upbeat approach to life has changed his friends and teachers. Treat yourself and watch the video [here](#).

CTV Montreal and CTV National News were inspired by Shylheim's story, and they visited him at the Mackay Centre School. They even attended his graduation ceremony. Watch the CTV stories at <https://montreal.ctvnews.ca/video?clipId=1408652> and <https://www.ctvnews.ca/lifestyle/keep-going-montreal-student-with-special-needs-graduates-after-17-years-1.3957041>.



Galileo SIS students show off their new portable puppet show stage.

Galileo goes on the road with a portable puppet show stage

Galileo Adult Centre recently received a beautifully handcrafted gift of a portable puppet show stage. Built by James Larocque, a teacher at the Rosemount Technology Centre's Cabinet Making and Woodwork program, the stage is a wonderful addition to the theatre program that the Galileo Socio Integration Services (SIS) students enjoy. This portable stage is extremely practical because the SIS students can assemble and disassemble it when they go on the road. They visit students at other schools to entertain and educate on important themes like anti-bullying, building friendships and dealing with loss.

As a thank you to Larocque, the SIS students presented him with a handmade thank-you card, soaps, cookies and a cactus plant. These were all made on-site at Galileo by the SIS students in the culinary, soap making, horticulture and art classes. Galileo also thanks Sam Servello and Joe Anne Desire for making this project possible.



We would like to thank our graphic design intern Lee Stotland for designing this edition. In doing so, Lee has successfully completed a Graphic Design certificate from Rosemount Technology Centre of the English Montreal School Board. As you can see, Lee's work is creative, fresh and engaging to read.

Thank you Lee!



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The St-Ambroise Montreal Fringe Festival inspires

By Cindy Davis

The Autism Monologues debuts at the Montreal Fringe Festival

See me. Hear me.

That is the fundamental message in *The Autism Monologues*, a play written by Christine Rodriguez and directed by Jen Viens, which played at this year's St-Ambroise Montreal Fringe Festival in June. A follow-up to Rodriguez's award-winning play *Dreaming in Autism*, which is an auto-biographical account of her own experiences having a son with mild autism, this play widens the lens and brings audiences into the lives of more than two dozen characters, each impacted by the disorder in some way.

"Autism is diverse," says Rodriguez in a press release. "There is a spectrum of symptoms that range from mild to severe. There is far more than one story to tell. Through *The Autism Monologues*, I'm able to present autism from many different points of view."

The play consists of a series of short vignettes portraying the multiple faces of autism. From a parent dealing with the diagnosis and struggling to access services, to a therapist detailing the difficulties in her work, to a police officer describing the takedown of an erratic four-year-old with autism at a press conference, every scenario shows a real and raw look at the disorder. Distinctly Montreal, the play makes several references to local spots, government agencies, and reminds the audience on several occasions that it understands the nuances of the city and province in which we live.

The cast of five actors do a wonderful job in taking the audience on the journey with them. Most commendable are the portrayals of individuals with autism – from a nonverbal child, to a likable teen with



The cast of The Autism Monologues.

Asperger's syndrome lamenting the fact that he believes the disorder is responsible for his restricted iPad use – this play does a fantastic job in demonstrating how autism affects everyone differently.

On its opening night, the audience was visibly taken with many of the scenes, with some nodding in agreement at the anguish of family members. At one point, an audience member shouted "just show them love!" in response to a scene with a character who did not know how to properly engage with a child with autism. Crying was audible during several dramatic scenes dealing with accidental death and suicide.

This play does not sugarcoat autism and its impact on those living with it, and genuinely demonstrates the ripple effect it has on family members, caregivers and society as a whole. It is powerful, well-acted, and relatable to so many.

For information about The Autism Monologues, visit www.theautismmonologues.com.

AWKWARD HUG plays more like a warm embrace

From the moment you walk into the theatre, show writer and performer Corey Thibert makes audience members feel comfortable. Standing out front and warmly greeting crowds as they enter, Thibert lets you know that you are not in for a conventional night of theatre with his newest one-man show, *AWKWARD HUG*.

Part of Montreal's St-Ambroise Fringe Festival this year, *AWKWARD HUG* is based on Thibert's life experience growing up as the child of two parents with cerebral palsy. Based on the description, one might expect this to be a poignant story of overcoming odds, and at times, it is very powerful, but much of the show is laugh-out-loud funny and very relatable to almost anyone who grew up under the watchful eyes of loving parents.

Thibert's writing and storytelling are superb in bringing the audience members into his world as a 19-year-old living in his parents' basement and learning that his family must move within a matter of months because they no longer qualify for affordable housing. It is only at this age that Thibert learns of his parents' diagnoses after spending his youth acknowledging that they were different from most parents. Much of the play takes the audience in and out of a countdown of months until this big move, interspersed with standout moments in Thibert's life, including losing his virginity, watching his mother fall down in public, and having his father walk out of all his shows minutes before the end.



Cory Thibert performs in AWKWARD HUG at the Montreal Fringe Festival.

Though what makes Thibert's story unique is his parents' disabilities, the show is much more of a coming of age story of a typical, albeit hilarious, young man. In fact, the first mention of his parents being "different" only comes up at least 15 minutes into the show.

Thibert and director Linnea Gwiazda have created a warm, relatable and all around enjoyable show with *AWKWARD HUG*, which was nominated for two Montreal Fringe Festival awards. The show will be touring across Canada over the summer with stops in Toronto, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Edmonton and Victoria.

For information on AWKWARD HUG, visit www.linneagwiazda.com/awkwardhug.



Artists display creative bent at Sylvan Adams YM-YWHA

By Wendy Singer

On Wednesday, May 23, the Hall of Honour at the Sylvan Adams YM-YWHA was abuzz with excitement for the Inclusion Services Department's Visual Arts and Multimedia Clubs' vernissage. Artists were on hand exhibiting their work and sharing their creative processes. The art was for sale, and all proceeds benefitted the Inclusion Services Department programs.

Stunning still life oil pastel and ink paintings of vases and flowers caught the eye upon entrance into the Hall. Art teacher Terri Spiegelman was proud to share this event with her artists. "Our students are the masters here. With each individual's creative interpretation, each painting has its unique look and beauty," shared Spiegelman.

The visual arts program works with many mixed media techniques. Students have the opportunity to explore colours, shapes, and texture, and discover how perspective influences artwork. They express their creativity through painting, drawing, collages and more.

Another highlight of the vernissage was photography taken by the Inclusion Department's new Multimedia Club participants. Under the leadership of Michael D'Abate, this program is offered in an adaptive, fun, and friendly environment. For teens and young adults, the initial goal of this program was to impart a fundamental understanding of how a DSLR/digital point-and-shoot camera works, tips and tricks in creating cool photographs, as well as how to edit and use online publishing. It has since evolved, and students are learning about stop-motion animation, some have started blogs and newsletters, and many are also using the time to simply learn to use their own smartphones. Their images on exhibit were thought-provoking and professional. The group also printed their images onto cards that were for sale.

The vernissage was a great success. Popular artist Billy Kirsch was thrilled to have sold all eight of his masterpieces!

The Inclusion Department also offers an Open Studio class, where, each week, participants create their own artwork using an eclectic mix of art materials through drawing, painting, sculpture, collage and more. Participants define their project, working at their own pace with the guidance of the leader in their creative process.

The Sylvan Adams YM-YWHA provides meaningful programming for people with special needs, be they physical, developmental, or intellectual. The Inclusion Services Department offers leisure and recreational services to children, youth and adults with special needs, with the goal of including the participants in life at the Y.

For information, visit www.ymywha.com and click on special needs, or contact Carly at cberlin@ymywha.com or at (514) 737-6551 ext. 215.



Students and staff celebrate together at the vernissage at the YM-YWHA.



Billy Kirsch exhibits his painting "Mosaic Vase" at the YM-YWHA.



Carly Liberman shares her photography at the YM-YWHA.



Alex Dubrovsky exhibits his photograph "Frozen Silhouettes" at the YM-YWHA.



Alicia Sylvain exhibits her painting "Cubist Style" at the YM-YWHA.



"Rainbow Blooms" by Billy Kirsch.



Myron Weekes and Francis Chichester in the art room at Wagar.

Wagar students' creativity soars

Students at Wagar Adult Education Centre in Côte Saint-Luc have created stunning works of art, and are very proud to share them with the public. Under the direction of teacher Myron Weekes, and liaison staff from CROM (West Montreal Readaptation Centre) Francis Chichester, the students have worked with various media including feathers and black ink, photography, and papier-mâché.

In addition to these projects, the walls and ceiling of the hallway outside of the art room



Papier-mâché sculpture of the Parthenon crafted by the students of Wagar.

are decorated from top to bottom with art that showcases their motto: "Acceptance." One wall display bears the title, "What's in a Name? Everything," where each student's name is listed followed by its origin (written in its original language) and its meaning. All projects aim to build the students' identity and pride in themselves and their art.

These students have created works beyond the expectations of their teachers, so much so that Wagar Principal Jacques Monfette had the feather art paintings framed, and hopes to exhibit them in a location outside of the school in the future. Weekes is blown away by the wealth of talent that this group of students has shown. He explains that while each student created using the same tools (a canvas, a feather, and black ink), each piece tells a different story. "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder," says Weekes. With regard to the talent of students, "Expect good things, and good things will happen," adds Chichester.

I Can Dream Theatre golf tournament a hole in one!

By Merrill Matthews



ICDT cast member Mitchell Newman getting his golf on! (Photo, Philip Ross White)

The sun was shining high and strong and the sky was blue on Saturday, July 7, 2018 at the Club de Golf de Belle Vue in Léry, Québec. This is where I Can Dream Theatre (ICDT) held their very first (now annual) golf tournament to raise funds that will go directly towards their work oriented programs and their yearly productions.

By 11:00 in the morning, foursomes for the tournament were arriving to register and set up for their day. Crèmeerie Buddy's ice cream truck was rolling by getting ready to hand out soft serve to golfers. And the tournament's many volunteers had their headsets on ready to troubleshoot anything that was to come their way.

But here's the thing - there was nothing to troubleshoot. The day moved along without a hitch. Everything was organized to a tee (pun intended) and there were only smiles all around the golf course. Everyone was happy to be there, and wanted to help. Everyone wanted to support and lift this organization to its full potential.

One only had to witness the high fives and thumbs up given to cast members from golfers right before they sped away on their golf carts to know that there was love and admiration in the air.

The tournament lasted approximately five hours. Teams came back to the reception area tired but happy. This led into a nice cocktail hour and then dinner, which was barbecue style goodness.

Over \$7,000 worth of prizes from various organizations were raffled away. Attendees who played golf left the event with some new gadgets and event tickets, and one lucky member won a mountain bike!

As ambassadors for the evening, the cast of ICDT received a standing ovation upon entering the reception area. No doubt that once you become a fan of ICDT, you remain so for life. This was evident in that moment, where the applause didn't seem to end.

The night was capped off with some dancing to favourites like Michael Jackson and *The Hustle*. As a friend of mine pointed out upon watching the recap video on the group's Facebook page: "I've gone to many charity golf tournaments, but I've never seen dancing after an exhausting day of golfing!"

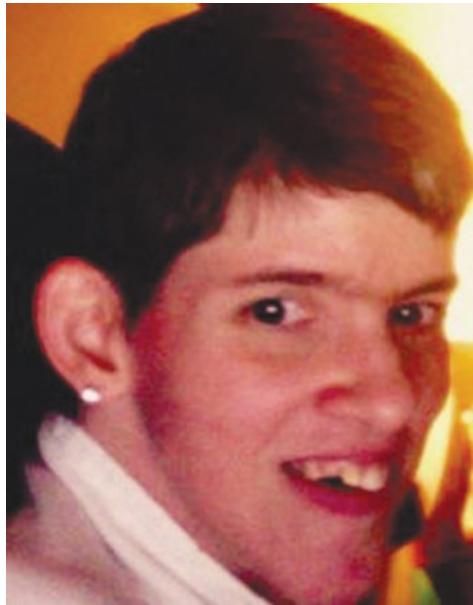


Some of the cast of ICDT at the golf tournament. (Photo, Philip Ross White)

We extend a huge amount of gratitude to Fiona Macdiarmid, ICDT's fundraising chair, for her invaluable leadership in making this first tournament such a success, and to the many volunteers who helped organize all of the details over the last few months.

If this year was any indication of the fun to be had at an ICDT golf tournament, you'll want to sign up for the next one, which is set for June 22, 2019!

Visit www.icandreamtheatre.com for all things ICDT, and make sure to come check out their seventh production this November, *Dead...on the Orient Express*.



Denise Landry was born in Montreal in 1968. She has cerebral palsy, and is non-verbal and in a wheelchair. She tries to empower people with disabilities, and educate the public to show that disabled people can do anything. She has published her works "Oliver's New Friend" in Stories for Children Magazine (June 2008), and "The Quiet Lighthouse Daughter" in Dreamer's Exclusive (July 2014)

The gift of a voice through poetry

By Denise Landry

Finding a voice through silence

*Being nonverbal, my journey to find my voice through silence
In this noisy world has been long, hard, but interesting.*

*My creative spirit was born in a cerebral palsy.
Unable to talk or run around like other children,
I was stuck in a wheelchair without a way to communicate.*

*Yet my mind was full of wondrous questions to ask,
And fanciful tales to tell, so I learnt to talk by hand.
I'd awkwardly point to symbols and letters on communication boards
In front of me, puzzling together what I want to say.
Was I understood? Sometimes yes, sometimes no.*

*Frustrating. Feeling separate from the speaking world as a young woman.
So I started tapping on keyboards, so my thoughts could be seen in print.
People loved and understood my verses,
However, I still wished I could express concerns, desires and stories
Out loud like others.*

*Then I discovered keyboards with synthesized voices.
Now, all my tapping makes wonderful noise,
A beautiful and clear voice, my every good or bad thought out loud.
People no longer guess what I want or think. I can just say it.
I am still nonverbal. But I am no longer silent. No longer feeling separate.
I can join in conversations with the talking. Or, maybe amaze them
With a great technological verbal performance.*

*A hard and long journey I had. But it was worth it.
I am much happier since I found my voice through silence.*

Rolling down life's highway in a wheelchair

*Rolling down life's highway
In my chair with four wheels,
I see people who were once
Speeding past me,
Stop and wonder what I am.*

*They watch me wheel down
The road as if I was part
Of a sideshow passing through
Town, trying not to think,
"Poor little thing, how could
Such a broken body handle
The hard bumps of life's highway."*

*But I park myself beside them
And tell them, "I can handle
The hard bumps of life's highway
As well as they ever could.
I have rolled my way through
Mistakes and learned from them.
And with the help of my chair,
I have pushed my way through
The problem of love, hatred
And paying bills."*

*Then I go on the road again
And hope the next time people
See me stuck on the highway,
They will see me as I really am
And give me a hand.
So I can join them back
On life's long highway.*



A beautiful arrangement made by students at Summit Tecc Flora.

Tecc Flora: More than just flowers

By **Marian Pinsky**

McGill University's School of Continuing Studies (SCS) is proud to have partnered with Tecc Flora, an initiative that teaches youth at Summit School T.E.C.C. the art of floral arrangements, for two of our recent high profile events. More than just learning about botany, artistic vision, and planning, T.E.C.C. courses teach teamwork, problem-solving, and becoming workplace ready.

As Tecc Flora coordinator Vicki Surplice explains, one of the main benefits is increasing youth self-esteem and self-confidence as they see the tangible outcomes of their work.

And what beautiful results! We were proud to include Tecc Flora as our floral supplier of choice at our recent Leadership and Legacy tribute reception for outgoing SCS Dean Dr. Judith Potter, as well as the Dean's Convocation Breakfast celebrating our exceptional students. Both events brought together prominent guests, donors, and board members, who gave a rousing round

of applause when Advancement Associate, Leanne Scott, shared our decision to partner with Tecc Flora.

"As a fundraiser, I am always eager to work with social enterprises because it brings something extra to an event," Scott reflected. "Tecc Flora and Summit School are incredible initiatives, and people are glad to know when they are supporting an event that is making a positive social impact."

The School of Continuing Studies is committed to community partnerships and learning in all its forms, and we were delighted to collaborate with such an important social enterprise.

Marian Pinsky is the events coordinator and development assistant at the School of Continuing Studies, McGill University.

For information about Tecc Flora, contact Vicki Surplice at (514) 652-4095.

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Ron Suskind chats with guests. (Photo, Avi Charszan)

Pulitzer Prize winner shares his family's story with a Montreal audience

Compiled by **Cindy Davis**
With files from **Mike Cohen**

Ron Suskind was the Wall Street Journal's senior national affairs reporter from 1993 until 2000. He won the 1995 Pulitzer Prize for feature writing. His company, Sidekicks, is leading efforts to build the next generation of augmentative technologies to lift and support differently-abled communities. But these days, the prominent media personality is best known as the father of Owen Suskind. That is because of his Academy Award nominated documentary called *Life, Animated*, based on his book by the same name about his son's journey with autism.

This past April, guests were treated to a private screening of the Oscar-nominated film and a meet and greet with Ron Suskind at Cinémas Guzzo Mégaplex Sphéretech 14 in Saint Laurent. The event was a fundraiser and outreach engagement for JEM Workshop, an organization and packaging company that employs individuals with emotional, intellectual, and/or physical disabilities, and helps them to lead productive and fulfilling

lives. Suskind met with guests at a cocktail party before the screening and spoke to the crowd and answered questions following the film. Friend of *Inspirations*, Jason Goldsmith of The Big Blue Hug, who is also a Board member at JEM Workshop, was on hand selling his beautiful art.

Suskind was delighted to share his story about the evolution of *Life, Animated* with the Montreal audience.

"A lot of people asked me why there was no book on this experience," Suskind said. "I told them that I was living a very public life and my family was private. When Owen was 19, he turned to my wife and me one night and challenged us. He was becoming more aware of how the world saw him. He said they do see him 'as I am an unpolished gem; a diamond in the rough.' That was a line from the film *Aladdin*. He went on to tell us that we were both writers and he was tired of not being seen. Well for my wife

and I, that was the beginning of several long nights about whether or not we should do a book."

Suskind said his wife Cornelia made the best point when she asked if a book like this would have helped their family. "Of course the answer was yes," he said.

Suskind believes the book and the movie have helped countless numbers of people. "We gave a nudge to parents to do something that they may have been thinking about anyhow," he said. "Now our mission keeps expanding beyond anything we ever imagined."

For almost 70 years, JEM Workshop has been providing a safe and caring workplace for individuals with special needs in the Montreal community. Through its packaging services, support programs and specialized on-site social workers, JEM Workshop has created a very successful model in enabling its workers to be productive and independent contributors, while providing an array of valuable packaging services to many local and national companies.

The idea for the event came from JEM board member Jessica Seidman, who was so taken by the film after seeing it that she suggested screening it for a larger audience. "One powerful take away from the film

is that no matter what a human being's condition is, the need to connect with others is so important," she remarked. "The family was so driven and successful at building their son's ability to verbally communicate when the odds were against him. Finding alternative ways is possible when we can discover the right tools. It really hit home for me that finding a way for a connection is so important. I believe this can apply to any matter of illness or different abilities, beyond autism. The Suskind's story and the way in which it is told in *Life, Animated* stays with you."

Seidman explains that the goal for this event – the first ever outreach and fundraising event for JEM Workshop – was to sensitize Montrealers about differently-abled people and what they are capable of. "We also hope to bring awareness to JEM and highlight the amazing non-profit that it is, serving as a workplace and a major serving of psycho-social support for roughly 85 community members that live with a disability," she says. "Thanks to the sponsors and attendees, this event was also an opportunity for JEM to raise funds to support the incredible programming which takes place throughout the year geared to responding to the diverse needs of its workers."

Visit <http://www.jemworkshop.org/> for more about the organization.



JEM Board members Rhonda Friedman, Shelley Smith, Barbara Shore and Jessica Seidman enjoyed the evening. (Photo, Avi Charszan)



*Trevor (Craig Roberts) and Ben (Paul Rudd) in *The Fundamentals of Caring* on Netflix.*

The Fundamentals of Caring on Netflix: A tale of friendship and healing

By Ishini Fernando

Robert Burnett's *The Fundamentals of Caring*, adapted from a novel by Jonathan Evison, tells the tale of Ben, played by the ever-charming Paul Rudd, who is a retired writer coping with grief after a personal tragedy. After taking a course in caregiving in the opening of the movie, Ben becomes the caregiver of a teenage boy named Trevor with Duchenne muscular dystrophy. Trevor, played by Craig Roberts, does not make it easy for Ben in his new job. With his penchant for dark humour and rather wicked pranks such as fake-choking and half-scaring his caretakers to death, he gives Ben a nightmare of a start, but the two eventually form an entertaining friendship for viewers.

Trevor seems to be agoraphobic, sticking to a strict schedule that involves eating waffles, watching television, and going out to the

park once a week. Ben, who eventually becomes used to the Trevor's antics, manages to goad Trevor into agreeing to go visit very underwhelming tourist attractions that the teenager had noted from his dull television-watching sessions. The boy's spirited mother Elsa, portrayed by Jennifer Ehle, reluctantly decides to trust Ben on the road with her wheelchair-bound son while she's away on a work trip.

Quickly turning into a road trip movie, Ben and Trevor set off to their dull tourist spots, such as the "the world's deepest pit". Along the way, they meet Dot, a runaway teenage hitchhiker played by popstar Selena Gomez, who instantly catches Trevor's eye, as well as a bubbly, very pregnant lady named Peaches, portrayed by Megan Ferguson. The dynamic between this odd

group makes it interesting as we watch how their relationships play out. Also, Trevor discovers Slim Jims meat sticks that the characters become obsessed with.

The dialogue is humorous, witty, sentimental, and sometimes cheesy, but cheesy can be comforting. It is Paul Rudd and Craig Roberts' chemistry, however, that truly shines through in this movie as they conquer their emotional and physical complications. Predictably, the bond between Ben and Trevor deepens and they eventually begin to come across as a father-son duo. Another thing Hollywood got right this time around is the character of Trevor, who is not shown as helpless or primarily defined by his disability. He is sarcastic, funny, complex, and portrayed well by the actor.

Parents should know that the movie contains foul language and adult themes since Trevor, in true adolescent form, behaves in any way possible to make his caretaker uncomfortable. The movie is lighthearted despite the serious themes, and delves into the kind of troubles that come hand-in-hand with life. Although the 2016 movie only explores issues slightly below the surface, the cast delivers and makes an otherwise overdone storyline very enjoyable to watch.

The Fundamentals of Caring can be watched on Netflix.

Ishini Fernando is a marketing student at the John Molson School of Business.

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Playing tug-of-war at the barbecue. (Photo, Kristopher Artuso)

LBPSB's annual barbecue celebrates community

By Margo O'donohue Edwards

The Lester B. Pearson School Board's (LBPSB) annual resource barbecue brings together special needs students from various schools, providing an opportunity to meet peers from other schools and form friendships, memories, and celebrate and exchange stories and news about the past year's accomplishments. They look forward to it every year!

The event, which is attended by an average of 200 people, requires significant planning. This is done together by mainstream and special needs students from John Rennie High School. They plan activities like tug-of-war, games, a photo booth, music, and schedule the day so it runs smoothly. Invitations are designed by the LIFE students who also plan

and make decorations. Resource students also discuss menu and grocery items and begin calculating according to a pre-set budget using store flyers as part of the math and cooking curriculum.

Special Needs students formally greet all guests, along with the help of the Grade 11 students. This year, one student from each high school won a \$10.00 gift card from McDonald's. As a parting gift, each student left with a goody bag, and each high school that attended the barbecue received a DVD of the event put together by Kristopher Artuso.

Margo O'donohue Edwards is a special education technician at the LBPSB.



Everyone enjoying the LBPSB Resource barbecue. (Photo, Kristopher Artuso)

LBPSB entrepreneurs share exciting new projects

By Freda Solman

What could be more exciting than the buzz of young entrepreneurs in one room anxious to share their projects with anyone who stopped by? This was the scene on Tuesday, May 29, at the entrepreneurial awards gala and ceremony at the head office of the Lester B. Pearson School Board (LBPSB).

Approximately 20 schools were on hand to present their pedagogical or community service-based projects.

Community Partnership Liaison at the LBPSB Nancy Battet spearheads the entrepreneurship grants program at the board, encouraging LBPSB schools to apply for scholarships to help fund projects that focus on young people developing entrepreneurial skills.

Springdale Elementary School presented two projects that were initiated through the CASP program (a competency-based approach to social participation) designed by the Ministry of Education for students with moderate to severe intellectual disabilities. Their CASP "Recycling, Milk and Mail Projects" taught students how to collect recycling bins from classes and properly sort the recycling. They also deliver milk to all classes, first counting out the correct number of cartons to be delivered to each class. Students are also involved in distributing mail to staff members in the correct cubbies.

Springdale's second initiative was "The Lunch Bunch", where students tried to make lunch hour more peaceful and engaging by encouraging harmony amongst the students.



Springdale students at the LBPSB entrepreneurial gala.

At John Rennie High School, entrepreneurs learnt how to do laundry. Through games they were able to understand how to tell what needs dry cleaning, what items should be machine washed or hand washed, and how to sort by colour and use a washer and dryer.

Through the Work Oriented Training Program at Lakeside Academy, students learnt how to do event catering by providing a meal to approximately 100 staff members after the LPBSB Science Fair. The students prepared the menu, did the cooking and clean-up.

LBPSB Art Therapist Mélanie Forest created a "Creativity and Wellness Center" with students at Beurling Academy. All students are invited to drop by any time they feel the need to relieve anxiety or stress. They can listen to music or get their creative juices flowing using any of the art supplies handy.

All the projects presented at the gala were outstanding and original. Congratulations to all the LBPSB schools that took part. We can't wait to see what next year brings!

Freda Solman is a retired teacher from the Lester B. Pearson School Board.



Doubletree Resort by Hilton Hollywood Beach

By Alexandra Cohen

We have always enjoyed staying at DoubleTree Resort by Hilton properties. After enjoying a nice experience last summer in Santa Monica, we were excited to find a newly branded addition to the chain in Hollywood Beach, Florida.

Checking in to a DoubleTree hotel always starts on a sweet note thanks to their signature, warm chocolate chip cookies.

Owned by Sotherly Hotels and managed by Chesapeake Hospitality, DoubleTree Resort by Hilton Hollywood Beach (<http://www.hollywoodbeachresort.doubletreebyhilton.com>) is located at 4000 South Ocean Drive, approximately eight miles from the Fort Lauderdale/Hollywood International Airport. The hotel opened with its new identity last October after undergoing an extensive \$7 million facelift.

Through its multi-million-dollar transformation, the property features 311 oversized guestrooms and suites, all with furnished balconies overlooking the property's attractions. Along with a 24-hour business center, it houses 10,000 square feet

of meeting space, including a stylish boardroom and an outdoor pavilion for up to 250 guests.

Each room comes with complimentary WiFi, a 37-inch HDTV, premium cable, a vanity area, a work desk, and a kitchenette, which includes a microwave, mini-refrigerator, and coffeemaker. We were able to open a sliding glass door and enjoy the view from our private and furnished balcony.

Situated near the ocean waves and white-sand beaches, the resort allows easy access for guests to hop on the Hollywood Trolley to tour Ocean Drive or to set off on the Fort Lauderdale Water Taxi. Family-friendly activities and outdoor recreation are at guests' fingertips from walks along the beach to people-watching on the nearby Hollywood Boardwalk.

Guests will find American cuisine with Caribbean flair across the resort's restaurant and bars. Its lobby nook, Made Market, offers Starbucks coffee, ice cream, snacks, and more. Port South Bar and Grill is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner, featuring



The exceptional pool at the DoubleTree.



A corner king room.

Caribbean fusion and local seafood in an indoor and outdoor setting. The Port South Lounge serves tropical cocktails, domestic and imported beers, and fine wines. Just steps from the Intracoastal Waterway, guests can enjoy live music, cocktails and snacks from the poolside Lava Tiki Bar.

The resort's spectacular amenities include an outdoor infinity pool and whirlpool, daily room service, and a 24-hour Fitness Center and Business Center. We were beyond impressed with the beautiful and spacious pool area, with plenty of lounge chairs available. The Tiki Hut serves drinks, including different specials of the day, and we had a fabulous view of the intracoastal waterway, with boats passing by and music playing. For lunch, we enjoyed some grilled quesadillas and shrimp tacos.

DoubleTree Resort by Hilton Hollywood Beach is also part of Hilton Honors, the award-winning guest-loyalty program for Hilton's 14 distinct hotel brands. Members who book directly have access to instant benefits, including a flexible payment slider that allows members to choose nearly any

combination of Points and money to book a stay, an exclusive member discount, free standard Wi-Fi, and access to the Hilton Honors mobile app.

Diamond and Gold members will enjoy free Wi-Fi and space-available upgrades to the hotel's exclusive Hilton Honors floor. Additionally, Diamond members will receive the complimentary Wake Up DoubleTree Breakfast™ and 1,000 Bonus Points per stay. Gold members will have the option of a complimentary, continental breakfast or 1,000 Bonus Points per stay.

SPECIAL NEEDS: The hotel has a number of accessible rooms. The one king-size bed mobility room, for instance, features all of the amenities of the standard king rooms, plus a 49-inch HDTV, an in-room selection of snacks, candies and healthy treats, as well as two bottles of water, all replenished daily. This hearing accessible standard room features one king-size bed and an accessible tub. The room has a visual alarm, and notification devices for the doorbell or door knock and incoming telephone calls.



Above: Yu Garden is an oasis of tranquility in the heart of cosmopolitan Shanghai.



Below: The majestic Jinshanling portion of the Great Wall of China at sunset, only viewed with Leo Kui and Beijing Walking Tours.

Above: Modern art is on full display at the Jing'an Sculpture Park, only a 10 minute walk from West Nanjing Road.

One perfect week in China

By Daniel Smajovits

For millennia, China has captured the hearts and minds of the world. Since opening up her doors to tourists in the late 1970's, more than one billion people have flocked to explore its unique culture and history.

With non-stop flights from Montreal to both Beijing (Air China) and Shanghai (Air Canada), the heart and soul of this country is well within reach. Recently, I spent one incredible week exploring both cities, tapping into the pulse of one of the world's most exciting countries.

Any first-time traveler to China should start in **Beijing**, where the country's rich history and politics is on full display. To fully appreciate the city and take in its most famous sights such as the **Forbidden City**, **Tian'anmen Square** and the **Temple of Heaven**, we suggest **Leo Kui's** Heritage Walking Tour (www.beijingwalking.com). While Beijing is best explored by foot, should accessibility be an issue, Leo will work with you to ensure accessible transportation is available either via private car or the city's vast public transit system.

In his mid 30's, Leo Kui's passion is ensuring that visitors leave China with a new love for



his country. We spent two full days with Leo, hearing stories ranging from his youth to life in one of the world's most complex societies. Unlike on larger group tours, Leo limits the number of guests to ensure that he builds a relationship with each and every person, allowing for candid and open conversations that allow you to truly appreciate life in China.

After a wonderful tour of Beijing, your afternoon should be spent walking through the city's **hutongs**, or alleyways, some of which remain unchanged since the Ming Dynasty. The city has a number of nightlife options, but we suggest that you get plenty of time to rest before the next day's trip to the Great Wall of China.

It only takes a few minutes of climbing to realize the massive engineering marvel that is the **Great Wall of China**. Built over the course of many dynasties, Leo's full-day tour provides two unique perspectives on the wall: the ancient and the restored. Starting at the Gubeikou portion of the wall, visitors can gaze and climb through the ancient fortifications. Following a delicious and traditional lunch comes the highlight of the day: the restored Jinshanling section of the wall. Timing it perfectly, Leo ensures to arrive

just before sunset, and with a glass of wine or traditional Chinese liquor in hand, your group is alone, basking in the sunset and the serenity of this wonder of the world. If accessibility is an issue, a cable car can provide access to the wall.

After breakfast on day three, it is time to make your way down to **Shanghai**. The most efficient option is the Maglev high-speed train. With 36 daily departures, the ride lasts just under five hours and allows you to avoid the stress of traveling by plane.

With over 24 million people, Shanghai is the most populous city in the world. After the quick trip from Beijing, settle into your hotel and then head to **The Bund** to take in one of the world's most famous waterfront views. The Bund must be visited both by day and night to truly grasp its beauty; make sure to time your evening visit to include the light show that runs continuously until 10 pm.

As a premiere tourist and business destination, Shanghai boasts a perfect mix of shopping and culture, so fill your next two days with both. Spend half a day strolling down **Nanjing Road**, the city's most famous shopping street. Ensure to include visits to the **Shanghai**

Museum, traditional **Yu Garden** and the **Jewish Refugee's Museum**, which tells the incredible story of the Jewish refugees during World War II. If time allows, the off-the-beaten-path **Propaganda Poster Art Centre**, offers a history lesson in Chinese politics through a privately owned collection.

As with most cities, no trip to Shanghai would be complete without indulging in its incredible food scene. While famous for its buns: both the steamed and soup versions, those delicacies only scratch the surface of the city's culinary exploits.

The **UnTour Food Tour** (www.untourfoodtours.com) will take your palate along a culinary journey unique to Shanghai. We opted for the Night Eats tour, which included five restaurants and two street stops, allowing us to sample dozens of dishes and drinks, while mingling with locals and tourists alike. UnTour's experienced guides provided the ideal evening activity, leaving you wanting seconds and thirds. The group operates multiple food tours in Shanghai, Beijing and Hong Kong and we will definitely try another tour on a future trip.

If your itinerary allows for more time in Shanghai, a great day-trip for families is **Shanghai Disneyland**. The theme park is very similar to its North American counterparts, but with a unique Chinese flair. For the business traveler, stop by the **South Bund Soft Spinning Market** on day one to get fitted for a new wardrobe. All shops have similar materials, but we chose Joyce and Rita (#129) for their customer service and hotel delivery.



Caravela dragon boat team to the rescue!

By Randy Pinsky

After a long, cold winter, the Caravela dragon boat team was eager to be back on the water. As Quebec's first dragon boat team composed of blind and partially sighted (BPS) paddlers, they're looking forward to their fifth year as a competitive community team. The boat is close to 20 paddlers strong and is sponsored by the Montreal Association for the Blind (MAB) - Mackay Foundation in Montreal, Quebec.

As a sighted paddler, I assist in practices and at competitions (you can read about their experience at last year's McAuslen Cup and at The Montreal Challenge), and I am always impressed by the team's commitment and sheer guts.

Crossing treacherous Saint Patrick, walking over uneven terrain to get to the Lachine Canal, climbing down a wobbly ramp to the even more unstable dock, and dealing with the unpredictability of rushing water and a tippy boat, is not for the faint-hearted. Dragon boating is a very demanding sport that requires focus and drive, yet visual limitations do not daunt the team in the least. They consistently strive to meet and exceed their targeted goals.

While paddling is exhilarating and challenging in the best of times, every now and then, something out of the ordinary occurs. Caravela's practice on May 23 was one such night...

There we were, going through various drills, transitions (switching from short powerful strokes to longer, more steady ones), perfecting our set-ups (the proper way to position your paddle), and as always, working on the connection throughout the boat. We had just completed a pretty solid 25-stroke start (receiving a grudging "Better" from Senior Women's Coach Magda Morawski), when we pulled in next to two OCs (outrigger canoes).

We were alarmed to see that one had flipped over, possibly due to the waves created by our much larger boat. The paddler managed

to get to the surface, a little dazed, but assured us he was fine...until we noticed that he was bleeding from the head from having collided with his OC.

Ever-calm Captain Annie Gouveia immediately took control, as head injuries, especially in the water, are not taken lightly. Coach Magda instructed the team to slowly bring the boat closer to the injured paddler, while Co-Captain Josh Simmonds insisted he come onboard.

Now getting someone into a boat from deep water is no easy feat. The team had to carefully maneuver near the athlete, and then stabilize the boat so it would be easier for him to get in. After a couple of unsuccessful attempts, we finally got him safely on board.

But what to do with the outrigger? Without missing a beat, like a firefighter springing into action, Co-Captain Josh kicked off his shoes, ready to hop in and direct the OC to the dock. As it was too difficult to maneuver, we opted instead to tie it to our boat and drag it back with us to shore. Team Caravela responded to the emergency as a single unit.

I was immensely proud of the team's ability to respond so well and credit this successful rescue to calm and effective leadership. For a clientele who often feels they must be dependent on others, it was a critical reversal of roles. This was best expressed by experienced paddler and internationally-renowned guitarist Ioana Gandrabur: "It felt good to be part of the rescuer team rather than being in need of some kind of assistance as is often the case."

Coach Magda, who has gone to Nationals and seen it all added, "This rescue was a first for me. I was proud to be coaching this team."

Randy Pinsky is the assistant writer and office manager at TrueSelf Psychology and is a dragon boater.



Part of the Caravela Team gearing up for practice. (Photo, Magda Morawski)



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Autism Speaks Canada's Montreal walk brings community together

By *Wendy Singer*

The eighth annual Autism Speaks Canada Montreal Walk was held on May 27 at the Tomlinson Fieldhouse on the McGill University Campus. It welcomed 65 teams and over 1,000 participants who walked three kilometers in support of autism awareness and to raise funds for world-leading research and community family services including access to resources, inclusive programming, services for young adults, and community grants.

The event has raised \$91,000 and counting, to reach its goal of \$95,000. A new record was reached with 26 Grand Club members who raised over \$1,000 individually! The walk met all of its missions: raising awareness and funds, and bringing the community together.

This year's National Walk and Montreal Walk Ambassador Jack Baranoff, a LaurenHill Academy student, together on behalf of his brother Quinn, inspired the crowd with a moving speech. His words were strong: "We need to show that people

with autism are just like anyone else. We have feelings and we are people. We need to show our awareness for this cause so people will understand what autism is."

This year, Team *Inspirations*, EMSB was co-chaired by Edward Murphy teachers Alana Goodings and Cynthia Fugnitto. They rallied together a team that had representation from other EMSB schools, making it a true coming together in support of their students with autism.

For the first time, Galileo Adult Education Centre joined the resource fair. "Principal Martina Schiavone and the amazing Galileo crew were full of energy, dedication, and so well organized! They presented a great interactive and varied exhibit table that provided much needed information about adult education," shared Regional Walk Manager Krista Leitham.

Stay tuned for information on next year's walk at www.autismspeaks.ca.

Left: Kelly-Anne Soutter, general manager of Lakeshore Soccer Club, is presented with a recognition award for the club's support as volunteers, a walk team, and resource fair exhibitor and sponsor by Krista Leitham, regional walk manager - Québec. (Photo, Philip Ross White)

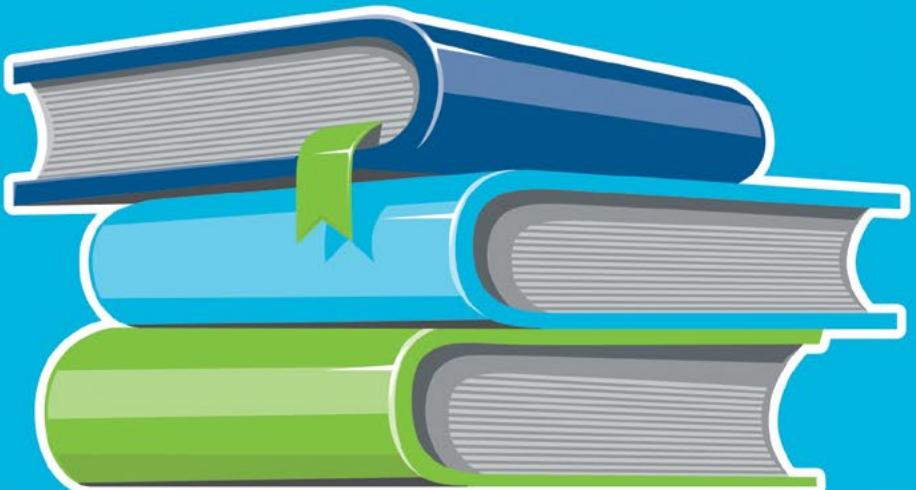


The Galileo Adult Education Centre team had fun meeting the public at their first Autism Speaks Canada Montreal walk.



Part of Team Inspirations EMSB at the Autism Speaks Canada Montreal walk.

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