

Summer/Fall 2015
Été/Automne 2015



INSPIRATIONS EXPRESS

A Snapshot of Our Special Needs Community
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An online edition

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Laurence and her parents at the Walk to Fight Arthritis. (Photo credit, Izazoom Studio). Read more on page 12.



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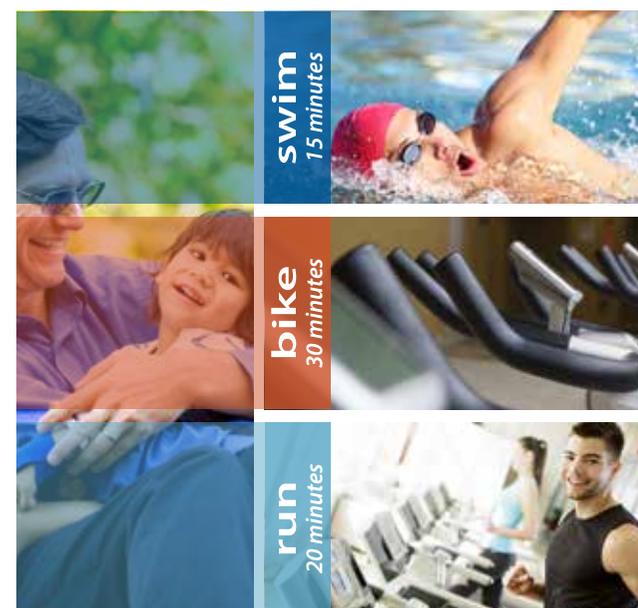
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Proceeds from our annual **TrYathlon** and **Y Cycle for Special Needs** are used to support the YM-YWHA Special Needs department, which provides children, adolescents and adults with intellectual and physical disabilities with the opportunity to participate in programs that take place at the Y.



The edible garden at Giant Steps School



Students at GS painted a "Fun Fence" to adorn their garden.

By Jade Horner Chinappi

This year an edible garden was planted at Giant Steps School in Montreal West. Giant Steps was founded in 1981 and has continued to evolve, offering a variety of programs to students with autism who range in age from four to 21. On June 26, 2015, Inspirations was fortunate enough to be able to visit their newly established edible garden. at Giant Steps School.

The edible garden was the brainchild of Director of Giant Step Thomas Henderson and administrator Tracy Pennimpede, who were inspired to create a garden, which like their students, would grow and flourish and become something beyond what it began as. The eventual dream includes a school curriculum built around a series of gardens, encompassing all areas of study from life

skills programs to science, and a hope to include in that as well, the technology of their computer labs. In addition, there is the possibility of creating a co-operative program with other schools that have gardens, or who would like to create them.

The generosity of Nick, Angie, Josie and Orlando from Centre du Pavé et Jardin R.D.P. allowed for the construction of the garden at Giant Steps. In addition, community funds, local businesses, family and friends all donated in some way to make the garden a success. Urban Seedling in St. Henri, also donated edible seedlings for the children to grow.

Pops of colour can be seen in the garden due to the "Fun Fence." The fence was the collaborative work of two classrooms, and features animated figures as well as colour-

ful abstract designs. Birdhouses decorated by another class, can be seen on some of the large trees which surround the space, to encourage feathered friends to come and join in the fun.

For many of the children the garden has become a form of therapy as well. Not only were they able to decide what to plant, they could also choose where to put the plants in the garden. This autonomous act has really connected to some children.

Teacher Iris Erdile explained how the act of doing real, practical activities like this provide wonderful opportunity to access the skills and interests of students in a concrete way. "It was great to see the way that students who don't normally excel academi-

cally were interested in the garden and excelled at planting," shared Erdile. "Certain students who are non-verbal and have high sensory needs seemed to enjoy digging in the dirt and getting their hands dirty. Another non-verbal student was highly engaged by watering the plants. The students' attention was maintained for long periods of time as they dug in the dirt, planted and watered. Students also enjoyed the opportunity to socialize together while participating in a shared, structured activity."

While Giant Steps students have been working hard to maintain the gardens, volunteers or donations of garden materials are always welcome. Contact Giant Steps directly for more information.



Thomas Henderson, Director of GS, sharing his gardening knowledge with students.
(Photo credit, Philip Ross White)

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Cette étude sera également menée en français.





EMSB schools receive QEC awards in Special Needs section

By Elaine Cohen

The 17th Quebec Entrepreneurship Contest (QEC) in 2015 inspired youth in school boards, CEGEPS and organizations throughout the province to develop products, services and raise funds for worthy causes. QEC is supported by a partnership of the Quebec Ministry of Education, Leisure and Sports, and business groups.

EMSB students competed and excelled at different levels. EMSB's LINKS High School and Mackay Centre School were cited for excellence in the Special Needs category at the local level.

The environment-friendly Terrarium Project submitted by LINKS High was awarded a cash prize of \$400 as a first place winner. Principal James Fequet credits LINKS High School Visual Arts teacher Iona Smith and EMSB Career Development Consultant Travis Hall for their dedicated guidance.

Smith, along with four students, attended the April 30 awards ceremony at Lasalle College. Besides the prize money, the winners received a QEC certificate and a medal. Sixteen students were officially involved in the project. Other students from the Life Skills group at LINKS unofficially participated as an interclass activity.

LINKS participants were lauded by commissioners at the EMSB on May 27th. Smith received a framed certificate. Five LINKS students attended.

An experienced gardener, Smith began by guiding students in crafting dried flower and plant material terrariums. The live Terrarium Project was an extension of this initiative.

To work with live plants, she researched the types of plants suitable for terrarium habitats as well as other materials and decorative items. She prepared her collection during the summer of 2014 and subsequently secured additional plants. "We produced succulent, cacti-type and tropical terrariums, as well as tropical potted gardens."

Smith reports the students worked well in groups, learned to follow directions, improved their motor skills, exercised their creativity and expanded their knowledge of environmental science as they prepared and designed the containers.

"Students grasped that learning can be cross-curricular and include recyclable materials, plants from nature, science, art and commerce," Smith pointed out. They sold most of the terrariums as miniature urban gardens to the school community during a parent-teacher interview evening and at a

teacher-student organized Christmas bazaar. The project was extended to the end of the school year.

"It was the focal point of our science course," she said. "Students generated questions and formed hypotheses as to why the household products worked well in breaking down glue at the back of labels. They explored the parts of plants, plant organs, their function, plant nutrition, the importance of water in plant life and the process by which plants create their own food-photosynthesis."

Mackay Centre School was recognized by the QEC for its "Leader on Wheels Fundraising Initiative". The students were awarded the "coup de coeur" for raising money to purchase special lifesaving equipment for the Montreal Children's Hospital. They sold Cajun Spice Rub and Triple Chocolate Brownies at different times and places.



LINKS High School students win QEC award for Terrarium Project. (Photo courtesy of LINKS High School)

Special needs student ranks among top competitors

Robert More, an educator with the Riverside School Board, commented on the keen contenders in QEC's Special Needs category. One of his students, KENZA Dechenes-Kherchi, an aspiring entrepreneur who has Asperger Syndrome, has received multiple awards for her jewelry. "She uses it as a platform to raise autism awareness," he said.



Riverside School Board educator Robert More congratulates award winning entrepreneur KENZA Dechenes-Kherchi. (Photo courtesy of Robert More)

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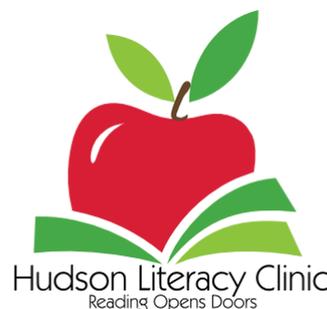


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Start on the right foot: Class climate building activities for the first days of school

By Karen Morrison

It's that time of year again. The lazy days of summer are wrapping up and a new school year will begin. Everyone is hopeful that their new classroom and experience will be a positive one where all students feel valued, welcomed and inspired. Teachers know that the first days of school are important for establishing routines, expectations, norms and values.

The work starts in the first days of school when we emphasize that all students have different strengths and needs, and everyone has something valuable to contribute to the class community. This involves making positive relationships a priority, providing students with opportunities to develop and practice empathy, compassion and conflict resolution skills. Teachers need activities that are engaging and promote these skills in students.

Looking for some good resources and activities?

Not-for-profit educational resources, such as the Rick Hansen School Program, provide educators with a range of practical teaching tools that support the development of a positive school environment beginning with the first days of school.

The Program provides lessons and activities that engage students in a number of key ways:

- Students learn to set goals, support others, and take leadership.
- The Program focuses on disability awareness, which promotes key characteristics of a positive class climate such as equity, fairness, caring and sensitivity.
- By supporting acceptance of diversity, respect and understanding of differences, disability awareness programs encourage positive interactions among all students.
- The Program supports inclusive education initiatives which value diversity and promotes understanding of others.

- A key feature of the Rick Hansen School Program lessons and activities is that they are easy to use and align with the Quebec provincial curriculum.

- The Program supports Quebec's Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Education, Leisure and Sport, by promoting inclusive environments and teaching practices. The lessons and activities can support the development of conditions in which all students, including those with disabilities, thrive by encouraging respect for diversity.

It's free and it's fun!



Rick Hansen at Rick Hansen School in Abbotsford, June 2015. (Photo courtesy of the Rick Hansen Foundation)

Free resources can be downloaded or ordered at www.rickhansen.com/schools.

Karen Morrison is the Curriculum Developer of the Rick Hansen School Program, Rick Hansen Foundation.

A new facility for The Mackay Centre and Philip E. Layton Schools

By Wendy Singer

The Ministère de l'Éducation, de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Recherche (MEESR) has authorized a sum of \$21.9 million for the English Montreal School Board to build a new facility to house the Mackay Centre and Philip E. Layton Schools.

At a press conference on August 31, 2015 at the Mackay Centre School, EMSB Chairman Angela Mancini announced that the new state-of-the-art facility will be built on Terrebonne Street near Madison Avenue in Notre-Dame-de-Grâce. The building is anticipated to open for the 2018/2019 school year.

For decades, the Philip E. Layton School was located at the Montreal Association for the Blind (MAB) facility on Sherbrooke Street West in NDG, where renovations forced them to move to the Decarie Boulevard building last September. The Mackay Centre and Philip E. Layton Schools have effectively been tenants of the MAB-Mackay Rehabilitation Centre (MMRC), which

falls under the jurisdiction of Minister of Health and Social Services.

The Mackay Centre School educates children with physical disabilities, the deaf and students with communication disorders. P.E. Layton services the blind and/or physically handicapped and /or intellectually handicapped students. Both schools have a supra-regional mandate and consequently, the EMSB is the only school board to offer services to this particular group of English students, not only in the Montreal region, but in the province of Quebec.

"We have been working with the Ministry of Education for four years now to make this dream come true," said Mancini. "I am so pleased to say that the wait is finally over. We will now begin the work necessary with our staff to get this project started."

Newly installed Director General Ann Marie Matheson is more than pleased with the news. "Our most vulnerable students deserve a home of their own," she said. "I look forward to working with our staff and the team at Mackay and Philip E. Layton to ensure that we construct a state of the art facil-

ity second to none."

In her address to distinguished guests and the media, Mancini thanked many individuals who worked tirelessly to bring this project to fruition, including Principal Patrizia Ciccarelli, former Director General of the EMSB Robert Stocker, and former Director Deputy General Roma Medwid. "We also want to take this opportunity to thank the former Minister of Education Dr. Yves Bolduc. He not only visited the school, but put a lot of energy into the file."

"It is a highlight of my mandate to see this project come one step closer to fruition," said Mancini.

Ciccarelli, who, as Mancini described, worked "relentlessly to keep this dossier at the forefront of the government's agenda", called this a victory for the entire English community.

In expressing her sentiments as plans move forward, MNA for the NDG riding Kathleen Weil explained that the Mackay Centre School is the only English-language school that caters to this population of students

not only in Montreal, but in the province of Quebec.

Parent commissioner for special needs students Joanne Charron extended her gratitude to Ciccarelli, her staff, parents and students, the government, and a number of EMSB senior management personnel who devoted an enormous amount of time to this dossier. A parent of a student who attended the Mackay Centre School, Charron added: "The enormity of this is going to resonate for years to come. The work that the staff here does with these children is boundless and limitless."

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Editor: Mike Cohen

Managing Editor: Wendy Singer

Layout & Design: Yibing Shen

Copy Editor: Elaine Cohen

info@inspirationsnews.com

mcohen@inspirationsnews.com

6000 Fielding Ave. Suite 109

Montreal, Quebec, H3X 1T4

514-483-7200 ext.7244

www.inspirationsnews.com



Sports by Daniel Smajovits



Summer of Sports



Athletes Valerie Gagnon Paradis and Andrew Perez, and Coach Jessica Moreau at the Special Olympics World Games. (Photo credit, Megan Grittani-Livingston, official photographer for Team Canada Special Olympics)

Both the Parapan Am Games and the Special Olympics World Games took place this summer, drawing thousands of incredible athletes to both Toronto and Los Angeles, respectively.

On home soil, Canada's Parapan athletes hauled in 168 medals, including 50 gold, ranking them behind Brazil for second place.

Team Canada was led by 19-year-old swimmer Aurelie Rivard. Hailing from St. Jean-Sur Richelieu, Rivard collected seven medals, including six gold. Even with the incredible medal haul, Rivard put the ultimate exclamation point on the Games by breaking the women's 100 metre freestyle S10 world record on the last day of competition.

Fittingly for Canada, the torch was passed onto Rivard from Benoît Huot, who swam competitively for the last time in Toronto. Huot burst onto the international scene in 1998 at the International Paralympic Committee world championships, winning two gold and four silver medals. Named the male athlete of the year with a disability by the International Commonwealth Federation, Huot's 18-year career was an inspiration to countless athletes.

Across the continent in Los Angeles at the Special Olympics World Games, 115 Canadians joined 7,000 disabled athletes from around the world in the largest Spe-

cial Olympics to date. It was considered the largest humanitarian event of the year. The organization itself is the largest one of its kind in the world for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, working with more than 4.4 million athletes in 170 countries.

For Laval's Andrew Perez, the Games were an experience that he will never forget.

"It was an experience of a lifetime. The opening ceremonies were out of this world with all the athletes celebrating together and over 80,000 fans cheering us on," said his mother, Cathy Vlahos Perez. "Celebrities like Stevie Wonder, Avril Lavigne, and Jimmy Kimmel were there, Justin Bieber walked in with Team Canada and First Lady Michelle Obama declared the games open."

Andrew, who was one of only 11 athletes representing Quebec on Team Canada, won gold in the 4 x 100 relay, the 200 metre backstroke as well as took home a silver medal in the 200 metre breaststroke and narrowly missed another medal in the 200 metre medley and finished fourth.

"It was a wonderful experience. Andrew gained more confidence and grew personally. He travelled a long distance on his own, was more engaged and showed great sportsmanship," added Vlahos Perez.

Austria will play host to the Special Olympics World Winter Games in March 2017.

Projet RAD shares urban dance at Camp Massawippi

By Holly Norris

This July, Projet RAD took a road trip to Ayer's Cliff bringing urban dance to the MAB-Mackay Rehabilitation Centre's Camp Massawippi. Located on the shores of Lake Massawippi, this historic sleep-away camp offers programs ranging from adapted waterski to wood shop.

Thanks to the generous donors of Projet RAD's crowd-fund campaign and the Sami Fruits Foundation, Projet RAD offered a 10-day dance intensive at the camp. RAD taught daily dance classes, and the campers performed two shows. The dancers first performance variety show took place on the camp's visiting day. To everyone's delight, Projet RAD co-founder Luca "Lazylegz" Patuelli made a surprise appearance.

After the campers showcased their new moves to an enthusiastic crowd, Lazylegz was treated to a taste of life at Camp Massawippi, including trying adapted waterskiing for the first time. After a full day of activities and dancing at camp, Luca left saying: "The energy of the campers and staff at Massawippi is incredible. I was so impressed by the campers' performance, and every other aspect of the camp. I definitely hope to return!"

Visit www.projetrad.com, or www.camp-massawippi.com for information.

Holly Norris is the Communications Representative of Projet RAD.



Luca "Lazylegz Patuelli" trying adapted water skiing for the first time during his surprise visit to Camp Massawippi. (Photo courtesy of Projet RAD)



A group of Massawippi campers performing their 'Werewolf' dance at the Visitor's Day variety show. (Photo courtesy of Projet RAD)



Benoit Huot wins silver and Alexander Elliot wins bronze at swimming during the 2015 Parapan Am Games. (Photo credit, Scott Grant/Canadian Paralympic Committee)



Aurelie Rivard wins gold at swimming during the 2015 Parapan Am Games. (Photo credit, Scott Grant/Canadian Paralympic Committee)



Sports by Daniel Smajovits

The Adapted Outdoors

As the world becomes more accessible, outdoor sports and adapted travel continue to converge, allowing adventure seekers with special needs the ability to experience opportunities that only a few years ago, would have been impossible.

This summer, my wife and I put ourselves in the shoes of many of our readers and experienced the great Alaskan wilderness from an adapted standpoint, pushing our travels to the edge in the rustic and quintessential Alaskan fishing town of **Seward**.

Our adventure began with **Kenai Fjords Tours** (www.kenaifjords.com), which was easily one of the highlights of our Alaskan experience. Manager Ron Willie beamed with pride when we took a tour of their ADA compliant boats, making this wonderful experience completely accessible. Ron explained to us the tremendous invest-

six-hour tour of the national park. After a delicious lunch on board, which is served only a few minutes after setting sail, we were able to walk around the circumference of the boat to enjoy the sights and sounds of the national park. The new boats operated by CIRI Alaska allow individuals in wheelchairs to move around the entire bottom level, and should these guests want to remain indoors, a section will be blocked off in front of their window, ensuring that no other guests can obstruct their view. Due to their daily sold-out tours during the summer months, Ron encourages guests with special needs to contact him in advance (rwillie@ciri.com) to ensure everything is taken care of upon arrival.

Our adventure began as soon as we boarded the ship, as we witnessed two bald eagles circling our ship, then resting only metres away on the sea wall. Birders undoubtedly had the experience of a lifetime, witnessing



The ramp (pictured above) on boats used by Kenai Fjords Tours allows for complete access for disabled travellers).

ment made by parent company, CIRI Alaska Tourism (www.ciritourism.com) in all their products, which includes the **Seward Windsong Lodge**, where we stayed for two nights, to ensure that guests with special needs can enjoy the majestic beauty of **Kenai Fjords National Park**.

While guests have a number of adventure options to choose from, we opted for the

more bald eagles, tufted and horned Puffins as well as falcons and black-billed magpies throughout the trip. We also spotted a variety of other wildlife, including sea otters, harbor seals as well as a few mountain goats.

Continued on Page 11

Un voyage éducatif en voilier mémorable pour 8 jeunes malvoyants

By Sarah Rouleau

En juin 2014, 8 jeunes malvoyants de 13 à 20 ans ont vécu une semaine mémorable sur le fleuve St-Laurent. Ils ont vogué de Québec jusqu'à Rimouski à bord le grand bateau-école Roter Sand, d'ÉcoMaris. Trois moniteurs de la Fondation des Aveugles du Québec et trois membres de PolyVoile les ont encadrés bénévolement tout au long de ce périple. Les jeunes sont revenus des souvenirs plein la tête et ne risquent pas d'oublier cette expérience de sitôt.

Ce camp de découverte sur la navigation et l'environnement maritime du St-Laurent aura permis aux adolescents de manipuler le gouvernail et les voiles, de lire des cartes marines et de participer aux corvées de nettoyage, d'entretien et de cuisine. « Ce n'est pas tous les jours qu'on peut dire "J'ai fait une semaine de voilier". Et là, ce n'est pas partir en croisière, c'est "avec d'autres, j'ai dirigé un bateau". Et pas juste un petit bateau... un gros bateau! » lançait Maxime, un des jeunes, avant le départ.

Une vague d'autonomie

Ce voyage éducatif aura aussi été une opportunité de travailler en équipe et de gagner une certaine autonomie. « J'ai choisi de participer à ce voyage parce que j'ai besoin de développer mon autonomie. Je sais que je n'aurai pas toujours ma mère pour m'aider. Je sais que plus je vais me mettre dans des situations inconfortables, plus je serai capable de me débrouiller toute seule plus tard » avoue Cynthia, 15 ans, pour qui cette aventure était tout un défi.

Cette expérience enrichissante aussi bien au niveau de l'apprentissage et du dépassement de soi prévoyait des escales sur l'île d'Orléans, l'île de Montmagny, la Baie-Saint-Paul, Tadoussac, Brandy Pot et au Bic.

Avant leur départ, Cynthia, Dominic, Sabrina, Maxime, Laurie-Ann, Antoine, Na-

thalie et Sofia suivent des formations pour apprendre à faire des nœuds, à s'orienter, mais aussi à envisager la vie de groupe sur un voilier afin d'être prêts pour l'expédition.

Des activités pour améliorer leur qualité de vie



Toute l'équipe travaillant à hisser les voiles, une tâche quotidienne sur le bateau. Té (capitaine), Ariane Tessier Moreau (première officière), Francis Aubé et Jean-Baptiste Favier (matelots) d'ÉcoMaris ont été de bons professeurs. (Courtoisie de la Fondation des Aveugles du Québec)

Cette expédition s'inscrit dans le cadre de « Projets 360° », qui consiste à amener des jeunes handicapés visuels voyager et faire du ski à travers le monde. Selon la Fondation des Aveugles du Québec, le voyage est la plus belle école qui soit. Le premier projet spécial de ce type « Ski 360° » a eu lieu en 2012 et a permis à 9 jeunes ayant une déficience visuelle d'aller skier dans les Rocheuses.

Les activités organisées par le service de loisirs de la Fondation des Aveugles du Québec permettent aux jeunes atteints d'une déficience visuelle de sortir de l'isolement et d'acquérir une plus grande confiance en eux. Depuis près de 25 ans, la Fondation des Aveugles du Québec permet aux aveugles de développer leur autonomie et d'avoir une vie sociale enrichie.

Pour voir les photos et témoignages du groupe à bord du voilier, rendez-vous sur www.facebook.com/aveugles.

Voir un résumé vidéo : <http://aveugles.org/premier-video-du-projet-voile/>.

Sarah Rouleau est la Relationniste, Fondation des aveugles du Québec.



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PLENARY
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DR. STEVEN MILLER

HEAD, DIVISION OF NEUROLOGY AND THE CENTRE FOR
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Universal Design for Learning: Canadian Perspectives

Sowing the seeds, facilitating the change, nurturing the growth

By Wendy Singer

McGill University's Office for Students with Disabilities brought educators from across Canada together to discuss Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and overcoming barriers to learning.

The UDL: Canadian Perspectives conference, which took place from May 20 to 23, 2015 in various locations on the McGill University campus, began with an evening reception and keynote address by Dr. David Rose, a developmental neuropsychologist and educator whose primary focus is on the development of new technologies for learning, especially for the most vulnerable of learners.

In 1984, Dr. Rose co-founded CAST, a non-profit research and development organization whose mission is to improve education for all learners, through innovative uses of modern multimedia technology and contemporary research in the cognitive neurosciences. That work has grown into a new field called Universal Design for Learning which now influences educational policy and practice throughout the United States and beyond.

UDL is a research-based set of principles used to guide the design of learning environments that are accessible and effective for all. If barriers to learning are removed, students have the opportunity to succeed academically. This statement can apply to students whether they have a visual or hearing impairment, a physical disability, or learns in a different way than other students.

Over the course of the conference, Canadian organizations, including many from Montreal, presented their progress in implement-



Rachel Desjourdy with Jess Giles.

ing UDL, and the positive results that are ensuing.

Inov8's Director Andrea Prupas spoke about the creation and implementation of accessible educational materials within the Quebec English school boards with the support of inclusive technologies. The concepts discussed were defined by the National Centre of Accessible Educational Materials (<http://aem.cast.org>).

Angela Burgos, Director General, and Anika Maloni, Academic Dean, at Centennial College, shared their fascinating journey in adopting the UDL framework. A school where 70 percent of students have a learning assessment (LD, ADHD, ASD), or mental health issues, Centennial supports students with diverse learning needs through high school and transitioning into the college years.

Due to a paradigm shift to UDL, most students at Centennial become autonomous resilient learners, regardless of their disability. "Disability was viewed as something inherent in the learner that needed to be fixed through intervention," shared Maloni, in explaining this shift. As with many other schools presenting at the conference, the challenge to implementing UDL begins with moving away from attempts to 'fix' the disability (medical model) and towards removing barriers to learning that are found in the environment and curriculum (social model).

The medical model is person-focused in which the individual problems need to be fixed or cured by 'experts', and is widely used. The social model, on the other hand, is society-focused. The person with an impairment is disabled by society and the environment around them. "The needs are too diverse to be addressed by focusing on the nature of the disabilities. The focus must be on widening access," adds Maloni.

Through innovation and collaboration, Centennial has implemented initiatives that structure the environment to their learners' needs, including Omnivox, weekly follow up of all students, workshops targeting learning behaviours including planning, organizing, goal-setting, and asking questions, and curriculum design that focus on methods, course design, objective, assessments and alignment.



Dr. Tara Flanagan.

In implementing this framework, Centennial has seen the number of accommodations go down by over 50 percent. "The focus on curriculum delivery, course design, and assessment methods is time consuming, but it is renewable, time efficient and saves financial resources. You can accommodate most students if you plan for it," concludes Maloni.

Dr. Tara Flanagan, Assistant Professor, Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology at McGill University, spoke about applying the concept of Universal Design to people with autism spectrum disorders. Flanagan explored ways in which UDL may be used to promote inclusion and opportunity. Such methods move away from stigmatization and pigeonholing to embracing diversity and strengths, and collaborating with community stakeholders in a move toward inclusive workplaces.

Jess Giles, Access Services Advisor at the McGill Office for Students with Disabilities, and graduated McGill student Rachel Desjourdy discussed advocating for inclusion, which includes talking with instructors and inclusive learning. Desjourdy, who has a hearing impairment, shared her rocky experience transitioning from high school into university, how she landed on the McGill OSD's doorstep, and the roles that self-advocacy and empowerment played in her successful academic journey. I won't give away too many details, because Ms. Desjourdy has agreed to share her story in the upcoming Fall 2015 / Winter 2016 edition of Inspirations. Please stay tuned!

To end the day, I attended a presentation delivered by Irene Woods, Director, Cassandra Fischer, History Teacher, and Raffaat Ghanem, Science Department Head, at Kells Academy. This team led a fascinating discussion about using digital technology in supporting effective teaching in diverse classrooms. The question at hand was how



Anita Maloni and Angela Burgos.



Irene Woods, Cassandra Fischer, and Raffaat Ghanem.



Presenter Anika Maloni with keynote speaker Dr. David Rose, presenters Roberta Thomson and Frederic Fovet.

to make digital technology user-friendly for the teacher and the student. Fischer demonstrated her experiences with flipping the classroom.

UDL has the potential to help students achieve academic success. These examples are but a few that are in place in the Greater Montreal and surrounding areas. Stay tuned for more, including Alice Havel's article on UDL at Dawson College in our Fall 2015 / Winter 2016 edition.

For information about CAST visit <http://www.cast.org>. For information about McGill OSD visit <https://www.mcgill.ca/osd/office-students-disabilities>.



(Continued from Page 7)

Yet, for adapted travelers, due to the accessibility of the **Kenai Fjords Tours** vessels, the opportunity to sail so close to dozens of killer and humpback whales is potentially once-in-a-lifetime. Whale watching is not unique to Seward, however, most purveyors in the state use smaller vessels with very limited accessibility.

On our adventure, all guests truly wondered at the incredible marine-life. Traveling at the end of June also provided us with the chance to also witness the bubble feeding of humpback whales – a natural wonder only seen in Alaska, Australia and Antarctica.

If whale watching was not enough, we were brought within feet of a tidewater glacier, providing for the unique experience of seeing the glacier calve into the water.

The amazing views, coupled with a cup of coffee or hot chocolate and some of complimentary freshly baked cookies on board made the entire Kenai Fjords Tour an unforgettable experience, accessible to every adventure-seeking traveler.

Hiking to Exit Glacier

While many tours will allow you to cruise

near glaciers, there was only one option that allows all travelers the opportunity to hike to one. Part of **Kenai Fjords National Park, Exit Glacier** gives visitors of all abilities the chance to get up close and personal with a glacier. Operated by the National Parks Service, there is one ADA compliant trail that allows guests in wheelchairs stunning views of the glacier from two different vantage points. There are a number of other moderate to intense trails available, depending on your abilities and time available, leading you to different views. We took a tour offered by our hotel, the Seward Wind-song Lodge, which provided adapted transport to and from the glacier and a guided hike towards the stunning view.

For the rest of our accessible Alaskan adventure, read my column on page 16.



Orcas, as seen during the Kenai Fjords Tours in Seward, Alaska.

Lakeshore Soccer supports Autism Speaks Canada

By Kelly-Anne Soutter

On Saturday August 1, 2015, the Lakeshore Soccer Club hosted a free event that included a friendly soccer match for the Lakeshore Super Sonics, a soccer program for children with special needs, and lunch. The Lakeshore Soccer Club has continuously demonstrated their devotion to helping raise autism awareness. This year, they honoured the 5th anniversary of the Walk Now for

Autism Speaks Montreal event, which took place on May 24, 2015. Aided by their club partners Jeweliez, they have created a bracelet to help Lakeshore and the Super Sonics raise awareness, and all profits are being donated directly to Autism Speaks Canada. If you'd like to order a bracelet, click on the following link: http://www.lakeshoresoccer.ca/lsc2013/displaybycategory.aspx?category_id=7.

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Notebook

Express

By Wendy Singer

On June 8, thousands of Canadians came together in over 25 communities across Canada, including 875 in Montreal and Quebec City, to participate in the 6th annual **Walk to Fight Arthritis**.

Four-year old Laurence and her family were amongst the Montrealers who walked, ran, or biked the five kilometer route in Arthur-Therrien Park in Verdun. This was a huge accomplishment for Laurence, who has juvenile arthritis, and each step she took before the age of two caused her great pain. She pedaled the whole course on her pink bike!

Amongst the attendees were **Marie-Andrée Mauger**, Advisor from the Verdun Borough, **Hélène LeBlanc**, MP for La-Salle-Émard, **Sarah Campillo**, Rheumatologist and Chair of the Advisory Committee and **Eric Amar**, Executive Director, both from The Arthritis Society Quebec's Division, and **Jean-François Parenteau**, Mayor of the Verdun Borough.

The Arthritis Society provides education, programs and support to the over 4.6 million Canadians living with arthritis, investing nearly \$190 million in projects that have led to breakthroughs in the diagnosis, treatment and care of people with arthritis. For information visit www.arthritis.ca.



The ribbon cutting of the Walk to Fight Arthritis in Montreal with Marie-Andrée Mauger, Hélène LeBlanc, Sarah Campillo, Eric Amar, and Jean-François Parenteau. (Photo credit, Ann Dion)



Galileo S.I.S. students dancing to Michael Jackson's ABC at Galileo Adult Education Centre.

On May 28, the Miriam Foundation in partnership with The Unicorn Children's Foundation, welcomed over 200 guests to "La Dolce Vita" at Luciani Infiniti.

A cocktail party that stood true to its theme of Buenos Aires, the evening featured the **Gold Centre's Glee Club**, a live tango performance which brought finesse and flair to the stage, a tasty dinner catered by Beso that delighted the senses with the flavours of Argentina, and a silent auction.

The undeniable highlight of the evening was the Glee Club's rendition of *Don't Cry for Me Argentina*, as well as other popular hits, which had the crowd cheering.

Organized by co-chairs **Marsha Becker** and Pearl Bratin, and the Dolce Vita committee, the event raised \$65,000 in support of the Miriam Foundation's scholarship fund for early intervention services. Both foundations were grateful for Reitmans for their generous sponsorship of the event.

"The needs are urgent as we're conscious that more than 150,000 individuals residing in Quebec have autism or intellectual disabilities," said **Warren Greenstone**, CEO of the Miriam Foundation.



The La Dolce Vita Committee: Warren Greenstone, Rhoda Vineberg, Susan Tepner-Novack, Marsha Becker, Pearl Bratin, Rona Davis, Susan Stivaletti and Valeria Rosenbloom. (Photo credit, PBL Photography)



The Gold Centre's Glee Club (Photo credit, PBL Photography)

Global Montreal was searching for junior weather specialists to join **Jessica Laventure** for live weather segments on the Morning News. Children between the ages of eight and 13 were able to make homemade weather videos and send them to Global. The first winner was **Owen Bruemmer**, a student at Edinburgh Elementary School in Montreal West.

"We were so impressed when we saw the enthusiasm, the energy, the teamwork that went into this visit, that

we asked if we could come for a visit," said Laventure during her newscast. She visited students in grade 5, and congratulated them personally. "They had great questions prepared for me, and it was such a pleasure meeting them.

You can view the full report here: <http://globalnews.ca/video/1968417/junior-weather-specialist-contest-wrap-up-and-mackay-center-school-visit>.

On June 10, over 100 guests gathered in the gym of Galileo Adult Education Centre to be dazzled by the school's Social Integration Services Program (S.I.S.) students. This group of nearly 50 students worked diligently for 10 months with their team of teachers and staff to prepare their musical, *Love, Michael*, a tribute to Michael Jackson.

Galileo's Principal **Martina Schiavone** opened the



Martina Schiavone with student Romeo Giuseppe, and Robert Stocker.

show, welcoming guests from the EMSB including former Director General **Robert Stocker**, and representatives from CRDITED de Montréal.

Love, Michael was laced with fun choreography and contagious smiles. The school spirit was undeniable, with students proudly wearing their black I Love Galileo t-shirts. It was often a challenge for audience members to stay seated!

Galileo's former Vice-Principal **Joe Cacchione** took to the stage to share some heartfelt words of appreciation. Last spring, Cacchione, along with the support of his friend **Antoni Sнопек**, organized a trip to New York City, which many of the S.I.S. students took part in.

As **Louise Panet-Raymond** stated in her closing remarks, "Over the past two years, Galileo is quickly becoming the gem of the EMSB." Indeed true, they will be increasing their student numbers in the year to come, and look forward to welcoming more students to their school. Read our blog at The Inspired Blogger: special needs in Montreal, for more about this show.



Best Buddies Chapter at LaurenHill Academy celebrates

By JoAnne Nagle



Students at LaurenHill Academy with their buddies.

The Best Buddies Chapter at LaurenHill Academy held its annual end of year event on May 28, 2015. This very special friendship group, which includes 31 members, is a mix of Buddies and Peer Buddies working together creating activities and fundraising events while at the same time gaining leadership skills and stressing inclusion. The group, which meets weekly, has been developing over a four-year period and promises to be even bigger and better next year.

The group has had great success in the past year in hosting its major event, Hooping it Up, which is a basketball competition for the whole school. For many children such opportunities, which allow them to take center stage, come regularly, but for children with intellectual disabilities, these chances to participate in leading fundraising events, participating in a large friendship group, is paramount to ecstasy.

The end of year event was amazing. Everyone enjoyed dinner, a bus ride together, and Cosmic Bowling. We

can't wait to see what this group will accomplish next year!

Best Buddies Canada is a national charity that helps to foster friendships between individuals with intellectual disabilities and autism spectrum disorders with student volunteers in over 370 universities, colleges, high schools, and elementary schools across the country. Through Best Buddies, students with an intellectual disability are given the opportunities to enjoy the same experiences many of us take for granted such as going to the mall, watching a movie, or simply enjoying the company of a friend. In Montreal, there are six Best Buddies chapters including: McGill University, Concordia University, Dawson College, LaurenHill Academy, Westmount High School, and Reach School.

If you are interested in bringing Best Buddies to your school, or for more information, visit their website at www.bestbuddies.ca or call 1-888-779-0061.

JoAnne Nagle is a Special Educator at LaurenHill Academy.

A 'Ramped Up' tribute to Stella Young: Comedian, journalist, disability advocate

"I've been an atheist for a long time - ever since I first heard that there was only a stairway to heaven." - Stella Young 1982-2014

By Maia Azia

The world lost a mighty figure this last December when Stella Young, Australian comedian, journalist and disability advocate, died at the age of 32. Born with Osteogenesis Imperfecta, at less than one metre tall, Stella Young embodied in her small frame a feisty and fiercely funny character that led her to become a leading figure in disability advocacy down under.

Stella began campaigning for accessibility at the age of 14 by auditing the stores in her hometown and was instrumental in the creation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. As editor of ABC's disability news website Ramp Up, Stella combined her journalistic savvy and her comic sensibility to influence individual and public policy. She argued that "disability doesn't make you exceptional, but questioning what you think you know about it does."

She was known for using her sarcastic sharp wit to call out those who espouse inspirational quotes like, "The only disability in life is a bad attitude," clarifying that "No

amount of smiling at a flight of stairs ever turned it into a ramp. No amount of standing in the middle of a bookshelf and radiating a positive attitude is going to turn all those books into Braille." She used her wicked sense of humor to breakdown stereotypes, express frustrations and highlight the real truth, that at the end of the day we are all the same and have the right to the same basic opportunities. For Stella, her disability was not that she used a wheelchair but that her broader environment was not accessible.

The truth is, not everyone with a disability is training for a Paralympic marathon. Some play sports but some are quite happy staying at home watching reruns of Friends with their friends. Yup, just like you and me. And, as Stella so aptly described in the short film, Room for Change, some would love to just be able to shop for the latest cute fashion they saw on TV without worrying if they can manoeuvre their power chair into the dressing room.

Stella Young, she might have contested being labelled as inspirational, but she contin-



Stella Young

ues to inspire us to question the inclusivity of the world we are creating, as we picture her wheeling up that ramp to heaven.

Maia Aziz P.S.W., C.L.Y.L is a Program Manager at the MAB-Mackay Rehabilitation

Centre, serves as President-Elect of the Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor and hosts the talk radio show Morning Moments With Maia...Conversations of Love and Laughter, Sundays at 9 a.m. www.withloveandlaughter.ca.



Adapted Travel by Mike Cohen



MYRTLE BEACH VIA PLATTSBURGH

For our recent summer family holiday to Myrtle Beach, South Carolina we decided that a 16-hours drive from Montreal was not on our wish list. There is a viable alternative in Spirit Airlines (www.spirit.com) and we happily took advantage of it, flying directly to our destination via Plattsburgh, New York. This has long been a favorite stop for Montrealers, given its close proximity. The city beaches and camp grounds are packed all summer long and it is also a spectacular place for boating, wind surfing, or fishing.

We left a day early and checked in at the Comfort Inn (www.plattsburghcomfortinn.com), spent a few hours at the Champlain Mall and enjoyed a nice dinner at the Butcher Block Restaurant (www.butcherblockrestaurant.com). It was the right decision for we did not have to worry about being held up at customs and got to sleep in a little before our 2 p.m. flight. We landed at 1 p.m. on the return home and following a stop for groceries we were home for supper.

Spirit is known as the ultra-low cost airline of the Americas and home of the Bare Fare. What this means is that fares are unbundled, reflecting the cost of taking customers to their destination without any extras. Every customer gets frill control: the ability to choose what perks and options you'd like to add, independent of the choices of other passengers. Officials at the airline maintain that by structuring fares this way, every passenger has a chance to fly for less than any other airline. Spirit currently operates more than 380 daily flights to over 57 destinations within the U.S., Latin America, Caribbean and Canada.

We were very happy with our Spirit experience. The flight to Myrtle Beach was just over two hours. Spirit charges you separately for checked bags and carry on items. In actuality, all airlines charge for these items, but they bundle them in the price. One small personal item that fits under your seat is permitted for free. The planes have wider seats in two by two seating configuration with ex-

tra-large leg room, Spirit calls them the Big Front Seats, which are about the size of a first-class seat, but available for around \$25. Make sure to check in online 24 hours before the flight and print your boarding pass from home or your hotel. If you wait until getting to the airport, that will result in an extra \$10 charge per booking.

Spirit, recognized as the fastest growing airline in the Americas, recently received a respected, independent endorsement that being different makes them one of the best. Air Transport World named Spirit as the Value Airline of the Year at its 41st annual Industry Achievement Awards ceremony. This marked the first time Spirit had received the award. The air carrier known for its bright yellow planes and humorous emails, has only been operating in the low-cost space since 2007.

According to the Department of Transportation statistics, Spirit fares are, on average, 40 percent lower than other airlines. Even after adding additional items like seat assignments, bags, and refreshments, Spirit's total price is 35 percent lower.

Spirit Airlines suggests that any travellers with special needs identify where they may need assistance at the time of booking. Customer service personnel have been specially trained and are aware of applicable Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and Department of Transportation (DOT) disability regulations.

Spirit offers a special TTY/TDD reservations service in conjunction with AT&T Relay Service. Customers may take wheelchairs, walkers, canes, crutches, or assist devices, in addition to one carry-on item. Devices can be stowed in an overhead bin, underneath the seat or in the forward cargo bin. Spirit works closely with the airports they serve to ensure that all facilities are accessible to everyone. Personnel are available to assist customers with disabilities in boarding, deplaning and connecting with their flights. They will provide assistance in getting customers to and from gates. However, they are not equipped to provide full monitoring while waiting at the gate. They will provide transfer service on and off the aircraft using boarding or aisle chairs that are designed for aircraft aisles. If you are making a connection, they will provide assistance between flights using their wheelchair service. If requested and needed, they will make available your own wheelchair from the aircraft cargo compartment for your use during your layover.

The airline will do its best to offer specific requests in seating for customers with disabilities. Although they offer assigned seating, it is on a first come first served basis, and it is suggested you check in at least one hour prior to departure to better serve your request. Service animals trained to assist customers with mobility, visual and hearing disabilities are permitted in the aircraft cabin. A service animal must occupy the floor space where the customer sits and cannot obstruct an aisle or areas that must remain clear in the case of an emergency evacuation.

PLATTSBURGH AIRPORT

Myrtle Beach is a year-round tourist destination and as such the direct route from Plattsburgh International Airport (www.fly-plattsburgh.com) is a successful one. "We have had Myrtle Beach service since 2008, first with Direct Air and then with Spirit Airlines," says Airport Manager Chris Kreig. "Myrtle Beach is a popular destination for travelers using the airport."

Created from the former Plattsburgh Air Force Base, the airport is quickly establishing itself as a multi-purpose aviation and aerospace complex serving the entire Plattsburgh/Montreal/Lake Placid region, including northern New York State, southern Quebec and Vermont. A massive, multi-modal facility, the airport has an established record of success as a fully operating industrial airport and aerospace park, handling large and small aircraft daily for its tenants and others. We left our car at the airport. Republic Parking charges only \$8 a night and it is free if you are there for six hours or less). Just steps from the terminal, a free shuttle service is available to and from the lots.

Amber Parliament, a spokesperson for the Adirondack Visitors Bureau, a division of the North County Chamber of Commerce (Northcountychamber.com), notes that the airport is currently in the middle of a \$55 million expansion with an expected two year construction project. The airport is proud to have bilingual signage, aimed at making it easier for Quebec travellers.

Kreig says he anticipates the terminal expansion project, with the exception of the Customs facility, to be complete by late summer/early fall 2016. "Once completed, the expanded terminal will resolve capacity issues that currently exist and will accommodate future air service growth," he says. "Completion of the Customs facility will allow for international air service from the



Spirit Airlines flies directly from Plattsburgh to Myrtle Beach.



airport.”

Kreig says he does not have exact data on Montreal-specific traffic, but in the broader spectrum, approximately 70 percent passenger traffic comes from Canada, with passengers traveling from as far north as Quebec City and as far west as Ottawa. The catchment area for the airport is quite large due in part to the combination of the destinations served, ease of access, and pricing.

The official title of the Airport is the Plattsburgh International Airport. The Plattsburgh-North Country Chamber of Commerce, which is contracted by the airport to provide marketing support, uses the term “Montreal’s U.S. Airport” as part of their marketing efforts, but Montreal is not part of the official title of the Airport.

The airport has handicapped accessible parking, washrooms, and an elevator and there are wheelchairs available. In addition, there are boarding ramps that accommodate wheelchairs for those aircraft which conduct ground boarding.

ACCOMODATIONS

The Comfort Inn and Suites (plattsburghcomfortinn.com) at 411 Route 3 has tended to be our “go to” spot in Plattsburgh over the years. They have one bedroom suites, which includes a fairly large bedroom, work desk and television and a separate living room containing a pullout couch, a TV, sink and a microwave and fridge.

There is a free hot and cold breakfast. If you sleep in, a new Perkin’s Restaurant is attached to the facility. There is also a Boulangerie Café, a lobby coffee shop featuring Starbucks™ Coffee and fresh baked pastries. Legends Sports Bar is the place to catch the latest game on the tube. The hotel is now in the midst of doubling Champy’s Fun Zone, their family entertainment center,

to 12,000 square feet. They will add a two story lazer tag arena, an elaborate two storey soft play full of the latest innovations, Lazer Maze, indoor bumper cars and a Build a Bear area. This is in addition to their current 18 hole indoor mini golf, miniature bowling alleys, redemption games and video games. Outdoor batting cages and mini golf are planned for some time in 2016.

You might want to find time to check out the hotel’s health club and fitness center, entertainment room, indoor heated pool complete with a waterslide and other features young children will particularly enjoy. Of their 114 rooms, 28 are suites. They come complete with fridges, microwaves and a kitchenette sink. A gigantic Wal-Mart Super Store is literally in the parking lot while the Champlain Mall and Price Chopper supermarket are a short walk away.

Owner Jim Murray and his partner Terry Meron opened the locale in 1988. Murray was a teacher by profession. Meron owned an Italian restaurant. He wanted to get into the hotel business and asked Murray to come aboard. Before you could say “reservation” they had a Comfort Inn franchise, which they have expanded substantially over the years. It has a games room, party room and banquet facilities. They secured the Perkin’s franchise in 2006 to give customers another reason not to have to leave the facility. Canadian clients come to Plattsburgh for the great merchandising deals.

The hotel has several handicapped parking spots in front of the main entrance. Large-sized elevators will bring you to the second floor. Make sure to advise them of any special needs when making a reservation for there are some suites on the top floor which you can only access by stairs.

If you forgot to bring along any necessities, the front desk has a magic drawer complete with toothbrushes, toothpaste, shaving



The Comfort Inn Plattsburgh is popular with Montrealers.

cream and razors.

For more information you can log on to their website at www.plattsburghcomfortinn.com, e-mail info@plattsburghcomfortinn.com or call (518) 562-2730.

DINING OUT

We dined at the Butcher Block at 15 Booth Drive. While the menu includes scrumptious chicken, pasta, and other quality delights, seafood and beef still grab most of the headlines. They have a nice kids menu as well. On the night we were there you could hear the French language emanating from many tables.

Since opening in 1975, the Butcher Block has become a mainstay of the restaurant trade. The menu is eclectic and unpretentious, but done with flair. Daily featured entrees are written on a board in the lobby and repeated at the table by the wait staff. This

place has an excellent soup, salad and bread bar. It comes with all main entrees or can be ordered as a meal. I highly recommend the prime rib. For fish lovers, the maple Dijon salmon is top-notch. As a side, the loaded mashed potatoes are a good option. If you have room for dessert, consider a hot fudge sundae. The entrance to the restaurant is wheelchair accessible and so are most of the sections.

For reservations call 518-563-0920. It is open for lunch seven days a week, 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.; dinner Monday to Thursday, 4:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, 4:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.; and Sunday dinner, 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. You can access the entire menu at www.butcherblockrestaurant.com.

Mike Cohen is the editor of Inspirations. He can be reached at mcohen@inspirationsnews.com. Follow his travels at www.sandboxwold.com/travel and on Twitter and Instagram@mikecohencsl.



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Adapted Alaska

By Daniel Smajovits



Just mentioning the State of Alaska conjures up images of incredible wildlife and natural beauty, unmatched throughout the world. Yet, for travelers with special needs, the rugged life lived by Alaskans which is portrayed in pop culture would make some think twice about planning a dream vacation to The Last Frontier. However, Alaska is quickly becoming one of the most accessible travel destinations worldwide.

Nearly all Alaskan adventures begin in **Anchorage**, as **Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport (ANC)** welcomes daily direct flights from Vancouver, Seattle, Atlanta, Newark, Chicago and other major American cities.

Should Anchorage serve as a pit stop before continuing deeper into Alaska, the airport is home to every major rental car company and a number of adapted shuttle bus companies, allowing those with special needs a plethora of options to reach areas of the state by car. If your travels plan on taking you to further outlying areas, regional airlines such as **Alaska Airlines** (www.alaskaair.com) or **Ravn Alaska** (www.flyravn.com) offer connecting flights throughout the state.

While not the capital, **Anchorage** is still home to 40 percent of the state's population and its downtown core is home to a number of high quality restaurants. We chose to indulge in a reindeer sausage and soak in the Midnight Sun for a few hours before driving south to our first destination, the port city of **Seward**.

Considered one of the most beautiful drives in the world, the **Seward Highway** is a 201 kilometer (125 mile) scenic drive that winds through the Kenai Peninsula, Chugach National Forest, Turnagain Arm and Kenai Mountains. While serving as the main road between Anchorage and Seward, adapted lookouts dot the road every few miles, providing amazing photo taking opportunities and your first chance to spot bald eagles, moose, bears and depending on the time of

year, beluga whales migrating north at Beluga Point. Should you not rent your own car, most of the shuttle services offer a guided drive south, complete with stops. These same shuttles can provide the tour, in addition to, transportation to your cruise ship, should that be your final destination.

Seward

We spent two wonderful nights at the **Seward Windsong Lodge** (www.seward-windsong.com). With 180 rooms, eight of which are ADA (American Disabilities Act) compliant and fully accessible, the lodge is nestled minutes outside of Seward, tucked underneath towering mountains and on the banks of the Resurrection River. The ideally located lodge served as our home base for our three days in Seward, offering us easy access to the restaurants and shops downtown as well as to our two tours: **Kenai Fjords** and **Exit Glacier**.

For more information on the spectacular **Kenai Fjords Tour**, click on the sports section on page 7 of this EXPRESS.



Windsong Lodge ADA room.



Just one of the spectacular views on board the White Pass and Yukon railroad.

While all of our meals were incredible in Alaska, one of our favorites came from **T-N-T Fish Processing** (www.buchananfishing.com), just down the street from the Seward Windsong Lodge. Terry and Tina Crump operate this small smoke shack, offering tourists with freshly smoked and cured salmon, caught only half-a-mile away. While there's no place to dine-in, for fish lovers, this is a must-stop on your way in or out of town.

Cruising Alaska

After three days on land, we took to the open waters and boarded a seven-day cruise southbound towards **Vancouver**. Cruising is undoubtedly the most popular method to experience Alaska and most major cruise lines operate out of the two main ports of

Seward or **Whittier**. Look for cruise lines to offer very similar, if not identical, itineraries and excursion options.

All cruises offer a mix of scenic cruising and ports-of-call. Our cruise took us to **Hubbard Glacier** and through **Glacier Bay National Park**, which once again provided stunning views of glaciers as well as the awe-inspiring sights and sounds of glaciers calving.

After two days of scenic cruising, we were ready to once again enjoy Alaska on land as we had three straight days with ports of call: **Skagway**, **Juneau** and **Ketchikan**.

Skagway

Located less than an hour drive west of Yukon, **Skagway** is the home of the **White Pass and Yukon Route** railroad, (www.wpyr.com) formerly the primary means of transportation for miners, but now strictly serves as a scenic and incredible way to experience the area.

With completely accessible and ADA compliant trains, guests can ride from Skagway to the Summit of White Pass, a 2,865 foot elevation. The trip is fully narrated, passing through two tunnels, over sky-high trestles and cascading waterfalls. Journeys are timed in conjunction with your cruise ship, ensuring you return to Skagway with plenty of time to board.

If you or your guests have the ability to rent-a-car, another popular option is to drive the 65-mile journey to **Carcross**, **Yukon** and **Emerald Lake**. Set aside at least four to six hours for this trip, as photo opportunities



are abundant and there might be a line at the borders entering Canada and returning to the United States. The quaint town of **Carcross** provides access to the world's smallest desert as well as Emerald Lake, two natural wonders that will put an exclamation point on a great day.

Juneau

The capital city of Alaska is only accessible via air or water, making this a unique destination for cruise ship passengers. With your ship in port for the day, most cruisers take part in two of the most popular excursions in Juneau: whale watching and helicopter tours.

Since we had a fantastic whale watching adventure in Seward, we opted for the ride of a lifetime, an **Era Helicopter** (www.eraflightseeing.com) tour to **Taku Glacier**. While on the pricier side of excursions at \$300 per person, the opportunity to land on a glacier and soar through Alaska was truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience. We came across Era Helicopters from their nearly perfect rating on TripAdvisor, and they lived up to their reputation completely. They offer as accessible an experience as possible, ensuring that anyone with mobility issues can be transported to the airport and into the helicopter. Once on the glacier, however, they do not have a lift to allow guests to exit the helicopter.

With the helicopter experience over, we made the most of our time in Juneau by taking a trip up the **Mount Roberts Tramway** (www.mountrobertstramway.com) to experience more stunning views of Juneau and the countryside. At the very affordable cost of \$33 per person for an all-day pass, the tramway and mountain is a fun and exciting way to spend time in port. Fully ADA compliant, from the base of the mountain up to, and including their lodge, movie theatre, restaurant, gift shop and even one scenic trail, all guests have the wonderful opportunity to enjoy the views from 1,800 feet above Juneau. Included with your ticket are unlimited trips up and down the mountain as well as the 18-minute film, "Seeing Daylight", about the Tlingit way of life.

Taking advice from past travelers, we saved our souvenir shopping for Mount

Roberts as well, purchasing a few authentic Native gifts that were handcrafted by the local Tlingit population. We also found some fun "Made in Alaska" souvenirs, identified by the polar bear sticker on the bottom.

As we were a little concerned about eating too much before our helicopter tour, we made sure to visit the **Timberline Bar & Grill** in the Mount Roberts lodge where we enjoyed some halibut nuggets, halibut hummus and smoked salmon dip alongside Alaskan wine, while overlooking the beautiful Gastineau Channel and city of Juneau.

Our only regret is that we wish we had more time to spend on **Mount Roberts** as there was just too much to see, do and eat.

Ketchikan

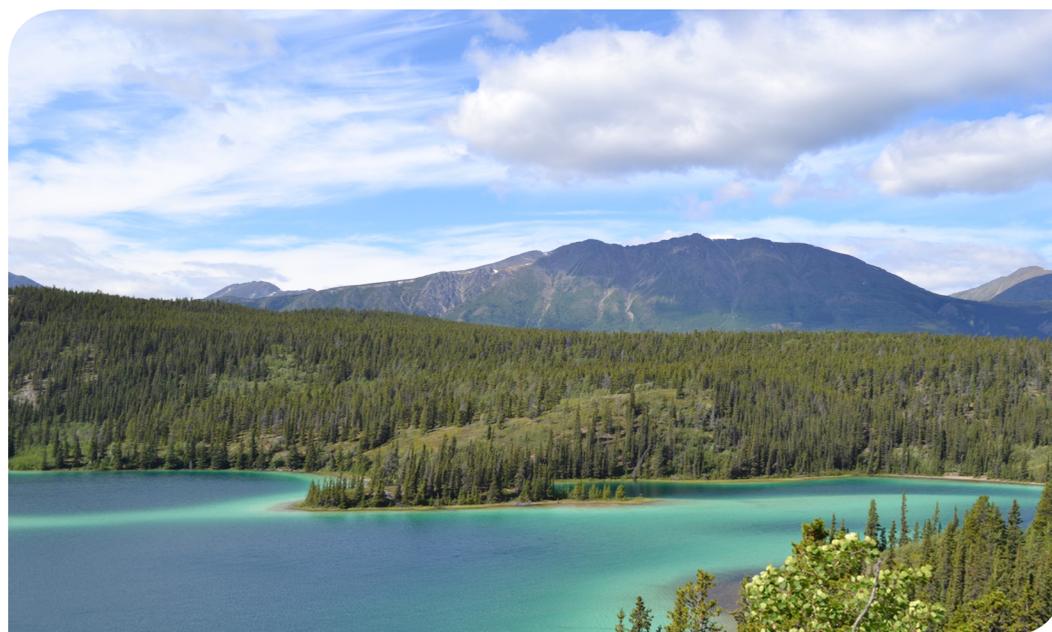
Known as the **Salmon Capital of the World**, if you haven't eaten enough wild salmon by this point in your journey, Ketchikan will not disappoint. While Ketchikan offers a variety of other things to do in port, such as their famous **Lumberjack Show** and **Totem Bight State Park**, the most popular excursion by far is salmon fishing. Charter boats pack into every open slip in the harbor, primed and ready to take guests out into the bay for their own fishing adventure.

Our day in port allowed us enough time to soak in the quaint town of Ketchikan, including Creek Street, which some say is the most photographed street in the country, before heading out for our noon charter trip with **Jared Oien** from **Rainy Day Charters** (www.ketchikanakfishing.com). A native of Ketchikan, Captain Jared's primary business during the summer months is taking guests on private charters. While none of the charter vessels in Ketchikan are completely accessible, guests with special needs can be accommodated with assistance. Their participation in the excursion will depend on their abilities.

For adapted travel in Vancouver, check out Mike Cohen's travel column in the Fall/Winter 2014 edition of Inspirations.



Yukon Drive.



Emerald Lake.



Mount Roberts View.



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Summit School Contact Info

1750 Deguire
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The English Montreal School Board has begun its second major initiative aimed at bolstering energy efficiency in school buildings. This \$24.6 million project with energy efficiency experts Énergère focus on 17 specific schools and centers. Savings are projected to amount to more than \$1.17 million per year. energere.com



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