



# INSPIRATIONS EXPRESS

A Snapshot of Our Special Needs Community  
Un coup d'oeil sur notre communauté aux besoins particuliers



## A celebration of the Arts

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Artist Billy Kirsch with Julie Longval, Coordinator of The Marlene and Joel King Special Needs Department of the YM-YWHA, at Expo Créatabilité. Read more on Page 2 of this edition.



[www.cinemasguzzo.com](http://www.cinemasguzzo.com)

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# Expo Créatability showcases stunning items created by artists with special needs

By Elaine Cohen

Their ages, cultural backgrounds, talents, and special needs differ but they are all eager to showcase and sell their unique creations. Their artistic endeavors run the gamut from fine and applied arts to clothing accessories and gourmet goods. Whether they are woodcrafters, weavers, photographers, jewelers, dog biscuit bakers or candle makers, they are determined to contribute to the economy as productive employers or valued employees.

To achieve their goal, they need to sensitize the community-at-large to their artistic prowess and gain support to find and maintain meaningful employment. Problem solvers and creative thinkers Jason Goldsmith, of The Big Blue Hug Project, and Lisa Marcovici, consultant at Rekinexion, and Wendy Singer, managing editor, Inspirations Newspaper, perceived this need and organized Expo Créatability on May 8, 2015, at Rekinexion's Rockland Avenue premises. Sponsored by Lucy Pires and Sihem Oka from Investors Group, it was a gratifying success, the initiators explain. Multitalented artists with special needs throughout the province and beyond Quebec borders reserved tables to display and sell their wares. Furthermore, they had a chance to interact with peers and the public plus make important contacts.

Goldsmith and Marcovici take pride in their brainchild and are pleased to report Peter Hall School in Saint-Laurent will host Expo Créatability on Friday, May 13, 2016. "We are currently inviting artists with spe-

cial needs to reserve a table (\$30) to exhibit their wares," Marcovici said, adding students from Peter Hall School will run the snack bar and everyone will benefit from the facilities at the spacious, wheelchair accessible venue. "Peter Hall vice-principal Sherilyn Ami has been incredibly enthusiastic and supportive. So many people want to work with us."

Goldsmith and Marcovici praise the multitalented participants for their ingenuity, as well as point out the invaluable knowledge gained from conducting hands-on sales. When they sign up for a table, they can bring volunteers to help them set it up and price their creations. Furthermore, Expo Créatability is able to provide the artists with volunteers, if needed. No doubt, they will walk away empowered and endowed with valuable marketing and presentation skills.

In one instance, a talented photographer with special needs from Vermont had never ventured away from home. Through the efforts of organizers at Expo Créatability, he was able to attend and engage in last year's event. His magnificent photographs of Vermont sunsets and other subjects impressed everyone.

Goldsmith and Marcovici's personal experiences served as the catalyst for their current affiliation with helping professions and alerted them to the need for Expo Créatability.

Goldsmith, an industrial designer by profession, responded to his son's chalkboard drawing of "the big blue hug"

and it served as the breakthrough in the route to conversing and bonding with Ellis, then a pre-schooler limited verbally due to autism spectrum disorder. Over the years, Ellis, now 17, has made remarkable progress. The Big Blue Hug website is chock full of Ellis's drawings, which Goldsmith transforms on glass using glass paint and frames them in shadow boxes. The result is a captivating 3-D effect. Goldsmith, in turn, teaches others how to communicate through art. He compares it to a visual sign language.

Marcovici, an architect by profession, refused to give up and substitute Velcro for shoelaces because she was told her son would never be able to tie his shoes. Furthermore, she was advised to medicate him. "His issue wasn't verbal," she said clarifying the diversity of special needs. Marcovici's determination paid off two-fold. She sought out and discovered non-intrusive solutions for her son. Shedding her architect's blueprints, she pursued intensive studies and subsequently opened Rekinexion, which embraces learning through movement. In addition to Brain Gym, Marcovici, along with her team, conduct multi-faceted workshops for all ages at Rekinexion.

Créatability is encouraging a paradigm shift of how society views what special needs individuals can achieve and the role they have in our society. They view a community where people with intellectual, developmental or physical disabilities can count on being supported in finding and maintaining meaningful employment, be it through self-employment or working for others. This vision begins with their upcom-

ing art and employability expo, which will feature both artists and employers, and will provide ample opportunity for networking and learning more about one another.

For information about Expo Créatability, contact [creatabilityexpo@gmail.com](mailto:creatabilityexpo@gmail.com), [jgoldsmith@thebigbluehug.com](mailto:jgoldsmith@thebigbluehug.com), or [lisa.marcovici@rekinexion.com](mailto:lisa.marcovici@rekinexion.com), visit [www.creatabilityexpo.com](http://www.creatabilityexpo.com), or call (514) 342-3331.

## Arts in the City

### Save the date!

*D'un oeil different: La creation, une affaire de Coeur*

**March 2 to 17, 2016**

Info: <http://www.dunoeildifferent.com>

*I Can Dream Theatre  
Screening of The Making of A Dream*

**April 28, 2016**

Info: [www.icandreamgroup.com](http://www.icandreamgroup.com)

*Summit School's original musical*

**May 11 and 12, 2016**

*Expo Créatability*

**May 13, 2016**

Info: [www.creatabilityexpo.ca](http://www.creatabilityexpo.ca)

*The Centre for the Arts in Human  
Development 20th Anniversary*

*Celebration: Music, Art,  
Dance and Theatre*

**June 16 and 17, 2016**

Info: [Concordia.ca/cahd](http://Concordia.ca/cahd)



Lisa Marcovici and Jason Goldsmith.

The team from Peter Hall School exhibiting at Expo Créatability.

Lucila Guerrero exhibiting at Expo Créatability.

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# I Can Dream Theatre Group expands in 2016

By Wendy Singer

Michele Matthews, Ada Masciarelli, and Trish Bartley met over 15 years ago while working at Summit School. They all had a calling in special education. They also had a calling in the Arts. When these three talented, ambitious women put their heads together, they envisioned a theatre group where people of all abilities could perform, learn, and grow. Thus began the I Can Dream Theatre Group (ICDT).

ICDT has become well-known in the Greater Montreal area for their original, professional and hilarious yearly musical comedies and dramas. A community-based organization, ICDT gives young adults with special needs the opportunity to develop their talents in the area of the performing arts while promoting commitment, responsibility, self-confidence and friendship.

The dynamic trio of Matthews (musical director/choreographer), Masciarelli (writer/director), and Bartley (production manager) begin their process each December with auditions. Preparations, including script writing, stage direction and choreography continue from there in the lead up to their November production dates.

Last year's spectacular show *The Tale of MacBeth(ish)* brought ICDT into the realm of drama, with eloquent Shakespearian(ish!) dialect and costumes, seamless acting, and enchanting musical numbers, both solos and group. It is a marvel to watch this talented group, from the singing of Steven Atme to the comedic timing of Andrew Perez, Maxwell Po's song and dance



Steven Atme and Maxwell Po backstage after the ICDT dress rehearsal 2015.

moves, Michelle Perron-Elgee in her ICDT debut, and Ainslie MacDonald's dramatic prowess in her first leading role, to name only a few. The audience was transported into another era as we delved into the tragic world of Macbeth with ICDT.

While this performance built on past successes including *Hannibal the Musical*, *Copacabana*, and *Love Trek*, the introduction of drama into this production challenged the artists, who ranged in age from 18 to 44, to grow in ways they had not yet experienced. "Very few of our cast are actually acting. Most are just being themselves. Drama was a challenge because it called for some of the cast to go beyond what was natural for them and act as their character would have," shared Matthews while discussing the ICDT actors. "We pushed them to grow, and they rose to the challenge. They did it well."

Each role in ICDT's original scripts is written to bring out the talents in each cast member. "Taking our direction is hard for them. And they pull it off. It is amazing!" adds Matthews.

While all cast members were outstanding, one cannot write about ICDT without mentioning the audience. Think Montreal Canadiens, final playoff game in the final round for the Stanley Cup. Think of the noise, the energy of the crowd. The ICDT audience rivals these Bell Centre crowds (minus the beer and lack of decorum). Made up of family, friends, and community members, they go wild for their actors, with cheers, tears, song and dance. It is a not-to-be-missed-treat to be a part of this audience. If you have not yet had the joy of attending, do



Jamal Thomas, Ainslie MacDonald, Samuel Lewis, and Gabel Fadda backstage after the ICDT dress rehearsal 2015.

yourself a favour and grab a ticket for the next one.

In its fifth year, and with a solid foundation, ICDT has taken steps to fulfill a greater mission. A limiting factor has been capping the amount of people involved to the number of roles in the show. With their newly acquired Federal non-profit status in hand, that is all about to change.

ICDT will soon welcome members to join, and offer theatre-related educational programs to adults with special needs. Geared towards developing vocational skills, programming will include set design and construction, costume design, sewing, clerical, office and computer skills, graphic design, printing, screen printing, photography, videography, life skills, cooking and catering, and programs to reinforce social, and leisure skills. They will also offer workshops in the performing and visual arts to people of all ages with special needs.

This will address the critical need for services for people over 21 years of age who have special needs and are no longer in the school system. In turn, ICDT will provide training and work opportunities, heighten awareness about people with special needs, and in time, assisted living to adults with special needs.



Ada Masciarelli, Michele Matthews, and Trish Bartley of I Can Dream Theatre Group. (Photo credit, Katherine Meyendorff)



Michelle Perron-Elgee in *The Tale of MacBeth(ish)*.

What does ICDT have planned for 2016? On April 28, they will premiere *The Making of A Dream*, which is a behind-the-scenes film about the making of *The Tale of MacBeth(ish)*, produced by the company's fourth wheel, Merrill Matthews (coordinator of Institutional and Educational Markets at the National Film Board of Canada). Save the date, bring some tissues; this will no doubt be an extraordinary event.

In the Fall of this year, ICDT will be taking a smaller troupe of cast members to schools and community centres to perform short, original pieces that will impact their audiences and share their message of inclusion and ability.

"Our actors have come so far. There is much more growth to come," adds Matthews.

The ICDT slogan, "If you can dream it, you can live it", is embraced by the directors, the cast and crew, their adoring public, and their army of volunteers. To know them is to know that you too, can accomplish your dreams. Look for ICDT to gain members and explode their fan base in 2016. The sky's the limit!

For information, to volunteer, sponsor or donate to I Can Dream Theatre, visit [www.icandreamtheatregroup.com](http://www.icandreamtheatregroup.com).



## Prix Janine-Sutto : l'art, un médium artistique qui ne fait pas de différence

Par Nathalie Goudreau

Le dépôt des candidatures pour la 12e édition des Prix Janine-Sutto présentés par l'Association de Montréal pour la déficience intellectuelle (AMDI), est maintenant terminé, et c'est avec enthousiasme que le jury étudiera les candidatures des individus et des organismes de la région de Montréal qui ont soumis leurs candidatures. Le jury est composé de la marraine d'honneur, Mme Janine Sutto, d'une administratrice de l'AMDI, Dominique Pepin, d'une représentante de la Ville de Montréal, Danielle Thibault, d'une représentante de la médiation culturelle, Sandrine Le-Tacon de l'organisme Exeko ainsi que d'une artiste professionnelle, Poli Wilhelm.

Ces prix visent à souligner l'apport de l'art sous toutes ses formes comme outil de sensibilisation et d'inclusion des personnes vivant avec une déficience intellectuelle. Ils ont comme objectif de valoriser et de reconnaître les démarches artistiques des personnes vivant avec une déficience intellectuelle et ainsi promouvoir une image positive de la différence. Ils se distinguent par son rayonnement auprès du grand public et son caractère innovateur.

Le Prix Janine-Sutto catégorie Artiste souligne le talent et la démarche artistiques d'une personne ayant une déficience intellectuelle. Le Prix Janine-Sutto catégorie

Projet artistique amateur souligne l'engagement d'un organisme et récompense un projet artistique dont les personnes vivant avec une déficience intellectuelle sont les principaux participants. Il peut avoir été mis sur pied par un individu, un organisme artistique, communautaire ou autre. Les deux prix sont assortis d'une bourse, offerte par le réseau Accès Culture de la Ville de Montréal ainsi qu'une œuvre d'art.

La remise des Prix Janine-Sutto se fera à Montréal dans le cadre du lancement de l'événement « D'un œil différent », à l'Écomusée du fier monde, le mercredi 2 mars 2016 dès 17 h sous la présidence d'honneur du duo coloré et inspirant composé de Geneviève Morin-Dupont et Jean-Marie Lapointe ! C'est un rendez-vous !

« D'un œil différent », qui a célébré ses 10 années d'existence en 2015, est un événement culturel multidisciplinaire qui a lieu durant la Semaine québécoise de la déficience intellectuelle et qui diffuse, sans distinction, les œuvres d'artistes ayant ou non une déficience intellectuelle. C'est un événement rassembleur très fort, touchant, un incontournable ! Il offre l'occasion de reconnaître les artistes et de déclencher des passions. Un offre un lieu de diffusion montréalais hors de l'ordinaire. L'exposition D'un œil différent présente plus de 150 sculptures, peintures, photographies et montages. Plusieurs des artistes participants sont issus d'ateliers de création et d'arts visuels adaptés. Coups de coeur artistiques



Gilles Grégoire, Gagnant catégorie Artiste 2015.  
(Crédit photo : André Farhat)

et humains assurés! D'un œil différent tient également des Hors murs avec la présentation d'une petite exposition et des animations à l'Université du Québec à Montréal ainsi qu'avec le spectacle de danse théâtrale de Mai(g)wenn et les Orteils au Monument National.

Pour renseignements, visitez [www.amdi.info](http://www.amdi.info) et [www.dunoeildiffere-et.com](http://www.dunoeildiffere-et.com) ou contactez [sensibilisation@amdi.info](mailto:sensibilisation@amdi.info) ou [comite@dunoeildifferent.com](mailto:comite@dunoeildifferent.com).

Nathalie Goudreau est Coordonnatrice, Communications et événements pour AMDI.

## Spectrum Productions: Empowering and employing through the Arts

By Cindy Davis

When you walk into the studio of Spectrum Productions, you immediately realize you are entering an unconventional creative space. On a couch at the rear, a team member is writing a script for a ten-episode mini-series he created. Near him, another team member is creating animated 3D graphics to go along with the script. At a long table, a participant is working on illustrations of cartoon animal skeletons that Spectrum hopes to publish as a children's sticker activity book.

A small corner is set up as a kitchen, where another group member is cooking up a meat sauce for Spectrum's Friday Night Social Club. The right hand wall is a fully functioning green-screen, the back office contains an editing suite, a foosball table sits right in the center of the room, while a beagle-x wearing a red bandana strolls leisurely throughout unfazed by the creative chaos surrounding him.

This was exactly the atmosphere that found-

ing partners Liam O'Rourke and Dan Ten Veen envisioned six years ago when they first started Spectrum, a production house that creates opportunities for youth and young adults on the autism spectrum, which began as a weeklong summer camp as a side to their jobs at Giant Steps School. Ten Veen and O'Rourke had been working with individuals on the autism spectrum for years and realized that there was untapped creative talent not only to be expressed by some of these individuals, but that could lead to fulfilling employment in media production.

"We provide employment opportunities based on individual interests," says Ten Veen, using the group member who enjoys cooking as an example. While in the past he had done stages at food chains, since being at Spectrum, he has honed his skills and developed his own weekly cooking show - edited by other participants - and is working on a collaborative project with other chefs in the city. "This inclusive atmosphere allowing people to explore their ideas and build confidence is one of the core things and biggest outcomes of what we do," adds

O'Rourke.

Spectrum currently employs one full-time staff member on the autism spectrum as well as four others on a contractual basis. They also hire seven others on the autism spectrum as mentors during their summer camp. With the wide variety of services offered like camp, social clubs, video programming, animation clubs, creative workshops and more, they provide creative and social services to approximately 150 individuals on the autism spectrum annually. They are now working on partnerships with other production companies to employ their members and starting soon, will offer rental use of their green screen and editing suites.

Ten Veen and O'Rourke hope to eventually take Spectrum's model nationwide. "The idea is for us to reach as many people as possible on the autism spectrum that are interested in exploring these pursuits or pursuing a career in media production," says O'Rourke. "There are so many misconceptions about autism; we want to change the



Spectrum Productions Founders Dan Ten Veen and Liam O'Rourke.  
(Photo credit, Mickaël Bandassak)

conversation around what's possible."

To learn more about Spectrum Productions visit [www.productionsspectrum.com](http://www.productionsspectrum.com).

Cindy Davis is the PR Coordinator at the Jewish Public Library as well as a freelance journalist, editor and PR consultant.



# Notebook Express

By Wendy Singer

We are always excited to feature the amazing arts endeavors of our special needs community. We hope you enjoy reading about just a few of them in this special arts-themed feature of the Inspirations Online EXPRESS. And now for some recaps of events we attended in 2015.

On December 17, 2015, Projet RAD and The Mackay Centre School continued their tradition of presenting the best Christmas dance show in town. This year's theme was *Toy Story*, and it was a marvel to watch as we reunited with our favourite characters from the popular film. Our friend **Luca "Lazylegz" Patuelli** was on hand dressed as Sheriff Woody Pride to introduce the opening scenes.

Each number, from Toy Soldiers which had Jessica's class (Mackay) doing some impressive breakdancing moves, to RC, The Remote Control Car, where Sebastien's (Mackay), dancers used their power chairs as a key component of their magical dance, was bold and highly entertaining.

Projet RAD's motto "No Excuses, No Limits" reminds us that everyone can dance, no matter what their ability and mobility. Every student in both the Mackay Centre and Philip E. Layton School for the Blind participated in this show.

**Flavio Condo** from Sami Fruits was present to share in the Christmas joy and see the fruits of his foundation, which sponsored the event. Principal **Patrizia Ciccarella** closed the show by sharing the wonderful news that Projet RAD recently received a Meritorious Service Medal, presented by **Governor General David Johnston**.



The Projet RAD team with Flavio Condo (back row, third from left), and Patrizia Ciccarella (back row, second from right.)

On December 16, 2015 students at Giant Steps School (GS) received a visit from Santa-Hab Alex Galchenyuk. This much loved hockey player who plays Centre for the Montreal Canadiens, was delighted to be at Giant Steps, to learn more about the school, autism, and put a smile on the faces of students and staff. Galchenyuk has dedicated himself to giving back to the community since he was drafted by the Habs in 2012, and is a supporter of various children's causes. He was accompanied by his sister **Anna Galchenyuk**, and **Andre Michaels** from Invesa Foundation. "It means a lot to be at Giant Steps," shared Galchenyuk. "It's all about potential, and seeing the smiles on and off the ice." While he was not wearing his Habs shirt, Galchenyuk was dressed in the spirit with his Canadiens Santa hat.

Galchenyuk met with every student at GS, shook their hands, posed for photos, and gave them a Habs bag filled with goodies. He later played floor hockey with some eager students. He shared a great deal of love and gentle humour, as well as the class that has always been associated with the Montreal Canadiens.



Andre Michaels, Alex Galchenyuk, Anna Galchenyuk, Alexander Galchenyuk, and Giant Steps Director Seiu Thomas Henderson.

(Photo credit, Ross White)

On Sunday, December 7, 2015, families gathered for Pama Claus Day. Organized by PAMA Foundation, this sensory-friendly event gives children with autism the opportunity to visit with **Santa Claus**, share their Christmas gift list, and take photos in a stress-free, sensory-friendly environment.

Inflatables filled the school's gym, while volunteers offered up delicious treats for everyone. The event was made possible with the help of Kloda Focus, Thebakingdiva, FDMT, Boucheaboosh, students from Marymount Academy that volunteered, and **Nick Katalifos**, Principal of Roslyn School.

PAMA is a non-profit organization run by volunteers that was founded in 2012 by Montreal-based behavioural therapist **Stefania Dei Tigli**. All money raised is given directly to kids with autism by means of toys, equipment, and events.



Stefania Dei Tigli with Santa Claus and James and Eva Pereira.

The Friendship Circle's annual Chanukah party took place on December 6, 2015. This year's theme was Super Heroes, and all guests felt quite secure, with their favourites, from Batman to Superman, in the house. The Super Hero theme was intentional: "To celebrate our friends with special needs, who are the true superheroes." Guests were invited to attend in their superhero costume, and with all of their collective powers at work, all the kids received their gifts, no evil villains got in their way, and all enjoyed delicious latkes and a buffet dinner, a live DJ, face painting, and crafts.

The Montreal Camera Club was present once again with their Help Portrait project, taking free family portraits of everyone that dropped by their makeshift studio. A beautiful menorah lighting ceremony led by **Rabbi Leibele Rodal** took place outdoors on the front lawn. This super celebration was as joyful and festive as they come.



Superhero with Atara Stolovitsky at the Friendship Circle Chanukah party. (Photo credit, Menachem Seraff)

The Segal Centre for Performing Arts brought *Tribes* to Montreal from November 29 to December 20, 2015. Starring **Jack Volpe** in the role of Billy, *Tribes* shares the life of a person who was born Deaf and the only member of a hearing family. A full-time PAB (Beneficiary Assistant) at the Mackay Centre School and Performance Director and ASL Head Instructor of Seeing Voices Montreal, Volpe was the first Deaf actor cast in this role. Director

**Sarna Lapine** succeeded in portraying the struggle to be heard in a world that is so focused on the sense of hearing. It evoked a visceral reaction that made many stop and think deeply about the struggle of language, love, family, and communication. To read more about Volpe, read the full feature article in our Fall 2015 / Winter 2016 edition.



Daniel Brochu, Andrea Runge, Jack Volpe, Toni Ellwand. (Photo credit, Andreé Lanthier)

A benefit concert in support of the Centre for the Arts in Human Development (CAHD) at Concordia University was held on November 8, 2015. Sponsored by the Sisterhood of the Shaare Zion Congregation for the third consecutive year, this evening event consisted of an inspiring concert of music and dance. The performers were all adults with developmental disabilities that participate in the CAHD programs. This year they were accompanied by the Cantor of the Congregation, **Adam Stotland**, and his band. A total of \$7,000 was raised for the Centre's unique creative arts therapies program. Take a look at their concert at <https://youtu.be/YdxPndhfIZM>.



Lisa Walsh singing a duet with Cantor Adam Stotland.

Check out our 'save the date' section on page 2 of this edition. Here's a sneak peek at one event you won't want to miss. Under the direction of The Dynamic Funds Caregiver of Inspiration 2015 **Jesse Heffring**, Summit School is mounting an original musical about five students who 'escape' during a museum field trip and go on an adventure downtown. It's Ferris Bueller's Day Off meets The Breakfast Club with their amazing actors with intellectual disabilities. Fun, entertaining and heartwarming. The show will be played on May 11 and 12, 2016 at 7:30 p.m.

If you have tidbits to share, email them to [wendyinspirations@gmail.com](mailto:wendyinspirations@gmail.com).



**PATH TO THE FUTURE**

**ARTISAN Market & EMPLOYABILITY EXPO**

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Saint-Laurent, H4L 1Y4

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# THE CENTRE FOR THE ARTS IN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

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**CENTRE FOR THE ARTS  
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## Sports with Daniel Smajovits



## Les Pirates de Montréal win big at Cruiser Cup Tournament

By Maria Colavita

This year, Montreal's sledge hockey team brought home the bronze medal at the Brampton Cruiser Cup Tournament, which took place from November 6 to 8, 2015. The Pirates de Montréal were overjoyed with their results.

The team overcame many obstacles on the journey to winning bronze. They lost their first game. They had to quickly adapt to fill-in coaches because their assistant coach was injured at the last minute. Their bus's wheel chair lift broke while they stopped for lunch, which meant that players, adults as well, needed to be transferred manually, and because of that the team made it to the arena less than an hour before their first game.

If that wasn't enough, their regular goalie was away playing with Team Canada so they were breaking in a new goalie who only practiced in the position for three games prior to the tournament, and said goalie got sick and had to be replaced in the semi-finals by one of the wingers.

Perseverance paid off, and the Pirates still were able to win bronze!

Congratulations to L'Équipe Québec, the adult men's team, who brought home gold for the second year in a row.

Maria Colavita is the manager of Les Pirates de Montreal.



Les Pirates de Montréal won a Bronze medal at the Brampton Cruisers Cup 2015 Tournament. (Photo credit, Maria Colavita)

## Lakeshore Super Sonics Soccer without limitations

There are no limits to learning basic soccer skills, getting fit and having fun while discovering a healthy appetite for competition and strengthening a child's cognitive and gross motor skills.

Our ambitions are to fine tune and further develop each individual child's abilities so that they may discover their inner athlete and live life to the fullest. For who: all children aged four to 17 years who are intellectually challenged, or who suffer from poor social skills or low self-esteem due to behavioral or learning difficulties.

**When:** Summer outdoor season - Saturday mornings from May through August.  
Winter indoor season - Saturday mornings from January through April.

**Cost:** \$50 per season.

Ratio of coaches to children varies between 1:2 and 1:4 – depending on the needs of the participants.

We also have a **Young Coach Mentoring Program**; for aspiring young coaches aged between 14 - 20 year Coaches and players alike learn valuable life skills that help overcome any challenges life throws at them.

Getting involved with **Super Sonics** is when the magic begins!



Kelly-Anne Soutter – Director General

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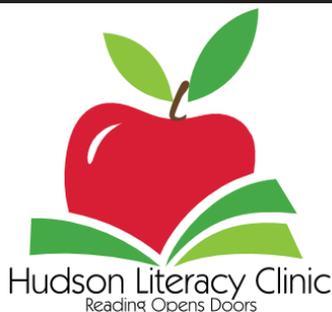
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# Opening Door for Accessibility: A forum for difference makers

By Wendy Singer

Opening Doors for Accessibility (ODFA) is a nation-wide initiative of March of Dimes Canada (MODC). This seminar provides an opportunity for individuals living with a disability, their partners and family members, health professionals, service providers, caregivers, and all interested people, to learn, exchange and network about the issue of accessibility.

On November 20, 2015, Inspirations partnered with MODC to bring Opening Doors to Montreal for the first time. We welcomed representatives from MODC to the Best Western Europa in Montreal, including **Donna MacKay**, Associate Director, Community Engagement and Integration Services, and MC of our event, **Andria Spindel**, President and Chief Executive Officer, **Mary Lynne Stewart**, National Director of Fund Development and Communications, and **Ruth Kapelus**, former Manager of Special Events and fundraising.

The day began with a fascinating presentation about The Rehabilitation Living Lab in the mall (RehabMaLL) by **Dr. Eva Kahayia**, associate professor at the School of Physical and Occupational Therapy in the Faculty of Medicine at McGill University and scientific co-director of the Centre for Interdisciplinary Research in Rehabilitation of Greater Montreal (CRIR), and **Dr. Bonnie Swaine**, professor in the Physical Therapy program of the Rehabilitation School of the Université de Montréal. This is the first interdisciplinary and multi-sectorial research study to explore the principal obstacles and facilitators, either physical or psychosocial, to social participation and inclusion for per-



Carole Foisy and Mary Lynne Stewart.

sons with disabilities in a commercial mall environment.

The project, which began in 2011 and is conducted by the CRIR, transformed urban shopping mall Alexis Nihon Plaza in downtown Montreal into an inclusive environment for persons of all ages, particularly for those with disabilities. Kahayia and Swaine explained how they have succeeded in making this mall accessible, from installing ramps to making changes to the interior space such as ambient music, noise levels, tools to prepare visitors for the mall experience, and more.

“The mall was in need of renovations, and the owners were visionary enough to see what our renovation teams could do,” shared Kehayia, while discussing their partnership with the Alexis Nihon Plaza owners. Other partners include Altergo, The City of Mon-



Dr. Bonnie Swaine and Dr. Eva Kehayia.



Catherine Blanchette-Dallaire and Donna MacKay.

tréal, and Adaptech. This team has grand plans that include transforming Quebec into an inclusive society. Stay tuned for our upcoming Spring / Summer 2016 edition to read more about RehabMaLL.

Donna MacKay presented the services that MODC offers in Quebec, including their rehabilitation conductive education program, stroke and brain injury services, accessible modifications, and their recent iPad giveaway. Seminar attendees were most interested in learning more about conductive education, which is currently offered at Island Hyperbaric Centre in Pincoort. To learn more about MODC, visit [www.marchofdimes.ca](http://www.marchofdimes.ca).

CAMO (Comité d'adaptation de la main-d'oeuvre) pour personnes handicapées is a national organization whose mission is to promote access to training and employment for people with disabilities. **Carol Foisy**, team leader and counsellor at CAMO, discussed the organization's role in job training and securing the continued employment of people with disabilities, including how CAMO helps employees prepare for employment, and employers integrate people with special needs into their workforces. Sadly, Foisy received news days prior to the conference that CAMO had lost its funding. It is our sincerest hope that they can continue their important work in the future.

**Catherine Blanchette-Dallaire** spoke about OnRouleAuQuébec - now referred to as OnRoule - which she founded after she broke both ankles and relied on a wheelchair for mobility. This impactful experience demonstrated the anguish caused by



Retrofit winner André Bougie.



Projet RAD team. Back row: Matt Nadeau a.k.a. DJ Rollo, Joe-Danny Aurelien a.k.a. Dingo, Maria Tamer a.k.a. Hamer Time. Front row: Antoine Patenaude a.k.a. Bboy Ant and his sister Marie-Elaine Patenaude a.k.a. ME.

lack of accessibility. OnRoule.org provides vital information about the accessibility of a multitude of venues. Blanchette-Dallaire depends on the public to share their discoveries about accessibility. She in turn categorizes and posts this information on her website. OnRoule has won many prizes including Finalist, Prix Femmes D'affaires du Québec. Look forward to Blanchette-Dallaire sharing more about OnRoule in our Spring / Summer 2016 edition.

**André Bougie** is a Development Agent at CIVA (Centre d'intégration à la vie active) and a lover of powerchair soccer. As the 2014 recipient of the MODC's Istvan and Barbara Haas Assistive Devices and Vehicle Retrofit Fund, he was provided \$10,000 to acquire an electrical wheelchair that enables him to play modified soccer. The President of Powerchair Soccer Canada, André lives with spina bifida and prior to receiving this award, used a manual wheelchair. Declining health and strength have made it harder for him to pursue the sports and recreational pursuits he so loves. In sharing his story with attendees, he demonstrated how his life has changed since receiving his new chair.

Projet RAD is well-known in the Greater Montreal area and around the globe for making dance accessible to everyone. Spearheaded by **Luca "Lazylegz" Patuelli**, they offer inclusive urban dance classes guided by specialized teachers. RAD provides everyone that joins their troupes with the same label: dancer. (Check out the Notebook EXPRESS on page 5 in this edition to read about one of Projet RAD's pet projects).

Continued on page 11



Antoine Patenaude a.k.a. Bboy Ant dancing at ODFA Montreal.



Matt Nadeau a.k.a. DJ Rollo dancing at ODFA Montreal.



Matt Nadeau a.k.a. DJ Rollo and Antoine Patenaude a.k.a. Bboy Ant with Joe-Danny Aurelien.



Andria Spindel and Wendy Singer.

Dancers **Joe-Danny Aurelien** a.k.a. Dingo, **Maria Tamer** a.k.a. Hamer Time, and co-founder of Projet RAD **Marie-Elaine Patenaude** a.k.a. ME shared motivational and highly inspirational stories that did not leave a dry eye in the room. With the creative use of the beat, story telling, and urban dance moves, we felt the evolution of lives changed through dance. ME shared how her brother, who has special needs, has inspired her by changing his life through dance. Hamer Time found a home in everyone's heart with her story of how working at Projet RAD has changed her, enabling her

to grow into the exceptional person that she is today.

**Isaac Hoch**, communications director of Disability Financial Assistance Corporation (DFAC) faced the challenge of following Projet RAD's energetic performance. How does one top that? Well, you don't. But Hoch got off to an excellent start with an impromptu jig! Hoch shared a plethora of important information about accessing disability benefits, such as the Supplement for Handicapped Children, investment planning, disability tax credits, and more. Hoch

uncovered the various benefits that are available to people with various disabilities, and how DFAC's collective experience in the areas of tax law and the administrative process enables them to guide their clients through the daunting paperwork required to maximize benefits.

We are proud to welcome MODC to Montreal, and hope to see you at next year's event.

For information, visit [www.marchofdimes.ca](http://www.marchofdimes.ca).



Isaac Hoch.

## Yes Youth Can!: Vanguard students aim for peace at the United Nations

By Linda Handiak

If there was one takeaway from the 2015 Student Observance of Peace Day, it was this: young people don't have to be powerless victims. They can be agents of change. Hundreds of students and youth leaders gathered at the United Nations (UN) headquarters on September 21, 2015 to be inspired by UN ambassadors and stories of student-led peace initiatives.

The delegates from Vanguard School's social justice committee embody youth-powered change. Carli, Ariana and Emre, a writer, a filmmaker and an I.T. wizard, are streaming their talents into community gardening and fundraising for developing countries. If you look at what they can produce rather than at what they've had to overcome, you wouldn't know they needed accommodations for learning disabilities.

Vanguard serves a population that falls within the average or above average range of WISC (Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children) - measured intelligence, but that struggles academically because of learning

challenges, such as dyslexia, auditory processing problems or attention deficits. The school, which encompasses all levels from elementary to high school, offers its clientele the opportunity to follow a regular curriculum in smaller classes of about 12 to 16 students.

Social Justice Connection (SJC), a Montreal-based human rights advocacy group, had the imagination to see the curiosity and creativity at the core of these kids and invited them aboard the peace bus to the UN. SJC also provides support for teachers through course material and classroom workshops on global issues.

The issue raised on Peace Day that provoked the most visceral response from team Vanguard was that of child soldiers. The UN Envoy on Youth indicated that half the world's population is under 25 years of age, a force not to be ignored. Yet in some countries, young people can be sent to die, but they cannot be sent to negotiate or even to vote. In response, the Vanguard students

plan to mobilize the arts as a fundraiser for war-affected children.

Their faith in the arts was shared by UN Goodwill Ambassador Herbie Hancock, who declared music a non-violent means of changing people. He added that tolerance, which is "just a step above hate," is not enough. "Peace is not just the absence of war but also the presence of understanding."

A youth leader observed that she learned much about wars at school but little about peace building. Youth are leading the way by asking us to devote time to teaching understanding of people, not just of academic subjects.



Delegates get pepped about peace before attending UN session. (Photo credit, Emre Vitye Yavuz with his 360 camera)

Linda Handiak is a teacher and admissions coordinator at Vanguard School.



## Adapted Travel by Mike Cohen

By Mike Cohen

**HOCKEY NIGHT IN BROOKLYN:** I have always wanted to see a professional hockey game in New York City. That recently became a reality when I took the trip from the Algonquin Hotel near Times Square to the Barclays Center in Brooklyn (it is less than 30 minutes by subway, taxi or car) to watch the hometown Islanders faceoff against the Toronto Maple Leafs. And I did so from the press box.

The 2015-16 season marks the first in Brooklyn for the Islanders. The team spent its entire 42-year history at the Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum in Uniondale, NY, aka Long Island. With the arena outdated and no new facility on the horizon, ownership turned towards the Barclays Centre – home of basketball's Brooklyn Nets. The announcement of the move was actually made three years ago. They have a lease here now until 2040.

The team still has its practice facility in Long Island. Four Stanley Cup banners are already hanging in the Barclays Center. In addition, banners hang for retired players Billy Smith, Mike Bossy, Bob Nystrom, Clark Gillies, Denis Potvin as well as former coach Al Arbour and former general manager Bill Torrey.

Located in the heart of Brooklyn, at the crossroads of Atlantic and Flatbush Avenues, Barclays Center boasts one of the most intimate seating configurations ever designed for a modern multi-purpose arena. For hockey the capacity is just over 15,000; 17,732 for basketball and up to 18,000 for musical or other performances. It opened on September 28, 2012.

I enjoyed the experience immensely and strongly recommend it to anyone visiting New York. As Mike Bossy told, this is indeed a work in progress. Most of the team's loyal fan base is still in Long Island. They either drive in or take the train. I spoke to many of them as I walked through the arena. While some complained about the commute of at least 45 minutes, they pledged to support the team. Communications manager Jesse Eisenberg told me the adjustment is going well and that sponsorship opportunities in Brooklyn far outweigh those in Long Island, where the team still practices. The

players are doing their best to make this work as well. After the game I stood outside the Isles' dressing room as a slew of players came out to take part in promotional meet and greets.

There was a great atmosphere in the rink and so many fans wearing Islanders jerseys, most with number 91 Tavares on the back (for captain John Tavares). There are all kinds of neat promotions going on – seeking the loudest fan of the game, the best beard, the best dancer, guess the autograph and seat upgrades. At one point during the game a member of the US Army was introduced to the crowd and got a long standing ovation. The team mascot Sparky actually skates around the ice, something the Habs' Youppi can't seem to do.

**TRANSPORTATION:** Eleven subway lines stop near the arena: 2, 3, 4, and 5, B, D, N, Q, and R to Atlantic Avenue-Barclays Center C to Lafayette Avenue G to Fulton Street. Travel time from Penn (2, 3, C) and Grand Central (4, 5) is 22 minutes.

**ACCESSIBILITY:** The Access-A-Ride bus stop at Barclays Center is located on Atlantic Avenue, between Ft. Greene Place and 6th Avenue. This is the city's paratransit system that provides transportation for people with disabilities who are unable to use public bus or subway service for some or all of their trips. The stop is situated on the South Side of Atlantic Avenue, adjacent to the arena, and is nearest the Emblem Health Atlantic Avenue Entrance. Barclays Center has been equipped with the most advanced assisted listening devices (ALD). Headsets and receivers are available at no charge at Guest Services. A driver's license, credit card, or some form of identification will be required as a deposit. Guests who choose to bring their own headset and receiver may access the system on a standard FM broadcast.

Every concession stand and bar is accessible to guests with disabilities. If assistance is required at any of the food service areas, they welcome you to contact the nearest staff member. Elevators for guests with disabilities are available in the Barclays Center on the Main Concourse, Lower Suite Level, Upper Suite Level and Upper Concourse. Predesigned elevators leading to the Event Level are also available for guests with ADA needs. Guest Services escorts can be

provided when guests with disabilities are in need of event level access.

Patrons requiring interpreting services for concerts should contact Guest Services Department no later than three weeks after concert ticket sales begin. All Barclays Center affiliated lots will have accessible parking spaces available. All public restrooms are accessible to patrons with disabilities. Animals are not allowed in the Barclays

Center, however, an exception is made for patrons with service animals.

Barclays Center provides wheelchair and companion seating with appropriate sight lines on all levels.

*Mike Cohen is the editor of Inspirations. He can be reached at [mcohen@inspirationsnews.com](mailto:mcohen@inspirationsnews.com). Follow him on Twitter and Instagram @mikecohensl.*



*A look at the Barclays Centre.*



*Action from a recent Islanders game.*



# Accessible Luxury Bahai Principe Esmeralda

By Suzie Lazar

On our annual winter vacation in December 2015, our family visited the Luxury Bahai Principe Esmeralda all-inclusive resort in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic.

Prior to booking this vacation, I read the Trip Advisor reviews and as a result of the overwhelmingly positive comments, we selected this resort. Soon after arriving, I was pleasantly surprised to see numerous accommodations made for people who use wheelchairs. Everywhere I turned, I noticed the efforts made to adapt the property. It seems as though boardwalks, ramps and pathways connect the entire resort.

Accessible rooms are available on the ground floor. Many have been reconfigured with large doors, large bathrooms and roll-in showers. If you are planning to visit this resort, make sure to specify that you require a reconfigured room when you are making your reservation.

A long wooden boardwalk was built for easy access to the beach. At the end of the boardwalk, chairs and an umbrella have been designated for people in wheelchairs and their families. And, a floating beach wheelchair is also available for people who want to experience the ocean. These details ensure that no one is denied access to the

beautiful beach and the pleasures of sitting by the ocean.

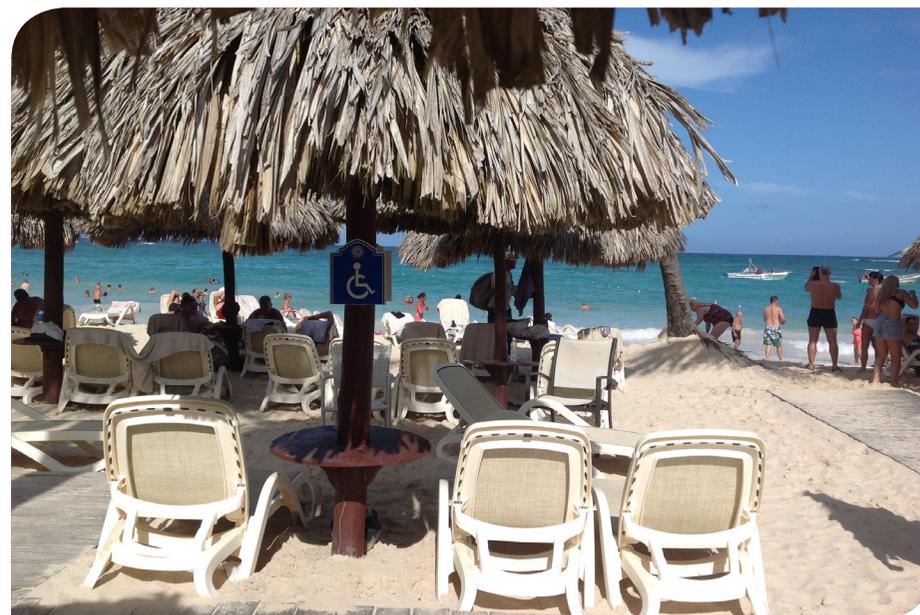
While on this vacation, I met a lovely family from Valleyfield, Quebec, who have vacationed at this resort for five consecutive years. They return year after year because the resort is luxurious, the weather is guaranteed to be warm and sunny, the customer service is excellent, and most importantly, it is wheelchair accessible – a must for their son.

The fact that airlines offer daily direct flight from Montreal is another reason why we chose this resort as our destination. Since we travel with our two young children, we need to keep our travels simple and with minimal risk of complications. The Luxury Bahai Principe Esmeralda is a 30-minute drive from the airport.

As a suggestion, prior to traveling anywhere, review this on-line “reservation checklist for persons with disabilities”. This checklist was prepared by the Canadian Transport Agency and is a step-by-step guide for planning your travels.

Bon voyage.....

*If you have questions for Suzie, email her at [suzieinspirations@gmail.com](mailto:suzieinspirations@gmail.com). Visit the website at [www.bahia-principe.com/en/resorts-in-dominican-republic/resort-esmeralda/](http://www.bahia-principe.com/en/resorts-in-dominican-republic/resort-esmeralda/).*



Reserved chairs and umbrellas for people in wheelchairs and their families.



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