



# INSPIRATIONS

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Fall 2016 / Winter 2017  
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English Montreal School Board officials take part in the historic groundbreaking ceremony for the new Mackay / Philip E. Layton facility. Read the full story on page 28. (Photo credit, Michael Cohen)

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# The Land of Misfit Toys recycling project



Students Jagendeep Randhawa, Charlotte Wong Ping Lun, Jason Di Biasi, and Harpreet Rhandawa work in the Misfit Toys shop at Riverdale High School. (Photo credit, Maryte Gurekas)

By Andrea Bertalan

The Land of Misfit Toys recycling project is an opportunity for students with special needs to develop practical hands-on life skills and work experience. The project began last year at Riverdale and John Rennie High Schools of the Lester B. Pearson School Board. It involves the students refurbishing donated toys including playsets, toy figures, games, puzzles and books.

Students are responsible for washing, sorting and organizing the toys into different categories. They learn how to take pictures and post them online. In addition, they learn how to advertise the merchandise through social media.

This project enables students to see the value and purpose of recycling a gently used toy. The work enhances their self-esteem and refines essential social skills. It is an opportunity for students to transfer learning from the school store to the setting of the working world. The students play an invaluable role from start to finish. Organizational skills are developed through the process of sorting, assembling, and packaging. Sharing the workspace with other students incorporates teamwork and builds the necessary

social skills required to work successfully with others. Students use the Internet where they learn to gather information, be creative and problem solve. They acquire a myriad of work skills in shaping and building their school toy store.

Two toy stores have been created, one at John Rennie High School, which is headed by Margo Edwards, and the other at Riverdale High School, headed by Maryte Gurekas. A third venue is in the planning stages.

Some of these recycled toys are donated to those in need, while proceeds from other toys sold enable our students to take part in various community activities and workshops. "The Land of Misfit Toys project has provided our students with a sense of purpose and autonomy. They enjoy multi-tasking and sharing responsibilities. Most of all, it is fun as they revisit their days when they played with toys and it is with joy that they prepare the toys for their next owners," shared Gurekas, special education technician at Riverdale High School.

To find your special toy, visit <http://misfittoys2016.wix.com/land-of-misfit-toys>.

Andrea Bertalan is a work skills consultant with the Lester B. Pearson School Board.



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# Transition planning guided by TÉVA

By Russ Cooper, MSc. OT

**P**ina Evangelista is the TÉVA consultant (Transition école vie active, or Transition from School to Adult life) for the English Montreal School Board. In collaboration with the respective school, Evangelista guides EMSB students with special needs and their families through the challenges of transitioning from youth to adult life. Inspirations spoke with Evangelista to gather information on how this new service is helping Montreal's emerging adults.



**Pina Evangelista, TÉVA consultant for the English Montreal School Board.**

## What is TÉVA?

While the transition from the youth sector to adulthood provides new and positive opportunities, it may also present challenges for many young people, particularly for students with special needs. "There are decisions to be made about future living arrangements, education, employment, finances, community and social involvement, all of which requires a lot of planning," says Evangelista.

## What is TÉVA consulting?

Transition planning is developing a concrete action plan designed to support students in this transition period by coordinating and facilitating the community, social, and education services, as well as efforts of the caregivers and student themselves. "The goal is to meet the unique needs of each student by identifying their strengths, abilities, hopes and goals for life after school so they're ready for employment and independent living."

## Why is this important?

According to Evangelista, many students with special needs encounter difficulties making the transition to adult life, so her emphasis is on equipping the students with useful skills so they can become more autonomous and obtain their desired goals.

As such, it is essential to create an individualized vision for their future by providing person-centered support, guidance, and navigation through the system. "It helps reduce obstacles and make as smooth and successful a transition as possible," shared Evangelista. "This often leads to enhancing their competencies and assisting students in achieving self-sufficiency, confidence, and social responsibilities."

Evangelista also points out that parents are not only integral to the process, but are supported as well. "Parents are often already stressed. They call me saying, 'this is happening, what can I do?' I try to give them support and find services for them."

## Who is TÉVA for?

TÉVA consulting is for EMSB students with special needs, students who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP), and students who simply require support. It can begin with youths as young as 15 or three years before leaving the youth sector, which generally happens at age 21.

"We have to give the process enough time. Essentially, the first year is getting to know the student and the student gets to know his or herself. The second year is about developing skills. And the third is about following through with goals and gaining hands-on experience. Throughout, there is constant coordination and revision going on. This way, the students can really build their skills in order to prepare them."

Evangelista adds that there are possibilities for accelerated TÉVA programs for students with one or two years left in the youth sector.

## How can parents access TÉVA consulting services?

Parents of EMSB students with special needs that are curious about what TÉVA programming might be available for their

child can ask their respective school administrators or contact Evangelista directly at (514) 483-7200 ext. 7299 or [pevangelista@emsb.qc.ca](mailto:pevangelista@emsb.qc.ca). Check with your school board to see where they offer similar TÉVA programs.

*Russ Cooper is a Montreal-based occupational therapist. Previous to this, Russ served as a journalist and writer for 14 years.*

## INSPIRATIONS

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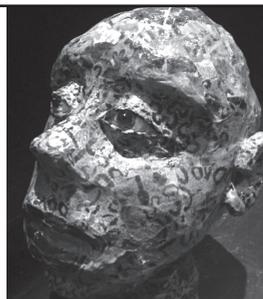
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# FROM THE HOUSE

## *Minister of Sports and Persons with Disabilities Carla Qualtrough: Pursuing two passions*

By Hayley Chazan

It's hard to imagine a cabinet minister better suited for her portfolio than Carla Qualtrough.

The former Paralympian swimmer, who has been legally blind since birth, was appointed Canada's federal sport minister and first-ever minister responsible for people with disabilities last December.

"It was a particular honour for me that Prime Minister Trudeau gave me a portfolio that encompassed my two life's passions, using sport as a tool for social change and advancing and advocating for the rights of people with disabilities," said The Honourable Qualtrough, during a sit-down interview with Inspirations Newspaper. "It's a wonderful opportunity, I take it seriously, I love it, it's a challenge with big expectations. We're going to make history with a lot of the work we're doing."

### *Sport: A passion and a purpose*

Qualtrough comes from a family of athletes and for as long as she can remember, sport has played an integral role in her life. "We spoke sport, we played sport, we lived sport," she said.

In the early years, the fact that she couldn't see didn't affect her as much as one might expect, but she explained that at a certain point, her disability started to impact her participation in sports. "The ball got too fast and the slopes got too steep," she said.

Then she found Paralympic Sport, a sport system for people with disabilities that

levelled the playing field. As a competitive swimmer, she competed against other swimmers who were also visually impaired. This restored her lost sense of purpose and empowered her to succeed in sport, as well as other facets of life.

Qualtrough refers to herself as Canada's Para- and Olympic 'super fan'. She was honoured to represent Canada as Sports Minister at the recent Rio Paralympic Games, and had a moment of a lifetime handing out the first gold medal to Canadian swimmer Aurélie Rivard.

As a three-time Paralympian medalist, Qualtrough travelled the world and said she was exposed to a lot of discrimination, isolation, and the perils that come with having a disability. She noticed that people with disabilities weren't treated as well in other countries as they were in Canada. She became infatuated with designing systems that were inclusive by nature and this led her to pursue a career in human rights law, sports advocacy and eventually, politics.

### *Championing a more accessible Canada*

In her role as Minister of Sports and Persons with Disabilities, Minister Qualtrough has been tasked with leading a national engagement process that will eventually result in a Canadians with Disabilities Act, legislation she says will proactively address barriers to inclusion for disabled Canadians.

Since September, Qualtrough has been travelling the country, seeking input on the planned legislation through in-person meetings. Online consultations were launched in



**Minister Carla Qualtrough in the House of Commons in Ottawa.**

July and will continue until February.

Qualtrough said that one of the challenges she faced as a human rights lawyer was that she often had to wait until people were discriminated against to help them. "Someone has to be denied a job, denied a service, or denied access to a program, before we can swoop in and help make it right," she explained.

Qualtrough hopes that national accessibility legislation, to be introduced in the House of Commons by the end of 2017 or early 2018, will proactively set standards and guidelines outlining expectations of employers, service providers and program deliverers to prevent discrimination before it occurs. The new law will also harmonize disability policy across the federal public service.

### *Serving Canadians*

Navigating the complex world of politics is hard enough, but doing it with a disability comes with its own unique set of challenges, said Qualtrough. She explained that because of her visual impairment, she can't read nametags, can't recognize constituents when she walks into a room, and can't look across the table at dinner to make eye con-

tact. "All the hallmarks of engaging with Canadians, I've had to figure out a different way of doing it," she said.

Qualtrough said that as a politician, she has to be honest and forthright about her disability. She's had to explain to people in her riding that if they see her at the grocery store, they should come say hi instead of waving, because she might not see it. "You figure out a way to get it done and very quickly people become accustomed to your rhythms and accommodate you," she said.

While Qualtrough acknowledges that her visual impairment poses challenges, she said she's realized that it's part of who she is and she has to "own" it.

"Having a disability gives you a perspective on the world that's really important, and so if you can find a way to contribute in whatever areas you're passionate about and bring that perspective to that passion, Canada, the workplace, wherever you're contributing, will be better off because of it."

*Hayley Chazan is a recent graduate of the Masters of Journalism program at Carleton University in Ottawa. She loves to tell stories and is passionate about politics and economics.*

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# Fragile X syndrome: Life, research and translatable knowledge

By Wendy Singer

**F**ragile X (FXS) syndrome is a genetic disorder that causes a range of developmental problems. It is the most commonly inherited form of developmental and intellectual disability. According to the website FragileX.org, about 10 percent of children with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) are identified as having another genetic and chromosomal disorder such as FXS.

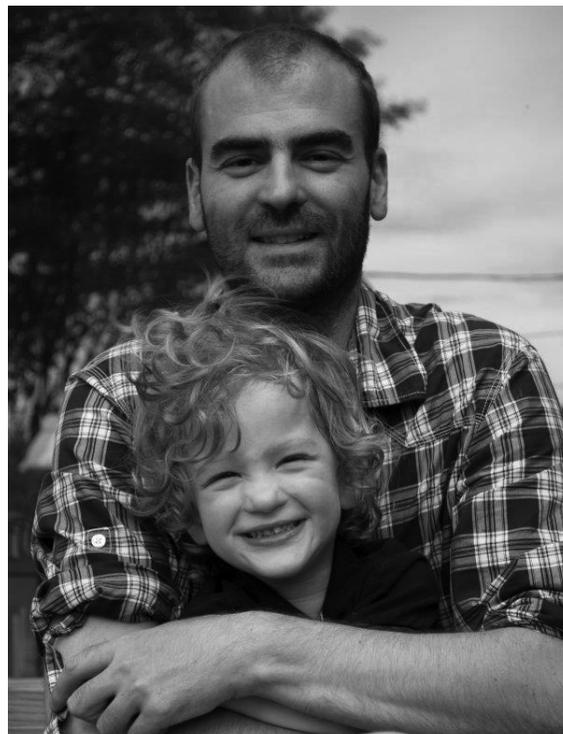
Symptoms of FXS vary in type and severity and can include: intellectual disabilities, ranging from mild (mostly in females) to severe intellectual disabilities (males only); social and emotional problems; speech and language problems. Most males and some females with FXS have characteristic physical features (long, narrow face, large ears, prominent jaw and forehead, unusually flexible fingers, flat feet, and in males, enlarged testicles after puberty) that are not obvious at the time of diagnosis around three years



**Dr. Corbin, head physician of the Fragile X Clinic at Université de Sherbrooke.**

of age, making it important to test for FXS should a child exhibit symptoms of global developmental delay.

This syndrome is caused by a mutation in a single gene called FMR1 (fragile X mental retardation-1) located on the X chromosome. When people have the full mutation of FXS, FMR1 is turned off. This causes the absence of the protein FMRP (fragile X mental retardation protein), which inhibits some 800 targets in the brain. Males with the full mutation are generally more affected than females because they don't have a second X chromosome to compensate.



**Frédéric Bruneau and his son Arthur.**  
(Photo credit, Alexandre Maurice)

Frédéric Bruneau is the founder of X Fragile Québec (<https://xfagilequebec.org/>), a support and advocacy group to some 230 FXS families, and co-founder of the Quebec Fragile X Clinic located in Sherbrooke. He and his wife Geneviève are parents to eight-year-old Arthur, who has full mutation FXS, and six-year-old Alice, who is a carrier. "On paper FXS is a simple condition. One gene is turned off and one protein is not expressed," shared Bruneau. "Because we know exactly how it is caused, it is a good canvas to find solutions that can be translated to other areas of intellectual disability and autism."

A painter who exhibited his works at a show titled *In Full FX* in Montreal this fall, Bruneau explains that FXS is like a spectrum within a spectrum, where not just those with the full mutation have symptoms. FXS carriers can experience various symptoms, such as premature ovarian failure (early menopause) in women, and tremor ataxia (a neurodegenerative condition that is often misdiagnosed as Parkinson's Disease) in both men and women over the age of 55.

Dr. François Corbin, head physician of the Quebec Fragile X Clinic, CIUSSS de L'Estrie-CHUS, works closely with Bru-

neau. This is the only FXS-specific clinic in Quebec. He is currently recruiting participants for a pilot trial (called LovaMiX) with a combined therapy of two drugs to see how they can correct the problems caused by the absence of FMRP. "We are trying to replace the function of the missing protein with drugs. This could help with the neuroplasticity of the brain," said Dr. Corbin. "For example, if we improve the ability to learn, it will be easier for patients to control their anxiety, aggression and other behaviours."

Katie Clapp is the president and co-founder of FRAXA Research Foundation, the largest FXS research organization in the world, and a partner and supporter of X Fragile Québec. Headquartered in Massachusetts, they have provided Dr. Corbin with a \$66,714 grant to conduct this research study.

"Dr. Corbin's research has tremendous potential to help all of us who have children with Fragile X syndrome because he is testing existing, available drugs which could be used right away," wrote Clapp in an email. "What Dr. Corbin has learned by doing these trials is laying groundwork for the next trials which we are organizing with his help. I speak as a Fragile X parent when I say how grateful I am to him and his team."

Encouraged by Dr. Corbin's research, Bruneau advises families with any questions to request an FXS test. "When you are in doubt, contact your local Centre de Réadaptation en Déficience Intellectuelle (CRDI) and CLSC. There are so many things to manage at the same time," he said. Acknowledging the toll that raising an FXS child, or any child with special needs, has on a family, Bruneau imparts words of perspective. "You have to focus and realize that it's not your child that is the problem. It's the Fragile X."

Bruneau describes his son Arthur as a beautiful boy who is in great physical shape, deals with sensory disorders and intermittent difficulties with sleep. "He has about 50 words in his vocabulary but we're far away from a sentence," he shared. "Arthur remembers people, he smiles, is cuddly, looks for attention and affection. He has the nicest smile in the world."

## FXS facts

- \* It affects one in 4,000 males and one in 6,000 females
- \* About one in 259 women and one in 800 men are FX carriers
- \* About one-third have features of ASD that affect communication and social interaction
- \* Seizures occur in about 15 percent of males (with onset before the age of nine) and about five percent of females
- \* A genetic blood test can diagnose FXS

X Fragile Québec and FRAXA are clear about their intentions. Their respective websites display the taglines "Objectif Cure" and "Finding a Cure for Fragile X". As Theodore Coutilish, FRAXA board member and Fragile X parent, recently wrote on the FRAXA website in reference to Dr. Corbin's research: "If all the science world's a stage, Fragile X researchers are more than merely players. They are centre stage."

Bruneau and his family have created the FAB Foundation (Fondation Arthur Bruneau) to raise funds for Dr. Corbin's important research. It is their hope that other groups join them in their mission to cure FXS and, in the process, find translatable answers for autism and other forms of intellectual disability.

For information, visit <http://xfagilequebec.org>, or their active Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/sfragile.quebec](http://www.facebook.com/sfragile.quebec). To learn more about FRAXA, visit [www.fraxa.org](http://www.fraxa.org).

For information about Dr. Corbin's pilot trial, contact [info@cliniquexfragilequebec.org](mailto:info@cliniquexfragilequebec.org). Read more about the LovaMix trial at <https://clinicaltrials.gov/ct2/show/NCT02680379>.

Sources:

<https://ghr.nlm.nih.gov/condition/>

FRAXA.org

Medline:[www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/9678703](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/9678703)

FragileX.org



## Special people have dreams

By Steven Atme



**Steven Atme.**

(Photo credit, Wendy Singer)

**H**ello everyone! My name is Steven Atme. I play the piano, compose music, perform and give private piano lessons to people of all ages with and without disabilities. I am also a public speaker.

As a teenager, my parents always told me to stand up and speak out for myself and for others. But I used to be scared and hesitant. I relied on my parents or teachers to manage incidents where I was afraid, or bullied. As the years went by, through experience and learning from the advice of my parents and my teachers at Summit School, I began to realize there's no reason to be afraid to stand up and speak my mind, whether it is through writing or through music. That is why I am honoured to join the *Inspirations* team, and share my experiences with you.

Music is like another language where we communicate through melodies rather than words. With melodies, we have the ability to feel the emotions of musicians and

composers as they play from the heart. In my experience, the same can be said for all sorts of creative arts, talents and skills.

I had a dream to become a public speaker, and so in 2012, I wrote my speech *Special People Have Dreams*. My hope was to have the opportunity to teach societies to understand that there's no place for judgement and bullying, and all the room to grow confidence, support and belief in ourselves. I don't want special people to go through the same problems as I did during my struggles with autism and life.

With confidence, perseverance, and devotion, my dream finally came true when I was asked to speak at a press conference at the English Montreal School Board in 2015. This has led me to where I am today; receiving more concert engagements, speaking opportunities, and people that come for piano lessons.

Miracles happen to those who believe.

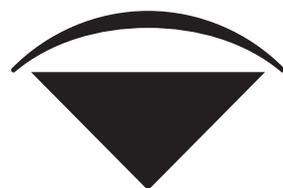
If you believe in them, you will be surprised to learn what special people are capable of doing. All you have to do is give them a chance and get to know them without judging their character, diagnosis and personalities.

There are no limitations. We are very proud of being special people!

I welcome you to follow me on Facebook for upcoming performances, speeches and writings or send me questions, statements and requests by email at [atmepianosphd@hotmail.com](mailto:atmepianosphd@hotmail.com). I look forward to hearing or seeing you in the near future.

*Steven is organizing a talent show which will be held in the spring of 2017. It will feature all artists with special needs, and will celebrate the fifth anniversary of Steven's speech Special People Have Dreams. Stay tuned to the Inspirations social feeds and website for more information.*

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# Pleins Rayons: Empowering people with autism

By Cindy Davis

There is a new excitement surrounding biking in Cowansville, Quebec, in the Eastern Townships thanks to brothers Michael and Brian Herman, co-owners of Turkey Hill Sugarbush Ltd. (a large maple syrup manufacturer).

In 2015, when a local bicycle factory closed, philanthropist and entrepreneur Michael Herman acquired \$150,000 worth of high-tech bike parts. He then began recovering bicycles from eco-centers and private citizens, restoring them with new parts and returning them, free of charge, to children through elementary and high schools. Michael Herman had already been involved in creating pottery programs at local schools, and realized how transformative a hands-on skill based program could be.

Michael Herman joined forces with Stephan Marcoux, a pro-cyclist and recreational therapist who works with children and adults with autism or intellectual disabilities. Stephan brought Myriam de Clausel de Coussergues, a specialized educator working with youth and adolescents with special needs, on board. With their Board of Directors, including Brian Herman, Anne Stairs, Sharon Dawe and Louise Penny, Pleins Rayons, or Freewheeling, was born.

A non-profit workshop, Pleins Rayons is dedicated to teaching bicycle mechanics, including the construction, repair and basic maintenance of bikes, to at-risk students at the high school and elementary levels, students with autism, and young adults with intellectual disabilities that are 21 and older.

Pleins Rayons speaks to the issue that so many youth and families face once they turn 21 and no longer have the support of the education system, and have no work skills or experience. Currently, in the Brome-Missisquoi area alone, where Pleins Rayons is situated, there are 185 families with young adults with autism who crave the structure, support and daily routine that this organization provides.

“We knew this program was a success in its first week,” says Michael Herman. “A lot of these young adults were isolated from their community. They have now become tremendously proud of the work they are doing and the difference they are making. They are really giving back.”

Seventy-five young adults are currently training at Pleins Rayons. The group builds bicycles, which are then given out to local schools, charities and organizations. They recently sent 55 bikes to the Cree community in northern Quebec and have a large order for more. They are also working on a program which will bring the Plein Rayons mechanics with autism up North to teach mechanic skills to the native students.

“Pleins Rayons is empowering youth as they develop unique skills, self-confidence and social abilities,” says Board Member Anne Stairs. “Young adults with special needs are giving bikes to kids when typically they’ve been on the receiving end of the handout – it’s really empowering for them.”

Pleins Rayons is setting the wheels in motion for change. It has been so successful



Participants Kevin Michaud and Vicky Girouard, educator Myriam de Clausel de Coussergues, participant Justin Carter, recreational therapist Stephan Marcoux, and participants Branden Graves and Meaghan Goudreau at Pleins Rayons in Cowansville. (Photo credit, Stephanie Comeau)

in its first year of operation that they are running out of space due to a significant number of bike donations. Generally, 15 participants come per day, but until more professional staff can be engaged, the recruiting of new participants is on hold. Their wish list includes renting a larger space so that they can welcome more adults to the crew.

This unique program is a model of how an idea and passion for change can turn into an establishment that changes lives from isolated to thriving. Pleins Rayons fosters social inclusion, enabling its participants

to learn marketable skills and much needed self-esteem. Participants are quickly becoming skilled bike mechanics, becoming physically fit, building relationships, experiencing the beauty of being an integral part of a community, and watching their work flourish and benefit others.

For information or to make a donation, visit [www.pleinsrayons.ca](http://www.pleinsrayons.ca).

Cindy Davis is the manager of Public Relations and Social Media at the Jewish Public Library as well as a freelance journalist, editor and PR consultant.

## Community kudos!

By Elaine Cohen

Congratulations to **Merrill Matthews**, social media manager of I Can Dream Theatre (ICDT) in Montreal. His documentary *The Making of a Dream* was accepted to Picture this...film festival (PTFF) and will be judged by a jury in the Spring of 2017.

The documentary starring adults with special needs was screened at Guzzo Theatre

in Saint-Laurent in April 2016. The goal of the documentary was to show all the steps it takes to make an ICDT production come to life. Read more in our Fall online EXPRESS 2016 edition on our website.

PTFF is an international disability film festival. It is competitive, mounts exhibitions and stages festivals. The films focus on disabilities and are written, directed, produced, or performed by people with a connection or an intrinsic interest in the special needs community. It is an initiative of the Calgary SCOPE Society, a registered non-profit organization. Visit [www.ptff.org](http://www.ptff.org) for information.

**Linda Mastroianni**, founder of Speaking Autism ([www.speakingautism.ca](http://www.speakingautism.ca)), was awarded the 2016 INPA Award in the category of Community Mentor. Chosen from a group of nominees from 24 countries, Mastroianni is a certified autism coach and consultant. She is also a writer, parent of two sons, Juliano, 18, and Emilio, 14. Emilio was diagnosed with autism in 2002. Mastroianni shares her personal and professional knowledge with families helping them navigate the special needs education system. She also coaches parents with special needs children by empowering them with effective strategies.

Mastroianni received her award at the 7th annual ANCA World Autism Festival (AWAF) in Vancouver. ANCA focuses on how the autistic mind processes information, or what ANCA terms “The Autistic Paradigm – from the inside out”. It features an inaugural trade show, certification workshops and exhibitions. For information visit [www.naturallyautistic.com](http://www.naturallyautistic.com).

**Jesse Heffring**, Summit School media teacher, and their performing arts troupe. Their play *Outta Here* will be relaunched at the Centaur Theatre’s Wildside Festival from January 5 to 7, 2017. Check out page 18 of this edition for detail and information on how to get your tickets.



## RAD on the move with Live for the Cause

By Wendy Singer

On August 27, Live for the Cause presented their Carnival Cocktail Dînaire in benefit of RAD Movement. RAD, spearheaded by Luca “Lazylegz” Patuelli and his partners Melissa Emblin and Marie-Élaine Patenaude, empowers individuals with special needs to discover strength from within by using adapted urban dance as a means of self-expression.

The event theme, “Live for movement”, was chosen to complement the vision of RAD (Redefine Ability through Dance) Movement (formerly known as Projet RAD – Réservé aux Danseurs). In speaking with Patuelli at the event, he conveyed the enormity of his passion and vision to change the world’s view of disability to ability.

Live for the Cause and RAD Movement worked in synergy to host a fun, thoughtful event. Guests were invited to play carnival games with a twist, such as Marshmallow Pick-Me-Up, where contestants picked up marshmallows with chopsticks while wear-

ing oven mitts, bringing attention to fine motor skills (the winner managed to pick up 121 marshmallows!).

Other challenges included a dart game that upped the stakes when googly glasses were put on to impair vision. The heavy arm challenge consisted of putting weights on the arm prior to tossing a football to simulate the feeling of Muscular Dystrophy. And a Wobble-Wobble Mini-Putt taught participants about balance and gravity as they stood on an unstable platform while attempting to putt a hole-in-one on the green.

The most challenging competition was the orange-cone laden construction zone obstacle course (a clever play on the City of Montreal’s abundance of road work and RAD Movement being under construction).

Event M.C.’s Lori Graham from CTV and comedian Chris Hall kept the evening light and running smoothly, while Patuelli and the RAD crew wowed with their urban dance show. Prizes, a silent auction, singing by Stephanie Cowan, and a live auction of a



Luca Patuelli with Michel and Matt at Live for the Cause at The Wave.

painting by graffiti artist Skim engaged the crowd.

Live for the Cause was founded by extraordinary young philanthropist Olivia Monton, who has clear goals and an undeniably immense heart. With her energetic team by her side, they have rejuvenated fundraising, developing creative and innovative ways to contribute to causes either monetarily or non-monetarily, through volunteering or education.



Mathew Griffiths, Patricia Paoloni, Stephanie Valin, Marie-Élaine Patenaude, Olivia Monton, Luca Patuelli, Katrina Monton, Marissa Ahmarani, and Mike Brennan at Live for the Cause. (Photo credit, Studio Kat Kennedy / Kathleen Girard)

As Monton, who recently began medical school explained during her speech, she is determined to show that her generation has much to give back to the community. And she is certainly well on her way.

We look forward to future events, and wish RAD Movement an easy ride through the construction zone.

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## Spotlight on accessible transportation

# STL mobile app: Making public transportation more accessible for the mildly disabled

By Valentina Basilicata

The Société de transport de Laval's (STL) Companion mobile app is set to go live during the first quarter of 2017. It will allow individuals with mild disabilities and developmental disorders to be more independent when using public transit within the city.

The application works on any smart device and requires users to pre-program their regular travel routes into the app. The app then guides users with step-by-step instructions when travelling from point A to point B on any of those routes.

Companion transmits precise audio and visual travel notifications in real time. It can

alert clients about service disruptions, which buses to get on and when to disembark.

For added peace of mind, geolocation services enable riders using Companion to have a live two-way chat with an agent from a Customer Contact Centre. The agent notifies the rider if they have veered off course and provides additional assistance if necessary.

"Our target is to have people with disabilities go into public transit and remove them from adapted transportation, which is more limited," explained David De Cotis, chairman of the STL Board of Directors. The STL does offer separate adapted transit. However, this service is by reservation only and is not offered 24 hours a day. "If we can put [these clients] on public transporta-

tion, it gives them more autonomy and more freedom to plan out their day."

The project has been on the drawing board since 2011, yet its development only began in 2013. The STL is working out a few final kinks before the official launch. Although innovative, the app is not the only one of its kind. It is modeled on a similar tool used within the subway system in Barcelona, Spain. The STL has partnered with the Spanish company to develop its own version. The Ministère des Transports du Québec (MTQ) provided 75 percent of the funding. The rest came from taxpayer pockets.

The Companion app launch will come on the heels of Laval establishing itself as the first autism-friendly city in Canada. The city has been collaborating with Giants Steps

School and Resource Centre to teach community members, including public transit workers, to better understand and interact with autistic individuals.

The goal of the STL has always been to improve their clientele's quality of life through the implementation of various projects, specified De Cotis. "Companion is just one of the many." In fact, De Cotis added that the STL purchased 38 new air conditioned buses in 2016. He estimates that within 15 years, the entire fleet will be air conditioned, further improving Laval citizens' public transit experience.

*Valentina Basilicata is a freelance journalist, communications specialist and emcee. She is also the proud mom of two boisterous, lovable boys.*

## Accessibility at Aéroports de Montréal

By Randy Pinsky

Travel for families with members who have special needs can cause great concerns about the inevitable challenges of accessibility. For such families, travelling requires planning and an incredible amount of foresight.

"Committed to providing airport facilities that are adapted to the needs of [all passengers]", Aéroports de Montréal has dedicated itself to easing the stress of travel from departure to arrival. And while some accommodations require prior notice, more are being offered automatically.

Oversized revolving doors, elevators and moving sidewalks throughout the terminal facilitate movement for those with limited mobility. All washrooms feature entrances without doors and adapted stalls, and information counters, ATMs, and public pay phones are made accessible for wheelchair users.

For those with limited mobility, wheelchairs are available at the information counters

located on the departure level. If you are boarding a flight, you are welcome to contact your airline for a wheelchair.

With prior arrangement, passenger transfer shuttles and wheelchair accessible vehicles can be rented. For those who are hearing impaired, TTY telephones are easily available, and fire alarms are accompanied by strobe lights. Large and clearly marked signage, elevators announcing floors, and even a relief area for guide dogs significantly reduce the headache of travelling for passengers who are visually impaired.

But what about families with children with autism or other functional limitations? The stress of new surroundings is particularly pronounced for those susceptible to sensory over-stimulation and changes in routine.

Since 2011, the airport has partnered with Autisme Montréal and Giant Steps Resource and Training Centre to offer the Premium Kids Program. It features a simulated travel adventure to enhance the familiarity and thereby reduce the stress of an otherwise dauntingly new experience. Families

are invited to 'rehearse' the airport process from start to finish. Parents can identify trigger points which might require additional prepping for the ultimate trip. All benefit as kids become more familiar with travelling procedures and the airport can become more attuned to needs for accommodation.

The impact of this program is most meaningfully related by parent testimonies, stating, "Your [initiative] gave us such joy... we live in a world where people do not sufficiently understand this disability and are often not very kind or understanding with our life". Another echoed, "I want you to know how much all the care and effort meant to my family and to everyone else who participated". Travelling can now be a much less stress-inducing experience thanks to Aéroports de Montréal's accommodations.

*Randy Pinsky is a freelance writer, a competitive dragon boater, and family program and outreach coordinator at HAVI Friends, a community group for families with alternative abilities.*

### Handy AT information:

**To reserve door-to-door service:**  
(514) 280-8211 or through the online reservation service SIRTA

**Requests for group travel:**

Fax: (514) 280-5317  
Email: [groupe.ta@stm.info](mailto:groupe.ta@stm.info)

**Telescript for hearing impaired clients:**

(ATS) (514) 280-5308

**Requests for transportation schedule:**

Fax (514) 280-6313

**Customer Service:**

Email: [transport.adapte@stm.info](mailto:transport.adapte@stm.info)

**General information:**

(514) 280-5252  
[www.stm.info/en/para](http://www.stm.info/en/para)

**STM's Transport CONTACT newsletter for paratransit users:**  
[www.stm.info/en/paratransit/about-paratransit](http://www.stm.info/en/paratransit/about-paratransit)



# STM's inclusive accessibility transit innovations

Compiled by Elaine Cohen

The Société de transport de Montréal (STM) has made great strides recently to improve public transit service for all segments of the population. The STM consulted with customers to note the latter's concerns and gain their support for their Strategic Plan 2020. Numerous initiatives in the five-year plan have been completed and others are progressing according to plans.

The focus on accessibility for school youth and adults of all ages with impeded mobility and special needs is commendable. "Universal accessibility promotes independence and contributes to the social inclusion of persons with one or more functional limitations," concedes the STM. Proposals put forward in the STM's Strategic Plan follow the course set forward by the Ministère des Transports du Québec Public Transit Policy, the City of Montreal's Transportation Plan, the Montreal Community Sustainable Development Plan and the Communauté Métropolitaine de Montréal's (CMM) Vision 2025.

CMM's Vision 2025 aims at increasing ridership by metro extension in Eastern Montreal as well as by ensuring flexible, rapid service and replacing diesel. The following summary describes the system, the progress thus far and what's on the agenda.

## Accessible metros

STM credits Transport Québec for its support in making elevator installation possible at various metro stations. Access is a boon to wheelchair users and everyone with reduced mobility. Elevators are installed at Lionel



A paratransit passenger uses the STM service. (Photo courtesy of STM)

Groulx, Montmorency, De la Concorde, Cartier, Jean Talon, Berri-UQAM, Champs-de-Mars, Henri-Bourassa, Côte Vertu and Snowdon stations. Elevator access will be available at Du Collège by 2018. The STM and the City of Montreal have recently announced that they will invest \$213 million to make 14 additional metro stations universally accessible by the year 2022. The money was part of the federal government's infrastructure plan and will be split with the provincial government.

## STM's paratransit program

The STM's paratransit program offers door-to-door public service by reservation only. Advantages include affordable, safe, reli-

able service that contributes to social and workplace inclusion for people whose mobility is severely restricted. To be eligible for paratransit it is necessary to justify a persistent impairment that impedes mobility. Paratransit serves areas covered by the Montreal agglomeration including Ile-Bizard, Ile Ste-Hélène, Ile Notre-Dame, Iles-Soeurs and the entire area served by the Agence Métropolitaine de transport (AMT), Montreal Island, Laval, Longueuil, North Shore and South Shore.

Applicants can download printable application forms online and follow the necessary steps to apply for the paratransit program at ([www.stm.info/en/paratransit/admin](http://www.stm.info/en/paratransit/admin)). Note that the second section must be completed by a health professional or school system with access to the respective student's medical file.

A list of points served by paratransit is available online. Mode of travel is determined by STM. The agency considers passenger needs and available resources. Among the vehicles are adapted taxis, regular taxis and minibuses.

## A cautionary note

The STM cautions readers not to confuse paratransit with the regular STM service. Wheelchair access in the regular system is available for persons able to maneuver and manage the trip autonomously. The system can be accessed by most wheelchairs both manual and motorized as well as three- and four-wheel scooters.

A few points to consider: To ensure drivers



The new elevator at Snowdon metro station makes it accessible to all. (Photo courtesy of STM)

spot wheelchair passengers, STM advises users to board at the front of the first car of the metro. Position the wheelchair with its back to the wall and lock the brakes. Remain stationary while the train is in motion.

In transferring from one Metro station to another a wheelchair user can request a Metro companion. Buses are wheelchair accessible with a couple of exceptions, such as Shuttle Ste-Anne. The low-front model buses are accessible before boarding.

## Companion card

The companion card is an STM initiative in collaboration with the Office des personnes handicapées du Québec (OPHQ), the Régie régionale de la santé et des services sociaux de Montréal-Centre, and Montréal rehabilitation centres for the visually or intellectually disabled. It provides free travel for the person who accompanies the cardholder while he or she uses the STM's bus and metro transit system. This card is issued free of charge. For information, visit <http://www.stm.info/en/access>. Click on accessibility-visually-or-intellectually-disabled.

## What are Adapted Transit users saying?

With the help of parent and volunteer Anne Marie Plante, we heard the experience of some parents who use Adapted Transport (AT).

*Q: How long did it take you to receive acceptance to AT?*

*A: The shortest I have heard was a little over four weeks. It took us five weeks*

*when we applied for my son. For my mother, who really needed it due to having to undergo treatments for cancer, it took over three months.*

*Q: Did you encounter any obstacles when applying?*

*A: No. We received our special OPUS card very quickly. You have to send photos of the potential client when applying - just like a passport application - so their photo is on the special AT/TA OPUS card. The card is not valid if it doesn't have their photo or if it becomes scratched or damaged. In that case you can ask STM to send you a replacement card (they keep the photo in their computer system).*

*Q: What has been the advantage of using AT?*

*A: It has benefitted us greatly. We have peace of mind knowing that my son will not get lost. It has allowed us to work more because we don't drive him ourselves to all the places that would be difficult for him to get to on his own.*

*Q: Do you have any comments about using AT?*

*A: I think it's a great service. Most of the drivers go above and beyond. Many come right to the door to escort my son to and from the vehicle, even in the winter. We*

*have had a few experiences of my son being picked up very late and in some cases a return transport being cancelled automatically (without us being notified) because the driver had not showed up for the pick-up and we had chosen to bring him to his appointment ourselves. We had wrongly presumed the return trip was still scheduled and then had to pick him up as well.*

*Anne Marie Plante is a parent of an autistic adult who is 24 years old. She is a foot care nurse with her business Plante de Pied, and provides home care as well as visits at Santé A-1. Thanks to all other contributing parents.*



# Group home provides family milieu for young adults with multiple challenges

By Elaine Cohen

**B**enjamin and Vanda Treiser Maison Shalom is a professionally run group home where children and young adults with intellectual, emotional and physical challenges are cared for in a safe, stimulating family style atmosphere. The special needs community is served by two locales in the Montreal area, the Donald Berman Residence on Carlton Avenue established in 1989, and the Hershey and Raizy Friedman Residence, opened in 2005, on Kent Avenue.

In addition to the seven permanent residents in each home, Maison Shalom provides respite services to families, seeking short and longterm relief for their loved ones. The recipients enjoy a change of scenery and an opportunity to interact with other residents.

Sid Dworkin, MSW, a well-known Cantor and chaplain in the community, has served as coordinator at Maison Shalom since 2004. "Maison Shalom was started to accommodate the observant Jewish community and it caters to all denominations of Judaism," he pointed out.

"We're unique within the system because we observe the Sabbath, Jewish holidays and a high adherence to kashrut. Maison Shalom is a working environment that has produced a dedicated staff commitment. Several of the employees have had a direct line with the residents since inception." The staff cares for residents as if they were their own children, Dworkin observes.

Benjamin's mother was among many parents that noted how much she appreciates Maison Shalom. The facility has enabled her to devote much-needed time to her other children and family members.

Since Maison Shalom residents face multiple difficulties, the staff/resident ratio is three to one. The residents, ages 20 to 45, receive 24-hour care. Staff attends to the residents' feeding, bathing, personal hygiene, dressing and other tasks.

"Maison Shalom is a learning-friendly organization and we have many students doing their community service placements here," Dworkin said. "We are fortunate to welcome numerous generous volunteers that come into our homes to entertain with their musical talents on piano, clarinet and guitar. Others share their expertise in art and storytelling." Most of the residents are involved in workshops, such as JEM, and CARE programs during the day.

Maison Shalom is supported by government funding, Federation Combined Jewish Appeal and private fundraising initiatives. "The ministry, and channels through which fund-



**Maison Shalom resident Chaim Zimlichman with coordinator Sid Dworkin.** (Photo credit @ Jack Malric – Jemphoto.net 2014)

ing is administered, has limited placement of new residents for a number of years," Dworkin said. To date, he has received no indication of change.

For information, visit [www.treisermaisonshalom.com](http://www.treisermaisonshalom.com).

## Pokémon Go app helping children with ASD

By Tania Piperni M.Ed

**W**e often suggest that educators working with children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) incorporate the students' special interests in the classroom as motivators. By including interests such as video game characters, trains, superheroes etc., it creates extra incentive to finish school work. We have often said that these special interests can be cultivated into future work skills. One of the biggest examples is this summer's latest craze, Pokémon Go. This app has become a fascination for adults and children alike as they travel their local communities trying to catch virtual creatures on their mobile devices.

Fifty-one-year-old Japanese video game designer Satoshi Tajiri turned his obsessions of insect collecting and video games into a multibillion-dollar franchise that launched the Pokémon craze. Tajiri wanted his games to allow children to capture the feeling of collecting creatures as he enjoyed doing during his childhood. Due to his fascination with arcade games as a teenager, he frequently cut classes and almost did not graduate high school. After majoring

in electronics and computer science, Tajiri pitched the idea of Pokémon to Nintendo. He deliberately toned down the violence in his games as he believes it is unhealthy for children to equate the concept of death with losing a game. Thus his Pokémon creatures faint rather than die upon defeat. Tajiri's personal story illustrates how a special interest can lead to future employment.

This free app allows children with ASD to interact with others who they may not have connected with. Although we hear of instances where individuals playing this game have become too distracted while walking around, there are many stories of how children with ASD are now interacting with other Pokémon users which in turn increases socializing opportunities at school and in the community.

Pokémon Go encourages kids to purposefully get out into the world while still motivated by their love of the virtual world. They are using more social skills and life skills due to their love of technology and video games. One mother, Nadia B, explains how her son Anthony, who has a diagnosis of ASD, uses the Pokémon Go app: "He was excited when he got his Pokémon

Go game because he got to share in the same excitement as his friends. He would go out more often with his group of friends and have so much fun being accepted as one of the gang."

Needless to say, parental guidelines should be put into place while children play this game. An adult should be with the child while walking around as traveling can include crossing busy streets, walking through dimly lit pathways, or through less populated areas. This in turn creates a discussion opportunity regarding street safety and how to safely interact with strangers. Some parents note that their children accompany them more often on errands so that they can collect different and even rare creatures on the way. For children with ASD, this allows them to explore new environments which may have previously provoked anxiety.



**Children interacting while playing Pokémon Go.**

Pokémon Go can create a bond between families; siblings, cousins and even parents can now go Pokémon hunting around town together. This mutual interest helps create bonds while providing entertainment for everyone!

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



# Dynamic Funds Teacher of Inspiration 2016

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## *Peter Tsatoumas: Keeping up with academics at the Montreal Children's Hospital*

By Wendy Singer

When a student is admitted to the Montreal Children's Hospital (MCH) of the McGill University Health Centre (MUHC), be it for a short or long term stay, they can count on their educational needs being met. The EMSB's Child Life and School Services team consists of two special education teachers who keep EMSB and English-language students from other boards and schools in the academic loop. The school range covers kindergarten to Grade 11 students, both in mainstream and special needs programs, from near and far. There are also three other teachers from the Commission scolaire de Montréal (CSDM) who provide attention to French-speaking students.

Dynamic Funds Teacher of Inspiration 2016 Peter Tsatoumas has been a member of this team since August 2015, and has worked on the team in previous years. Devoted to the patient-students that he teaches at the MCH, he describes his work as emotionally charged and highly rewarding. He teaches some students on the medical wards, but predominantly attends to those that are admitted for mental health issues. Tsatoumas has worked with students with autism and special needs at Paul VI/L.I.N.K.S. High School, and Edward Murphy Elementary.

Each day Tsatoumas and his colleague Sarah Adair review a list of patients who have been admitted to the MCH. They consult



**Peter Tsatoumas, special education teacher at the MCH, student Mario Futia, and Gail Callender, principal of the MCH program.**

with the nursing staff, and if appropriate, will visit the student to see if they can provide assistance with academics. Sometimes a student is there for only a few days. In many cases, they are too ill to do school work. But most of them are eager to keep up with their studies. School is not mandatory.

This program allows the teacher to focus on the patient's individual needs when being part of a classroom is not possible. "I feel like I'm doing something really worthwhile by keeping our students connected," says Tsatoumas. "When they return to school they have not fallen behind as we try to mirror the work covered in the child's regular

classroom. It is also stimulating for them and takes their mind off of being in the hospital."

Being a teacher in an acute care hospital can be emotionally challenging, and as Gail Callender, principal of The MCH program, St. Raphael Elementary School, and The Sir Mortimer B. Davis explains, teachers require the ability to work with hospital staff, be sensitive to the parents, keep in touch with school teachers, and be able to work with a variety of needs. "Flexibility is key," shares Tsatoumas. "I can work with a Grade 3 student and then move on to prep a Grade 10 student for provincial exams. It's a balancing act. You always need to be on your toes."

Patient-students have a lot going on when in the hospital and the team needs to work academics into the students' days in between their medical needs. "We have competition from clowns, music therapists, pet therapy, and child-life programs," adds Tsatoumas, who was recently a guest of JFK at the Dancing with the Stars event.

"The teachers at the Montreal Children's Hospital really make a difference for our patients who have to be hospitalized for a long period of time," said Dr. Harvey Guyda, associate executive director of the hospital. "They bring in the normal part of life in a world filled with challenging medical issues. The teachers often go beyond their role by providing emotional support as they become supportive adults who are able to show compassion to the patients."

"As a teacher, it is a very rare opportunity to regularly work one-on-one with students," shares Tsatoumas. "Teaching at the hospital gives me the opportunity to truly adapt to students' needs. I feel very fortunate to be afforded that luxury."

*Dynamic Funds is one of Canada's most recognized asset management firms. We offer a comprehensive range of products and services, spanning every major sector, geographic region and investment discipline. Dynamic's actively managed investment solutions add value to a wide variety of accounts, including fee-based, tax-advantaged, and customized high-net-worth programs.*

### *Inspirations: Celebrating inclusive communities*

The special needs community of the Greater Montreal and surrounding areas is one in motion with vision for the future. It is comprised of people with amazing abilities that we celebrate on a daily basis, and people that are creating outstanding opportunities for them to grow, thrive, and be included in our communities on all levels.

Upon consultation with experts in the field, we realized that it was time to modify our tagline. Inspirations is not only providing a 'snapshot of our special needs community', we are reaching

beyond the confines of our barriers towards a greater community. We are striving for a community that is inclusive of people with all abilities.

We are celebrating this move! It is congruent with Universal Design for Learning, transition planning, creating autism-friendly cities. It includes educating the public-at-large, and all other efforts that our amazing community is making to better understand and serve people with varying abilities.

We hope you will join us as we set forth in celebrating inclusive communities.

### **News from the Inspirations team!**

It is with great pleasure that we introduce **Jill Dascal** to our Inspirations community. She joins our team as an Advertising and Sales Specialist. Jill has been an Avon representative since 2011, and takes an active role in her family business Unique Home Décor.

We thank **Suzie Lazar** for her immense contribution and dedication to Inspirations as she moves on to pursue other challenges. It has been our honour to have her on our team. We wish her the best of luck in her future endeavors. Keep in touch with Suzie at [wisemoneywisechoices.com](http://wisemoneywisechoices.com).

We also welcome Steven Atme, Russell Cooper, and Randy Pinsky to the editorial team.



**Jill Dascal**



## Inspirations Notebook

Wendy Singer



The Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology in partnership with the McGill Faculty of Education presented the McGill Summer Institute for School Psychology (SISP) in June. This inaugural annual conference was crafted to expand knowledge mobilization to professionals providing services to school-aged children, including school psychologists, educators, educational policy makers, counsellors, clinical psychologists, social workers, graduate students, and other related personnel across North America.

This two-day conference held at McGill University welcomed internationally known speakers **Dr. Jerome Sattler**, well-known for his work on the Wechsler assessment tests, and **Dr. Peter Isquith**, who spoke about executive functioning in the everyday context. McGill University speaker **Dr. Steven Shaw** spoke about implementing Tier 2 interventions for students with low cognitive ability, and our friend **Dr. Tara Flanagan**, also from McGill, spoke about putting self-determination theory into the practice of school psychology.

Organizers **Dr. Steven Shaw** and **Dr. Jeffrey L. Derevensky** worked closely with their student committee to kick off this important conference.

L'équilibre en mouvement opened its doors to the public on August 25 with an open house that offered attendees the opportunity to learn about the multiple services that this integrative, holistic center has to offer. Located on Van Horne avenue in Outremont, it was founded by **Manon Lefebvre**, a certified Brain Gym® and Educational Kinesthetics (Édu-K) consultant, and social worker.

**Lisa Marcovici**, founder of Rekinexion, now a partner in this endeavor, is known for offering a full range of movement-based learning programs for all ages, including Brain Gym® trainings and courses, Rhythmic Movement Training®, and other fundamental developmental techniques.

The services that L'équilibre's practitioners provide in this cozy and comfortable space include yoga and Brain Gym® for children aged five to eight years old, physio and massage therapy, art therapy for adults, Positive

Pedagogy, theatre for children, yoga, dance, meditation, and more. For information, visit [www.equilibrenmouvement.ca](http://www.equilibrenmouvement.ca).

The Friendship Circle hosted The Art of Friendship vernissage on June 22 at the Gelber Center, celebrating the talents of individuals with special needs. One hundred pieces of art created in collaboration with mentoring Montreal artists were on display, and for sale. Mentors included **Elaine Dubrovsky**, **Maureen Azimov**, **Toby Wexelman**, **Susan Scott**, **Haim Sherff**, **Shalom Serraf**, **Daniel Wisebord**, and **Ellie Morganstein**.

Guests enjoyed an incredible performance by the Friendship Circle's drama club. An Art of Friendship coffee table book is available to purchase at [info@FriendshipCircle.ca](mailto:info@FriendshipCircle.ca). The event raised \$75,000.

The Friendship Circle has been offering novel events for parents, including a weekend retreat for mothers who have children with special needs. "Shabbat at the spa" at the Tremblant Manor offered pampering with gift baskets, robes, pillow-soft spa socks and breakfast in bed. Moms enjoyed an array of activities including a Havdalah ceremony and bonfire. As for the guys, they had a dad's night out at Amaze - a real life escape game. More special events are coming up, so stay tuned!

The 9th annual Three, 2, 1, GO! race was held on August 27 at Maisonneuve Park. This fundraiser benefits Regroupement pour la Trisomie 21 (RT21), a community organization that supports people with Down syndrome. This year nearly 950 people registered for the 5k, 10k or 1k events. Spokesperson, actor **Maxime Le Flaguais**, was present to meet the families and cheer on the runners. After the race, families were treated to a barbeque in the park, music and dancing. The event provided a wonderful opportunity for individuals with Down syndrome to meet and greet one another, and celebrate together.

With the support of many volunteers, sponsors Bombardier, Plomberium, Baliscus, and partners, an amazing \$74,000 was raised. These funds will ensure the continuity of RT21's services and activities.

The Giant Steps School and Resource Center team is working on a pilot music project for students with autism titled "Extraordinary Rhythms". Organized with Music for Autism International, the program's unique approach focuses on the teaching of music to autistic students. Beginning in November, professional musicians will meet with students for six weeks of individualized music instruction. This will culminate in a concert performance. The project boasts Project Ambassadors **Sam Roberts** and **Sophie Prigent**. We'll feature this project in our next edition.

WIAIH (West Island Association for the Intellectually Handicapped) and its initiative to build the KIZMET Centre for young children and parents has won the prestigious 2016 Community Cares Award in the Organization category. **Natalie Chapman**, WIAIH's director and the driving force behind the KIZMET project accepted the award on behalf of her team at a gala on May 12, 2016.

"We are so proud to be expanding our traditional mission so that our expertise can help all families with young children in the West Island," said Chapman. "The research is crystal clear that investing in kids before the age of six can help to diminish, or even prevent, mental and physical health problems which may only emerge later in these children's lives."

KIZMET will provide programs such as early literacy, parenting advice, pre- and post-natal programs, developmental screening, community kitchens, language stimulation, and parent-child playgroups for relationship development.

On September 25, the Canadian Associates of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev welcomed **Dr. Ilan Dinstein** to the Shaar Zion Synagogue as part of their fifth annual Kindle Your Imagination lecture series. **Larry Nachshen**, president of the Quebec Division of the Canadian Association of Ben-Gurion University, **Mark Mendelson**, chief executive officer, National Office, and **Ellayne Kaplan**, executive director, Montreal office, were present to welcome Dr. Dinstein to Montreal.

Dr. Dinstein is a member of Ben-Gurion University's Department of Psychology and the Zlotowski Center for Neuroscience. He has established Israel's first major autism research center with the help of additional scientists at the university and physicians in the neighbouring Soroka Medical Center. The goals of the center are to reveal what causes different types of autism and to develop new interventions through a better understanding of the genetics, metabolism, brain function,

and behavior of one to four-year-old toddlers who develop autism.

The Canadian Associates of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev have raised significant funds from individual donors to support Dr. Dinstein's research. Read about Dr. Dinstein's cutting-edge research and his presentation *Cracking the Autism Puzzle*, in Jonathan Wexler's blog at [inspirationsnewsmtl.blogspot.ca](http://inspirationsnewsmtl.blogspot.ca).

The third annual Salon de L'Autisme TSA du Québec took place at Place Forzani in Laval on September 30 and October 1. Organized by **Johanne Leduc**, president of the Salon, and **Sylvie Le Guerrier**, vice-president, the event brought 115 exhibitors and 25 presenters together under one roof.

This year's Salon, which welcomed Montreal Impact star **Laurent Ciman** as honorary president, and comedian and writer **Frédérique Dufort** as spokesperson, included a play corner furnished by Kit Planete, a quiet area where sensory tools to aid relaxation were available, and an artist section featuring talented creators that have autism.

Leduc and Le Guerrier introduced Un Pas à la Fois, which raises funds to help non-profit autism-related organizations and families with a child or adult with autism. The first recipient was parent and 2016 Salon Personality **Anne-Marie Le Guill**.

Autisme Sans Limites (Autism Without Limits) is a charitable organization that supports personal fulfillment and social inclusion of adults with high functioning autism. Chaired by **Lise-Marie Gravel**, and vice-chair **Lucien Le Comte**, the programs include Studio Sans Limites, which focuses on skill development and workplace training programs, and Academy Without Limits.

On October 5, Autisme Sans Limites held an exclusive Montreal film premier of **Alexandra Shiva's** documentary *How to Dance in Ohio*. The film follows teenage and adult clients with autism as they prepare for an iconic American rite of passage - the spring formal dance. Filming took place at Amigo Family Counseling, run by **Dr. Emilio Amigo** in Ohio. Dr. Amigo flew to Montreal to attend the event. He answered questions about his Respons-ability Social Therapy™ from Andrew Molson after the screening.

For the full story, read Emmanuelle Assor's articles on page 23 of this edition.

If you have tidbits to share, connect with me at [wendyinspirations@gmail.com](mailto:wendyinspirations@gmail.com).



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**1.** Micah Tilley, Laura Varona Prevez, Marie-Michelle Boulanger, Dr. Jerome Sattler, Shalakah Shah, Emily Stubbart, Loredana Marchica, and Ida Foster at the McGill SISP. (Photo credit, Paul Ma)

**2.** Lisa Marcovici, Nathalie Lecompte, and Manon Lefebvre at L'équilibre en mouvement's open house.

**3.** Lindsey Dubrovsky, Phil Dubrovsky, future Friendship Circle president, Rick Dubrovsky, Richard Hitelman, Elaine Dubrovsky, mentoring artist and volunteer, Joeseph Dubrovsky, Ali Paperman, Ross Paperman, and Selena Paperman. (Photo credit, Menachem Serraf)

**4.** Artist Heidi Cardyn and Brittany Itzcovitch, artist and Friendship Circle participant, at the Art of Friendship vernissage. (Photo credit, Menachem Serraf)



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**5.** Moms of children with special needs enjoy their spa weekend at Tremblant Manor. (Photo credit, Shaina Gniwish)

**6.** Maxime Le Flaguais (actor and spokesperson of the event), Mustapha Amrhar (2nd place winner), Charles-Eric Langlois (1st place winner), Geoffroy Legentilhomme (3rd place winner) and Joël Martin (event ambassador) at the Three, 2, 1, GO! Race for RT21. (Photo credit, Stéphane Lafrenière)



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**7.** Sam Roberts visited Giant Steps School to share his music with the students. (Photo credit, Ross White)

**8.** Team WIAIH/KIZMET: Pierre Fréreau, Cherry Marshall, Diane Gibb, Lyne Charlebois, Natalie Chapman, Mary Rainville, Liam Chapman, Jean-Pierre Lacroix. (Photo credit, Trish Kuntz, Photo Diva photo\_diva@hotmail.com)



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**9.** Larry Nachshen, Dr. Ilan Dinstein, Ellayne Kaplan, and Mark Mendelson at the Shaar Zion Synagogue.

**10.** Johanne Leduc, Anne-Marie Le Guill, and Sylvie Le Guerrier at a press conference for the Salon D'Autisme at Place Forzani.

**11.** MNA Francine Charbonneau, a cut out of Laurent Ciman as he was not able to attend the event, and Jean-François Lisée at a press conference for the Salon D'Autisme at Place Forzani.

**12.** Andrew Molson, Dr. Emilio Amigo, and artist Casey Remrov Vormer at the Autisme Sans Limites fundraising event and Montreal premier of *How to Dance in Ohio*. (Photo credit, Eric Carrière)



# The Quebec Society for Disabled Children: Providing service for over 85 years

By Chantale Thérour

The Quebec Society for Disabled Children (QSDC) has supported the development of children with various neurological, intellectual and physical disabilities since 1930. In the process, they have been assisting parents in their struggles to provide care, attention, and support for their children.

Within the spacious, friendly facility on René-Lévesque Boulevard West in Montreal, children and young adults benefit from a multitude of services and recreational activities, from a vibrant inclusive daycare to music therapy, a Snoezelen room, and a new stimulation and occupational therapy centre furnished with state-of-the-art adapted equipment.

Each room is decorated and designed to promote the development of the child. The hallways are also equipped with games to occupy the children while they wait. The reputable staff includes two occupational



**Jen and Annie practicing fine motor activity at the Quebec Society for Disabled Children.** (Photo courtesy of the Quebec Society for Disabled Children)

therapists and two specialized educators. The QSDC is recognized for its partnership in supervising McGill occupational therapy students.

Services are provided to children from 12 months to 12 years of age through one-on-

one therapy or group intervention. The focus is on helping a child's development in the areas of cognition, fine and gross motor skills, sensory processing, visual perception, and functional independence.

Other services that the QSDC provides include Résidence Papillon, which offers leisure stays and short-term respite to people with physical disabilities between the ages of five and 25 years of age. The residence specializes in the support of young adults with multiple difficulties.

Camp Papillon, located in the Lanaudière Region, welcomes hundreds of campers with physical disabilities each year. Activities include fishing, archery, a climbing wall, camping, and much more.

In the summer, for a period of eight weeks, the QSDC's day camp hosts children with disabilities who cannot attend a regular day camp due to their special needs. A second day camp intended for children with a tracheostomy, with or without ventilation, is piloted thanks to the financial support of the Montreal Children's Hospital Foundation. A third day camp welcomes campers with multiple disabilities aged five to 25.

Papillon Daycare is a specialized daycare that is integrated into Jardin des Papillons, an early childhood stimulation centre. It promotes the development of disabled and



**Stimulation room at the Quebec Society for Disabled Children.** (Photo courtesy of the Quebec Society for Disabled Children)

underprivileged children in all spheres of their growth. Among the 75 children that attend the daycare, 13 live with a disability that requires the professional supervision of educators, specialized educators and occupational therapists.

To register for occupational therapy contact Jennifer Hargadon at (514) 937-6171, ext. 236 or [jhargadon@enfantshandicapes.com](mailto:jhargadon@enfantshandicapes.com). For all other services visit [www.enfantshandicapes.com](http://www.enfantshandicapes.com), call (514) 937-0617 or email [sehq@enfantshandicapes.com](mailto:sehq@enfantshandicapes.com).

The Quebec Society for Disabled Children offer a sliding scale to cover the cost of the services, which is dependent on the parent's income.

Chantale Thérour is the director of daycare services at the QSDC.

**Jacques Chagnon**  
Député de | MNA for Westmount—Saint-Louis

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By Nick Katalifos

## Upcoming conference to focus on the immense employment potential of autistic adults

In the last edition of Inspirations, I had the welcomed opportunity to report on an ambitious project aimed at improving the lives of individuals and families dealing with the challenges of autism spectrum disorder. With the goal of encouraging municipalities to become “autism-inclusive,” the Giant Steps School and Resource Center entered into a partnership with the forward-thinking administration of the City of Laval. The aim was to develop a training program for its first responders and help organize inclusive activities for its organizations and agencies.

Ultimately, one of the main goals of the project is to raise awareness among local business leaders regarding the benefits of employing adults living with ASD. To accomplish this, Giant Steps and the City of

Laval, led by Mayor Marc Demers and Executive Committee Vice-President David de Cotis, approached the Laval Chamber of Commerce, Tourism Laval, Emploi Québec and Autisme Laval to help organize a one-day conference dealing with autism and employment.

As efforts by leading autism organizations continue to raise awareness about ASD worldwide, many people are still unaware that one in 68 children is diagnosed with autism (Centers for Disease Control, 2014). This startling statistic has necessitated the development of policies designed to make autism a priority for research funding and delivery of services. Having stated this, employment for autistic adults has become a primary concern for many families and advocacy groups. The conference, scheduled for January 31, 2017, at the Palace Reception Hall, organized by Giant Steps, the City of Laval and their partners, will serve one main purpose – to raise awareness among business leaders in and around Laval that

autistic adults have immense potential as employees.

The conference’s keynote speaker, Randy Lewis, is a retired senior vice-president and well-known corporate leader from the United States who worked for Walgreens, a Fortune 50 company, where he was responsible for that organization’s huge, nationwide distribution network. The father of an autistic son, Lewis approached Walgreens’ board of directors in 2002 with an ambitious plan to hire not only people with autism but any disability. Just as important, Lewis’ approach was not based upon the notion of charity but on a business model as he convinced the company that this hiring practice would boost morale, corporate loyalty, reduce employee turnover, etc.

Lewis’ rationale proved to be a huge success as thousands of employees with disabilities, autism included, have been hired at Walgreens during the past 15 years. Indeed, this hiring program has served as a model

to many other world-class corporations and Lewis hopes the business leaders of Laval will embrace his message. The conference will also feature other corporate leaders including representatives from Specialisterne, a human resources company specializing in the recruitment and placement of autistic adults. Founded in Denmark by Thorkil Sonne, another parent of an autistic child, the company has offices in Toronto and Montreal, operates as a non-profit organization, and aims to fill at least 25,000 positions in Canada.

*The conference is open to everyone, from business leaders, professionals, parents and autistic adults. For information and to register visit <http://www.ccilaval.qc.ca/events/midi-mag-lembauche-de-personnes-autistes-un-potentiel-a-valoriser/>.*

*Nick Katalifos is the chairman of the Giant Steps School and Resource Centre, principal of Roslyn Elementary School, and special advisor to Inspirations.*



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## MNA David Birnbaum creates scholarships for John Grant students

The first D’Arcy McGee scholarships were introduced at last year’s John Grant High School (JGHS) graduation ceremony. Two scholarships in the amount of \$250 each will be given to JGHS students annually courtesy of the office of MNA for the D’Arcy McGee riding David Birnbaum. The commitment of the yearly D’Arcy McGee Scholarships is guaranteed only during his term of office. Mr. Birnbaum created these scholarships with the intent that they “contribute to the welfare and future success of John Grant graduating students.”

The first scholarship, awarded to Kesrie-Ann Pelesfor from the school’s Challenges Program, is for a student who displays the qualities of perseverance at school and personal growth. The second scholarship, for a student who shows positive engagement in the community, was awarded to Jacquelyn-Louise Gauthier, a student in the Work Orientation Training Path program. “We appreciate Mr. Birnbaum’s support of our school and our students, and their future

endeavors, both now and in the coming years,” said James Fequet, past principal of John Grant High School and current principal of Marymount Academy.



**MNA David Birnbaum with graduate and D’Arcy McGee scholarship winner Jacquelyn-Louise Gauthier at the John Grant High School graduation ceremony.** (Photo courtesy of John Grant High School)



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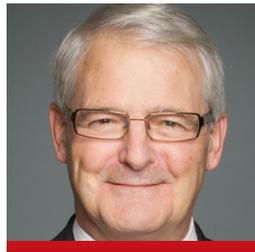
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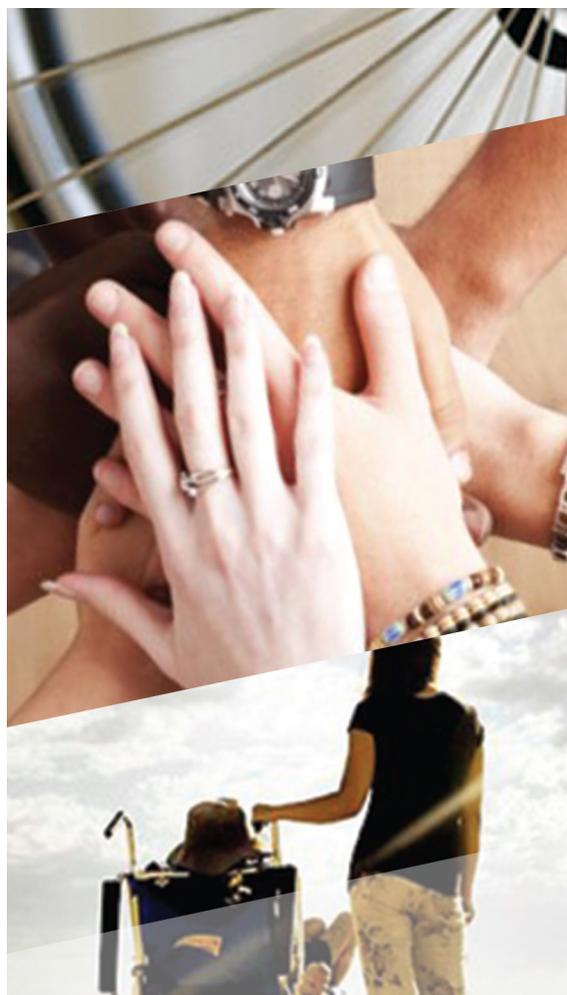
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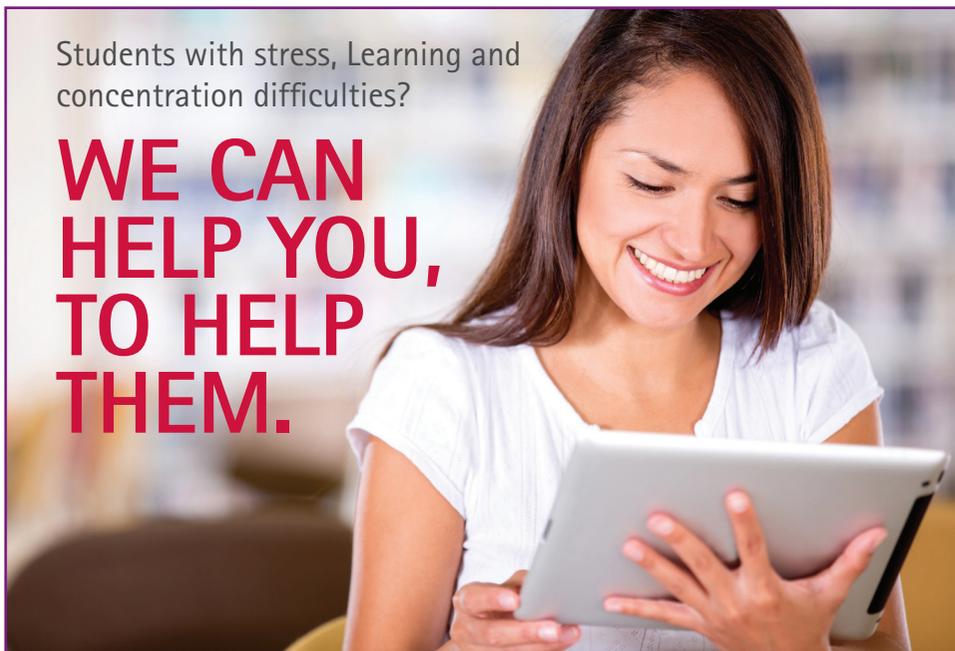
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# Autisme sans limites, un univers à découvrir

Par Emmanuelle Assor

**M**ercredi le 5 octobre 2016, une soirée de lancement réunissant des artistes et des journalistes de renommée ainsi que tous ceux qui sont touchés par le sujet de l'autisme, a eu lieu au splendide Théâtre Outremont. La raison de ce rassemblement : la grande première montréalaise du très touchant documentaire, *How to dance in Ohio*.

Pour l'occasion, le Théâtre Outremont avait déroulé son beau tapis rouge pour que des jeunes autistes montréalais puissent y faire leurs premiers pas en compagnie de «parrains et marraines» d'un soir issus du milieu artistique, tels que Joel Legendre, Herby Moreau ou Jeannette Bertrand. Ce tapis rouge inversé où les stars étaient de jeunes autistes (et non leurs accompagnateurs) a été une occasion très spéciale de souligner que les autistes ont leur place dans notre société avec leurs aptitudes uniques et qu'ils sont capables d'une participation citoyenne active.

Au nombre des personnalités présentes, les animateurs Charles Lafortune et Patricia Paquin, tous deux très impliqués auprès de la communauté autiste, et eux-mêmes parents d'enfants autistes, ont souligné l'importance d'une telle soirée de rassemblement. Une soirée émouvante pour découvrir un superbe documentaire sur des jeunes vivant leur première expérience de bal de finissants à Columbus, en Ohio. Pour reprendre les mots de Mme Lise-Marie Gravel, présidente de l'organisme Autisme sans limites, «ce film démontre le courage de ces jeunes qui vivent dans un monde qui n'est pas fait pour eux.»

Mme Gravel nous a ensuite parlé de son désir de créer un écosystème de milieux de vie pour autistes. Ce serait des milieux inclusifs inspirés de son premier «Club des soirées d'antan», un club de danse réunissant des autistes et des personnes neurotypiques, une initiative lancée pour que son fils puisse tout simplement danser un slow. Une demande pourtant si simple mais si compliquée pour un autiste.

Dans le cadre d'Autisme sans limites,

Mme Gravel a présenté brièvement les deux programmes phares de l'organisation, soit : l'Académie sans limites, un centre de loisirs et de développement continu s'adressant aux jeunes adultes autistes de haut niveau de fonctionnement, et le Studio sans limites, qui se présente sous forme de petites entreprises aménagées dans des centres d'éducation aux adultes de commissions scolaires. Le but ultime de ces programmes : créer des compétences sociales et un environnement de travail adapté pour qu'à l'âge adulte, les autistes ne tombent pas dans le vide, victimes de problèmes de santé mentale et esseulés. Selon Mme Gravel, «le principal problème, c'est nous qui n'avons pas su inclure les



**Jaclyne Demers et Herby Moreau à la première montréalaise du documentaire *How to Dance in Ohio* au Théâtre Outremont.**  
(Crédit photo : Éric Carrière)

autistes dans notre tissu social. Il faut sortir les autistes de leur isolement comme ce soir, ici, tous ensemble.»

Pour en savoir plus sur Autisme sans limites et pour découvrir le projet «Entrez dans la danse», visitez [www.autismesanslimites.org](http://www.autismesanslimites.org); [www.entrezdansladanse.org](http://www.entrezdansladanse.org).

## *How to Dance in Ohio* ou comment valser avec la vie quand on est autiste

Par Emmanuelle Assor

**L**e documentaire *How to Dance in Ohio* est un petit bijou de 88 minutes où l'on suit une dizaine de jeunes autistes pendant les trois mois qui les mènent à leur premier bal.

Pour tourner ce film, la cinéaste Alexandra Shiva a suivi le psychologue Dr Emilio Amigo, connu dans sa communauté en Ohio pour son implication auprès de jeunes autistes qui participent à son programme de Responsability Social Therapy™ (RST program).

Au fil du documentaire, on assiste à de troublantes séances de thérapie de groupe pour apprendre des habiletés sociales et Dr Amigo devient celui qui anime ces jeunes ayant de la difficulté à entrer en rapport. Alors que

pour le commun des mortels l'adolescence est un âge de tourmente, on n'imagine pas comment cela peut être encore plus difficile pour des autistes. Dans le groupe de Dr Amigo, nos jeunes âgés entre 17 et 23 ans évoluent sans cesse et apprennent des choses de base comme comment dire à quelqu'un qu'il nous intéresse; comment comprendre si la personne de notre choix ne veut pas sortir avec nous; comment se présenter; quelle tenue choisir pour sortir; comment danser? Pour ces jeunes, la liste de difficultés semble sans fin.

*How to Dance in Ohio* nous invite dans un univers dur où chaque autiste doit se battre constamment pour comprendre ce qu'on attend de lui, n'ayant pas les clés de notre univers si complexe. Mme Shiva a créé un documentaire triste et lumineux car de toutes ces difficultés que vivent ces jeunes ressort le besoin de vivre, d'aimer

et d'être aimé. C'est une véritable leçon de courage que ces jeunes nous donnent en nous montrant que rien n'est perdu d'avance, que tout peut encore arriver. Il suffit d'y croire et d'être épaulé comme ils le sont par le merveilleux Dr Amigo, qui porte si bien son nom. Un film à voir absolument pour comprendre ce que les autistes vivent au quotidien et pour leur tendre la main sans les juger.

Pour des renseignements sur le documentaire et comment s'en procurer une copie: [www.facebook.com/howtodanceinohio](http://www.facebook.com/howtodanceinohio).

Emmanuelle Assor est blogueuse pour le Huffington Post et écrit sur l'autisme, un sujet qui lui tient à cœur.

«Entrer en relation avec les autres, c'est accorder nos pas avec les siens.»  
- Dr Amigo



**Dr Emilio Amigo à la première montréalaise du documentaire *How to Dance in Ohio* au Théâtre Outremont.**  
(Crédit photo : Wendy Singer)



# L'Association du Québec pour l'intégration sociale

Par Anick Viau

Appuyant ses actions sur les principes fondamentaux avancés dans la Déclaration universelle des droits de l'homme et les Chartes canadienne et québécoise des droits et libertés de la personne, l'Association du Québec pour l'intégration sociale s'emploie à : promouvoir les intérêts et défendre les droits des personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle et ceux de leur famille, soit en agissant de manière proactive, notamment par des revendications face aux différentes orientations politiques touchant les personnes et leur famille, soit en intervenant lors de situations de crise, de discrimination ou d'exploitation de ces personnes.

Sa raison d'être est également de renseigner et sensibiliser les membres, les partenaires,

dont les professionnels et les intervenants du milieu, de même que les décideurs et la population en général, sur les problématiques et les nouveaux développements en matière de déficience intellectuelle, par le biais de publications, de relations avec les médias et par l'organisation d'événements tels que congrès, colloques ou campagnes de sensibilisation.

L'AQIS agit à titre de porte-parole des associations qu'elle représente auprès des diverses instances politiques et publiques ou acteurs sociaux, notamment concernant les différents projets de loi et règlements en matière d'éducation, de travail, de santé, de services sociaux, de sécurité du revenu ou de tout programme touchant de près ou de loin l'intégration sociale des personnes dont elle soutient la cause.

Elle est présente afin d'encourager et épauler toute initiative privilégiant les services et le soutien aux familles facilitant l'autonomie des personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle, et, par conséquent, favoriser leur intégration pleine et entière dans leur communauté respective.

L'AQISa également mis sur pied la Fondation Le Support en 1988 afin d'amasser des fonds et soutenir les organismes oeuvrant à l'intégration et à l'amélioration de la qualité de vie des personnes présentant une déficience intellectuelle partout au Québec. La Fondation contribue notamment à l'achat d'équipements spécialisés, à la construction de logements adaptés, au financement de camps de va-



Anik Larose, directrice générale, et sa fille Marie. (Crédit photo : AQIS)

cances, de centres d'intégration et de maisons de répit.

Anick Viau est une conseillère aux communications et aux relations avec les membres.

## Prêts, disponibles et capables: L'inclusion est une force au travail !

Par Amélie Duranleau

Prêts, disponibles et capables (PDC) est un partenariat national de l'Association canadienne pour l'intégration communautaire (ACIC) et de l'Alliance canadienne des troubles du spectre autistique (ACTSA), ainsi que de leurs organisations membres. Financé par le gouvernement du Canada et actif dans 20 villes à travers le pays, PDC est conçu pour accroître la participation des personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle ou un trouble du spectre de l'autisme (TSA) au marché du travail.

Dans le monde hyperconcurrentiel des affaires d'aujourd'hui, la différence entre le succès et l'échec réside dans le talent et la diversité de l'ensemble des compétences de votre main-d'œuvre. Il existe environ 500 000 adultes ayant une déficience intellectuelle ou un TSA en âge de travailler. Cette main-d'œuvre inexploitée peut aider à remédier aux pénuries de travailleurs actuelles tout en rendant les entreprises plus fortes, plus diversifiées et plus productives.

La stratégie nationale de PDC vouée au développement de milieux de travail inclusifs et efficaces :

- Soutiendra et favorisera le rapprochement entre les employeurs, les personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle ou un TSA et les organismes communautaires locaux, provinciaux et nationaux ;
- Favorisera la compréhension et aidera à la sensibilisation des employeurs et du grand public quant à la valeur d'embaucher des personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle ou un TSA ;
- Complémentera et augmentera la capacité des organismes communautaires de services d'aide à l'emploi en partageant les nouvelles demandes d'employeurs.

PDC offre :

- De l'information sur les raisons pour lesquelles l'embauche d'une personne ayant une déficience intellectuelle ou un TSA est bénéfique pour l'entreprise ;
- Du soutien individualisé pour vous aider à devenir un employeur favorisant davantage l'inclusion ;
- De l'aide pour identifier les personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle ou un

TSA qui peuvent répondre aux besoins de main-d'œuvre de votre entreprise ;

- De l'information pour sensibiliser vos employés actuels aux questions de handicap ;
- Des accès directs aux organismes communautaires offrant des services d'aide à l'emploi et de soutien aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle ou un TSA ;

- Du soutien individuel dans le milieu de travail pour que les employés puissent travailler efficacement et l'aménagement de l'espace de travail, si nécessaire ;
- Des liens avec des employeurs qui embauchent des personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle ou un TSA.

Nous travaillons ensemble pour créer un milieu de travail plus inclusif!



Cascades accueille un nouvel employé via Prêts, disponibles et capables. (Crédit photo : Luc Bouvrette)

Pour plus d'information, contactez Amélie Duranleau de l'Association du Québec pour l'intégration sociale : (514) 725-7245 # 31, [aduranleau@deficiencointellectuelle.org](mailto:aduranleau@deficiencointellectuelle.org) ou <http://readywillingable.ca/>.

Amélie Duranleau est la coordonnatrice provinciale, Programme Prêts, disponibles et capables.



# The public temper tantrum: A parent's nightmare

By Lori Rubin

The experience is familiar to most of us. Mom is standing in line at the cash while her toddler grabs a box of chocolate candy disguised as a “nutritious breakfast cereal” and shouts, “Mommy, I want this one!” He removes the box of Raisin Bran from their cart, replacing it with the chocolate cereal. Mom responds with a resounding “No!” adding that it is not healthy. After a few attempts at coercing his mother to change her mind, the boy lies down on the floor crying, and eventually works himself into a tantrum. Mom is embarrassed. Onlookers are uncomfortable. She leaves the cart of food, picks up her wailing son (who is now banging her back with his fists) and leaves the store.

In the Forever 21 clothing store, an 11-year-old girl begs her father to buy her a pink spandex crop-top. When her father tells her she's too young to wear clothing like that, she insists that all her friends have one and yells at her father that he is old-fashioned and mean. Dad succumbs to his daughter's

public insults and foot-stomping and purchases the top.

Both incidents are a result of a child trying to get what they want using any means possible. Usually, the older the child, the more manipulative their approach. According to Dr. Meg Eastman, author of *Taming the Dragon in Your Child*: “When children learn that whining, crying and sulking are powerful tools to get others to do what they want *right now*, they tend to become self-centered and often narcissistic adults.” (Eastman & Rozen)

Fatigue, illness, overstimulation or stress can trigger a public tantrum. Taking a hungry, tired, cranky toddler to do grocery shopping is a recipe for disaster. Adolescents are particularly sophisticated at expressing their rage when their parents will be most humiliated. So what is a parent to do?

- *Ignore the tantrum if possible*, although this is not always possible in a public setting. Sometimes the tantrum passes very quickly when little to no attention is paid to it.

- *Set a time limit*. “You have five minutes to whine and cry and then it needs to stop or we are leaving.” Then follow through.
- Faber & Mazlish, authors of *How to Talk so Kids Will Listen & Listen so Kids Will Talk*, suggest the “alternative to no” strategy. Choose your words carefully to avoid that trigger word “no”. Example: “I don't want to go home, I want to play on the slide” Instead of responding “No, we have to leave now”, try “I can see how much fun you're having (as you take him by the hand to leave). I also don't like to leave a place when I'm having fun”.
- Use the “*art of distraction*”. Pay attention to early cues that the child is about to have a tantrum and make a statement such as, “Oh no! I forgot to lock the front door. We'd better hurry home”.
- *Appeal to the child's sense of reason and intelligence*. “I know you don't agree with me about why I won't buy you those high heels. Let's go have an ice-cream and I'll explain.”



File photo

Always keep in mind that it is our parental obligation to make those hard decisions that our kids sometimes react to. Remember that we are doing them a favour in the long run, preparing them to cope with the disappointments in life that are sure to come.

Lori Rubin is a behaviour management specialist at the English Montreal School Board.

## La pédagogie positive, vous connaissez ?

Par Sabine Gémis

Depuis que je suis toute petite, je vois mon verre de jus de pommes se vider, et je me réjouis de la moitié sucrée qu'il me reste. C'est la psychologie positive des solutions !

Mon coffre à outils professionnel est rempli de mes expériences d'éducatrice spécialisée Enfance et Familles, en milieu communautaire et scolaire. Il s'est enrichi de la rencontre d'Isabelle Pailleau et Audrey Akoun, psychopédagogues fondatrices de la Fabrique à bonheurs : ainsi est né Sabine en couleurs, et les ateliers pour parents, enfants, étudiants et équipes éducatives scolaire ou en milieu de garde.

Loin des messages culpabilisants et des conseils théoriques, les ateliers que j'offre proposent une démarche globale, concrète et outillée qui permet à l'enfant et à ceux qui l'accompagnent d'améliorer leur rapport à l'apprentissage. Avec de la gestion mentale, des cartes d'organisation d'idées, de la

communication non violente, une approche Tête Cœur Corps avec de la relaxation et du Brain Gym®, la pédagogie positive prend en compte les émotions, les signaux de notre corps, et offre en plus des clés et une méthodologie pour apprendre, mémoriser, rédiger et structurer. Elle réhabilite le questionnement, la curiosité et place l'enfant au cœur de la bienveillance de l'adulte envers cet acteur du monde de demain.

La Pédagogie Positive illumine ma pratique professionnelle comme un soleil de printemps ! Se féliciter de ses erreurs comme autant d'occasions d'apprendre, c'est excellent pour toute une classe. Utiliser le mind mapping (une carte d'organisation d'idées) pour arriver à mettre les idées de sa tête sur le papier pour une production écrite, c'est enlever la souffrance d'un jeune garçon autiste pour qui écrire ne fait pas de sens. Et bien plus... Ma pédagogie positive, c'est donc tout cela !

Vous pouvez la partager avec moi lors des ateliers offerts avec L'équilibre en mouvement: Booster ses révisions et préparer ses

examens pour les Ados, Apprendre Autrement pour les parents et les enfants (automne 2016 et à venir), Organiser son travail et ses projets avec le mind mapping (2017), Enseigner et Accompagner (2017).

Vous pouvez aussi la retrouver sur le site web [www.sabi-neencouleurs.com](http://www.sabi-neencouleurs.com) ou sur la page Facebook ou Twitter Sabine en couleurs. La fabrique à bonheurs Canada vous accueillera aussi sur Facebook. Et pour des pensées et histoires colorées, visitez le blogue du même nom, Sabine en couleurs, sur blogspot. L'équilibre en mouvement se trouve quant à lui au [www.equilibreenmouvement.ca](http://www.equilibreenmouvement.ca).



Le génie, c'est  
1 % d'inspiration  
et 99 % de  
transpiration.

Thomas A. Edison



File photo

Sabine Gémis est éducatrice spécialisée Enfance et Familles, psychomotricienne, conférencière et formatrice en pédagogie positive. Elle travaille au primaire et au secondaire, en intégration des élèves à besoins particuliers et en adaptation scolaire.



# Visions Program a good choice for students

By Kimberly Blackburn and Kara Woods

The Visions Program at Riverdale High School of the Lester B. Pearson School Board has been successfully supporting Grade 10 and 11 students for more than 20 years. The program has evolved and adapted to new technology and student needs, but it has remained effective due to the combined effort of students and staff to make Visions ‘a home away from home’.

Visions is an alternative for students who choose to take a different path towards their successful completion of high school. In 2015, 100 percent of Secondary 5 (Grade 11) Visions students earned their high school diploma, and in 2016, 94 percent graduated. Results like these challenge all the old stereotypes of what and who alternative programs are for.

That’s right, students choose to participate in the Visions Program. They apply, interview and are accepted into the program when the Visions and Riverdale staff can see that they are both academically capable

and mature enough to try to assume responsibility for their own learning.

Students are attracted to the program because of its smaller class sizes. The Grade 10 and 11 curriculum is covered by two teachers. Approximately 30 students are divided into Grade 10 and 11 groupings for each of the core courses and some option classes.

Another popular feature of the program is afterschool “homework” help, where students stay on after regular school hours for help. This gives them an opportunity for one-on-one-time with their teachers, for peer tutoring, and study groups. This last hour of the day can be used for tutorials before tests and exams as well.

Discipline in the program is fair and consistent. The teachers call it ‘tough love’. The focus is on assignment completion, punctuality, and appropriate behavior. Students receive contracts for transgressions, and they have five school days to clear that contract. The first contract is a warning, the second is when guardians are made aware, and the



Visions Program students enjoying some recreational time on the field.

(Photo courtesy of Riverdale High School)

third requires a meeting with the student, staff, and guardian(s). Students may be dismissed from the program if they break a third contract. However, if they adhere to the rules and complete all of their assignments they are rewarded with a monthly afternoon off. In the beginning, the students often work for the reward, but they quickly learn how at ease they feel when they hand in their assignments on time.

Delicious rewards run the gamut, from pancake Fridays to potluck meals. Every event includes Visions alumni who often visit and/or mentor current students. Once you join this family, you’re always Visions!

*Kimberly Blackburn and Kara Woods are teachers for the Visions Program at Riverdale High School, LBPSB.*

## The Disability Tax Credit: Getting the funds you deserve

By Harold Akerman

As a practicing public accountant and the father of a son with Down syndrome, every few years the Canada Revenue Agency requires his Disability Tax Credit (DTC) be renewed. Clearly, Down syndrome is not a reversible condition and the cognitive gains he experiences as an adult will not disqualify his eligibility. For others, it is possible that their status changes, disqualifying them for the DTC.

To be eligible for the DTC, a medical practitioner must certify the Canada Revenue Agency’s form T2201, Disability Tax Credit Certificate, attesting to the individual having “a severe and prolonged impairment in physical or mental functions”. Revenue Québec will either accept the federal form or Quebec’s Certificate Respecting an Impairment, TP752.0.1.4V (English). If the person is over 18 years old and is unable to live alone, or is undergoing therapy, the Quebec form is preferred as it contains two additional questions covering these issues.

The parents of a Quebec resident under the age of 18 should also apply for the monthly

nontaxable handicapped allowance. When the individual turns 18, the handicapped allowance is discontinued and the individual can apply for Social Assistance. In the year that the person turns 18 and his/her income is under \$23,080, a supporting person can calculate the Caregiver Tax Credit.

At the federal level, having the DTC can be associated with various non-refundable tax credits. Some are only claimable by the disabled person while others can be claimed by supporting person(s). The criteria and limits for some tax credits are additionally different for a person with an approved DTC.

In July 2016, parents of children under 18 years of age, and who have the DTC, started to receive the monthly Child Disability Benefit. This benefit is taxfree, with a maximum of \$2,730 per year. Eligibility is contingent on parents having filed their federal 2015 tax returns and is reduced if the adjusted family net income exceeds \$65,000.

To secure the financial security of people with disabilities, there is the Registered Disability Savings Plan. To qualify, the indi-

vidual must be eligible for the DTC, have a valid social insurance number, be a Canadian resident at the time of plan entry, and be under the age of 60. The age of the person affects the calculation of family income and the amount of government grants and bonds. The maximum lifetime contribution limit is \$200,000, and is not tax deductible. It is possible to catch up on missed grants

and bonds of prior years and to receive government money without making a contribution to the plan.

*Harold Akerman is a practicing public accountant with over 25 years of experience. He presents on subjects related to personal tax and disability-related topics. Contact Harold at [haroldcpaca@gmail.com](mailto:haroldcpaca@gmail.com) or (514) 979-8752.*

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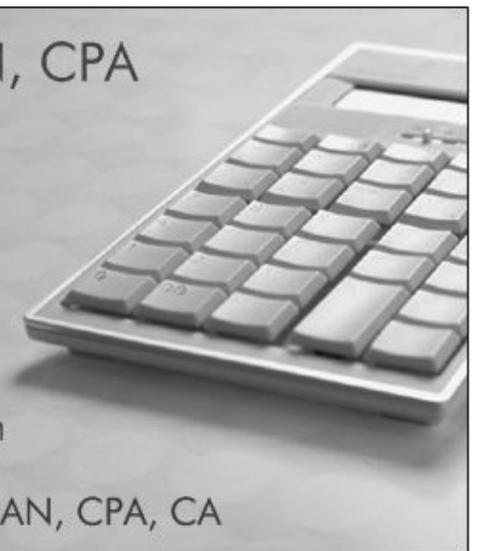
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# Following the TacTics road to success

By Randy Pinsky

In *The Wizard of Oz*, four unlikely friends embark on a series of adventures in pursuit of desired qualities, vanquishing evil along the way. It is only upon returning to the Wizard that they realize that the strengths they so fervently believed they lacked had been within them all along. This approach of empowerment and unleashing the capacity within is what fuels social skills consultant Linda Aber.

A mother of two children who have learning disabilities, Aber knows firsthand the daily stresses of parenting, compounded by the challenges of special needs. Director of TacTics Resource Services, she is Montreal's only certified specialist in Nurtured Heart®, Theraplay® and HeartMath® Anxiety Reduction.

In affiliation with the Montreal Center for Learning Disabilities, Aber's parent coaching and educational workshops address the challenges of living with ADHD, learning

disabilities, mild ASD, and anxiety and attachment disorders. She emphasizes that active participation is key to boosting children's self-confidence, emotional management, and social skills.

What is Aber's 'heartfelt' and 'strength-based parenting' approach? How can one 'reset' one's outlook to be more mindful and strategic? Through various activities, she addresses power struggles, parent-child relationships, and restoring peace in the household based on structure, mutual respect, and compassion.

Through a language of 'positivity', emotional drain can be reframed and reversed, leading to transformative and lasting change. "It is not the events that challenge us that are so determining, but rather, how we respond to them," Aber maintains.

One of her most popular seminars is on 'resilience teaching'. Rather than fixate on misbehaviour and gloss over the positive in the usual disciplinary manner, she encourages teachers to publicly recognize 'in the

moment' desired behaviour. "Imagine the impact on future classroom behaviour you could have by saying, 'I noticed you were about to interrupt but didn't. Thank you for teaching the class about respect and self-control'," said Aber. The element of surprise or spinning a situation are strategic tools with wide applicability.

Aber's social skills workshops assist youth in managing emotions and stress, and addressing social awkwardness and self-confidence. The partnership between parents and youth is fundamental for bringing about sustainable change. She emphasizes: "The way we talk to our kids becomes their inner voice. Such validating of youth transforms them from the inside out." Aber's mission is to assist parents in filling their children's 'buckets of self-esteem' so high that no amount of poking holes can harm them.

Whatever your Emerald City, Aber motivates people to believe in themselves and to realize that they too are already equipped with courage (resilience), a brain (resourcefulness), and a heart (empathy) - they just



**A TacTics social skills workshop in action with Linda Aber.**

*(Photo courtesy of Linda Aber)*

need to make the journey to find that out for themselves.

Contact Linda Aber at (514) 487-3533 or [tacticsmtl@yahoo.com](mailto:tacticsmtl@yahoo.com) for school and parent workshops, or social skills and HeartMath® Anxiety/Anger Reduction programs for youth and their families.

## Construction begins on Mackay/Philip E. Layton facility

By Andrea DiTomaso

After two years of lobbying the Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur (MEES) for funds as well as multiple studies on neighbourhood infrastructure and traffic impacts, construction on a \$21.9 million state-of-the-art facility for the Mackay Centre School and the Philip E. Layton School will begin this Fall.

The facility will be built on a now empty piece of land located on Terrebonne Street between Benny and Madison Avenues in Notre-Dame-de-Grâce. The English Montreal School Board (EMSB) has owned the green space for decades. The field is currently under municipal custodianship and is being used as an informal playing field by the public and the neighbouring Commission scolaire de Montréal (CSDM) elementary school École Marc-Favreau.

The building will house approximately 200 students who have physical disabilities, who are visually impaired and multi-disabled, students who are deaf and stu-

dents with communication disorders. It will be the only one of its kind to offer specialized educational and rehabilitative services for the Anglophone community. Its supra regional mandate means that students from several Quebec English School Boards will be attending this school. Some students will travel as much as three hours per day by school bus.

The entire facility has been carefully designed to cater to the diverse needs of its student population. On the ground floor, numerous specialized classrooms, washrooms, a closed outdoor courtyard, as well as an indoor therapeutic swimming pool are just some of the standard facilities planned. The second floor will accommodate school administration as well as private offices and equipment for medical professionals.

All efforts have been made by the EMSB to reduce the impact on commuting students, nearby residents and the environment. The building will be climate controlled via a geothermal heat-exchange system. Construction materials will be fabricated off-site to minimize noise and dust pollution. As many existing mature trees as possible

will be preserved. Sick trees will be inspected, pruned and/or replaced with healthy saplings.

To minimize traffic problems, school bus drop-off points will be located on the school property and a parking lot for 100 cars will be constructed. To ensure the safety of our students, crossing guard and bussing services will be carefully coordinated with nearby St. Monica and Marc-Favreau schools.

Access to École Marc-Favreau will be maintained throughout the construction period and a permanent path will be built on the right-side of the property to allow continued access to the school. The existing sports field will be reduced to about one-quarter of its current size, fitting snugly between both schools.

Daniel Hogue, director of Material Resources at the EMSB, will manage the building



**Back row: Angela Mancini, Joanne Charron, Sylvia Lo Bianco, Front row: Fay Schipper, Margot Vignal, and Luca Patuelli at the groundbreaking ceremony for the new facility. (Photo credit, Michael Cohen)**

project until its completion in June of 2018. Mr. Hogue is available to address concerns and answer questions from local residents. He can be reached by phone at (514) 483-7200 extension 7328 or e-mail at [dhogue@emsb.qc.ca](mailto:dhogue@emsb.qc.ca). Results from all impact studies are available to the public and can be accessed by contacting the borough of Côte-des-Neiges-Notre-Dame-de-Grâce.



# Passion, perseverance secret to success for jewelry designer

By Valentina Basilicata

**S**arah Aspler is a well-spoken, ambitious 22-year-old entrepreneur in Montreal. Her Etsy page showcases her meticulously handmade jewelry, which she also sells at fairs like Creatability with fellow special needs artisans.

Her craft is mostly self-taught; she began designing pieces before the age of 10. Sarah has always had a penchant for art (despite visual spatial perception issues) and pursued her passion through several classes. With a DEC in Fine Arts from John Abbott College already under her belt, Sarah is currently completing jewelry making courses at École de Joaillerie de Montréal.

“I would like to expand the Etsy business and start doing more silver jewelry to sell. But it’s hard to make a living off of that,” she explains, adding she would compensate by working as a dog groomer part-time. She finds working with animals less overwhelming than working with people. Her next goal is to move into her own apartment.

Sarah’s mom, Annette Woolf, has supported her daughter every step of the way. “We have been pleasantly surprised and thrilled at the success that has come from all of this.”

Annette admits Sarah’s road to adulthood has had its fair share of bumps and roadblocks because Sarah isn’t neurotypical. “You wonder at the beginning, ‘Where is this going to lead? What can my child do?’ Basically our door was always wide open and we never said ‘no’ to anything,” Woolf reveals.

At age three-and-a-half, sensitive Sarah still wasn’t speaking and showed signs her brain processed the world in a unique way. Throughout her childhood, Sarah saw a slew of medical specialists for evaluations and therapies that led to a long list of labels - some were accurate, some less so. Particularly problematic for Sarah were her sensory processing, receptive-expressive language and auditory processing disorders. She transferred to Vanguard School in fifth grade. Yet Sarah continued to struggle socially and academically in subjects like math and science.

As recently as 2015, Sarah felt her diagnosis was incomplete and turned to psychologist Dr. Elizabeth Shoiry for a reassessment. Dr. Shoiry uncovered what years of testing had missed. Sarah also has a non-verbal learning disability. This means she has difficulty recognizing and processing nonverbal cues like body language, facial expression and the nuances of conversation, making social interactions difficult. The assessment also revealed underlying dyslexia and ADHD.

Annette and Sarah agree growing up with several challenges strengthened Sarah’s resolve to succeed. Thanks to her mother’s emotional and financial support, Sarah received many treatments throughout her life like occupational therapy, psychology and listening therapy. Family vacations and new cars were often sacrificed. Yet neither of them regrets any of it.

“Yes, there are certain things we’ve done without, and it’s not the end of the world,” Woolf says. “Sarah was number one.”



**Sarah Aspler selling her jewelry at Expo Creatability 2016 at Peter Hall School.**

*Take a look at Sarah’s jewelry on her online page at [www.etsy.com](http://www.etsy.com), search for Atelier Sarah Rachel.*

*Valentina Basilicata is a freelance journalist, communications specialist and emcee. She is also the proud mom of two boisterous, lovable boys.*

## Playing the waiting game

By Laura Caprini

**P**icture this scenario: mid-way through the year, you’ve been invited to meet with your child’s Grade 1 teacher. She lets you know that your child is struggling to keep up with the demands of the curriculum. In particular, your child has a significant difficulty with reading. He is less than halfway to the required grade level target for students in his age group. He is beginning to fall behind his peers and his teacher is concerned.

At home, you spend at least 15 minutes per evening reading with your child. You had noticed that he appears to be struggling when trying to remember what sound goes with what letter. Reading the simplest of words requires assistance, and more often than not, the whole activity results in tears and frustration. You weren’t especially concerned though, because you figured that given enough time and practice, your six-year-old would eventually catch up to his classmates. Besides, every child is a unique individual who learns at his or her own pace; give them time to mature and develop, and all will be well...is that not what the experts say?

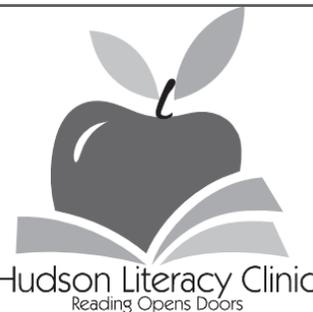
Thirty years ago it was widely believed (and rarely disputed) that given enough time a “late bloomer” would get to where he/she needed to be once the brain matured. In the case of this Grade 1 student, parents would be told something along the lines of, “Intervention at this point in the game is not necessary, things will right themselves in due time.”

This school of thought, still widely subscribed to by many today, is outdated and misleading. More recent studies tell us that waiting for a struggling reader to “mature” will likely cause him/her to fall even further behind, and that reading weaknesses are evidence of a skill deficit and not a result of a developmental lag. Research done in the last decade tells us that the probability of a child catching up is slim to none when we play the “waiting game.” Closing that gap as soon as a problem is identified, before it becomes insurmountable, is a child’s best chance to overcome a learning difficulty. For more details on this interesting research and its supporting data, visit <http://www.readingrockets.org/article/waiting-rarely-works-late-bloomers-usually-just-wilt>.

A deficit that is identified early, and the intervention that follows, can mean a world of difference for the struggling reader. What do we mean by “early intervention?” Depending on the nature of the difficulty, this could mean any number of measures: consistent school-based remediation time with a resource teacher, supportive technological tools, devices and software, speech and language services, psychological educational assessments, and/or outside specialty services that provide intense targeted instruc-

tion. To determine which intervention is appropriate for your child, close communication with and information from your child’s school can set these wheels in motion. Not sure where to start? See Sandra Weir’s article on Questions to Ask Your Child’s Teacher published in the Fall 2016 online *EXPRESS* edition of Inspirations.

*Laura Caprini is a teacher at the elementary level, and co-owner with Sandra Weir of Hudson Literacy Clinic.*



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# The power of yet

By Despina Vassiliou

**Y**-E-T: Three simple letters that can make an enormous impact on our perceptions. It can make the difference between stagnation or failure and hope. For example, if a child says “I can’t do math, it sounds definitive, leaving no hope for improvement. They simply cannot do math and that will not change. If the child says: “I can’t do math, yet”, we hear hope. There is room for change.

This is what Dr. Carol Dweck, Stanford University psychologist, refers to as a mindset. Through her research, Dr. Dweck examined how students reacted to failure by observing their responses to overly challenging tasks. She found two main differences in their responses.

One group responded to the challenge in a positive way. They seemed to enjoy it,

saying things like “I love a challenge”. Dr. Dweck calls this a growth mindset where one sees the potential of learning and developing one’s skills. The second group seemed to see their performance in the challenging task as catastrophic, and tragic - a reflection on themselves, a personality trait and a part of them. Dr. Dweck refers to this frame of mind as a fixed mindset. These students were found to avoid challenges and reported that they would likely cheat the next time.

Brain imaging revealed that students with a growth mindset demonstrated greater brain activity than those with a fixed mindset.

I have seen this several times in my career as a school psychologist. I remember a young girl with a physical handicap who barreled through school with a smile, perseverance and sought independence. She accomplished a great deal on her own, not allowing her handicap to stop her. I’ve also

seen students with serious learning disabilities seek out help, demonstrate motivation and put forth tremendous effort to progress. I’ve also seen students with learning disabilities lose hope and stop trying. We were challenged on how to help these students.

Can we change a child’s mindset? Yes. Dr. Dweck argues that we have to praise our children, focusing on the process taken when facing a challenge rather than the end result (e.g., the A in math). Dr. Dweck backs this up with studies that found that students succeeded more when they were taught that effort and challenge works the brain to develop further. Simply put, when we push out of our comfort zone to learn something new and difficult it results in changes in our brain structure and the way it processes situations and information. This strengthens the brain muscle, helping us problem-solve the next time.

We do this by assigning positive meaning to the words “effort” and “difficulty”. If we define them as a means of training and strengthening our brain, we can be more motivated by a challenge, even if we fail. The process is more important than the end result.

Not everyone is good at everything. If we fail it is not a personality deficit. The way we approach failure strengthens and matures us. As parents and educators, we must keep in mind that helping a child to change his or her mindset takes time and effort, and is a challenge. We may not have succeeded, yet!

*Despina Vassiliou is a school psychologist at the English Montreal School Board, member of the Mental Health Resource Centre, and a certified PREPaRE trainer (for school crisis prevention and intervention).*

## PEERS®: Parents and teens work in tandem to develop social skills

**T**he first PEERS® (Program for the Education and Enrichment of Relational Skills) session in the Greater Montreal area took place in the West Island over a three-month period. Facilitators Loretta Labreque, UCLA certified PEERS® provider, and Dr. Catherine Masden, psychologist, brought six adolescents and their respective parent(s) together to experience this evidence-based social skills intensive training program that helps those with autism, ADHD, social difficulties, and anxiety to develop skills to make and keep friends.

Parents attended separate sessions from their teens in order to develop skills to coach their child, such as having two-way conversations, sharing common interests, hosting get-togethers, handling bullying and arguments, to name a few.

A highly effective experience for all, parents commented that they gained strength by sharing common experiences with other parents, and that they learned, among many new skills, how to converse with their teen in a constructive and meaningful way. “Our conversations are totally different from 14 weeks ago. My son responds to what he is asked. I am communicating with him now,” shared one parent.

Another parent learned not to underestimate

her son: “We’re tough with them but sometimes we don’t realize how capable they are.”

Labreque saw enormous changes in the confidence and maturity level of the adolescents attending the program. “We broke everything down into concrete rules and steps that can be applied to different situations,” she shared. Her advice moving forward was for the teens to keep practicing, and listening to their parents as they are the coaches and have all the tools needed to help their teens.

*PEERS® will be expanding to include a variety of age groups. For information on the upcoming sessions contact [peersmontreal@gmail.com](mailto:peersmontreal@gmail.com) or (514) 933-9797.*



**Iseah and Corey Richardson at the PEERS® graduation.**



# PEERS®

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# Resource Page

Compiled by Randy Pinsky

## *Confidence for all abilities*

Known for its fantastic performances, dedicated teachers, and variety of dance genres offered, The Studio by Funky Feet has launched a new program for children with special needs. Whether it is Aspergers syndrome, high functioning autism, or intellectual disabilities, this initiative has been very popular among families since its debut in March. Guided by the mentality of 'no limits', founder Livia Avriith was inspired to start this adapted dance program in memory of her aunt who never let her limitations hinder her ambitions.

Dancing helps children develop both gross and fine motor skills, coordination, and body awareness. Socially, they connect with others through teamwork, following instruction, and having a final performance to work towards. And at its essence, dance is an incredibly powerful non-verbal means of self-expression, in its simplest form enabling the 'feel good' emotion. Through word associations, dancing and singing, the Diamond Dance Approach is more than 'just dancing', but rather is a truly creative form of collective movement.

Small class sizes allow students to feel uninhibited and able to express themselves in a non-judgmental and welcoming environment. For information visit [www.thestudiobyfunkyfeet.ca](http://www.thestudiobyfunkyfeet.ca) email [livia@thestudiobyfunkyfeet.ca](mailto:livia@thestudiobyfunkyfeet.ca) or call (514) 684-7300.



## *A community of support and empowerment*

Families of children with special needs experience a whole spectrum of emotions on a daily basis, from the celebration of special moments, to overwhelming challenges, with everything else in between. It can often be an isolating situation with constant worries about therapies, finances, making friends, and developing supportive

networks. It was for this reason that HAVI Friends was born.

Montreal-based charitable organization Happy Village International (HAVI) advocates for children with alternative abilities, promoting educational programs and community involvement to increase integration and reduce social stigma. In addition to its Montreal activities, HAVI also runs the Educate Our Girls project in the Volta region of Ghana, West Africa.

Packed with a diversity of themes, HAVI Friends is a bi-monthly mentorship program of volunteer-led activities and resource-based sessions facilitated by professionals in the field of disability. From art projects and indoor gardening, to sports and cupcake decorating, children make friends and enjoy a one-on-one ratio with volunteers. Together We Are Able. For information visit [www.happyvillageintl.com](http://www.happyvillageintl.com), or contact Luiza Baez, program director of HAVI Friends at [luiza.baez@happyvillageintl.com](mailto:luiza.baez@happyvillageintl.com) or (514) 917-5505.



## *Agence Ometz: Support for after 18*

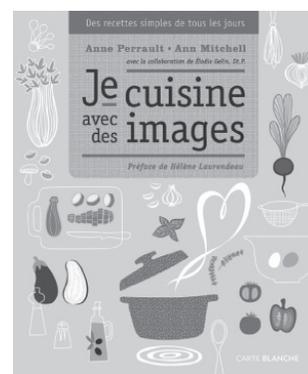
For parents of kids with special needs, a lingering concern is always what their options are once their children are out of school. In collaboration with Emploi Québec, Ometz Supported Employment Services directly addresses this issue, and assists adults with intellectual challenges, learning disabilities, autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and mental illness, secure and maintain employment. The employment specialists assess interests, skills, and abilities, and have been effectively integrating adults into the job market for close to three decades.

Ometz Supported Employment specialists educate employers from various industries about hiring their clients on topics ranging from safety and workplace productivity, to needs for accommodation. This group of clientele is in fact an untapped pool of valuable resources as they can provide specialized skills and alternate perspectives that can contribute to raising productivity as well as help sensitize others about disability, diversity and inclusion.

Through ongoing meetings, Ometz employment specialists assist clients with interview preparation, job matching, and on-the-job coaching. Such long-term support, vocational guidance and soft-skills training enables the best possible and meaningful fit, and a winning combination for all involved. For information contact Edina Markovitz, Manager, Supported Employment Services at (514) 342-0000, ext. 3377, email [Edina.markovitz@ometz.ca](mailto:Edina.markovitz@ometz.ca), or visit [www.ometz.ca/employment/job+seekers/special+needs+employment](http://www.ometz.ca/employment/job+seekers/special+needs+employment).



## *Cooking up accessibility*



entire memoirs on making the perfect crepe.

There is no lack of resources to cater to every palate and taste, but have you ever considered how it is for those with reading difficulties? In fact, the Canadian Literacy and Learning Network notes that four in 10 Canadian adults have low literacy skills. This cohort is, therefore, unable to use recipe books due to the complicated text, over-detailed instructions, and endless reminders and tips.

*Je Cuisine avec des Images* has created a unique cookbook designed with all literacy levels in mind. Whether it be adults with learning or intellectual disabilities or young children starting out in the kitchen, the easy-to-read recipes help make homemade cooking accessible to everyone. Knowing that preparing meals is critical for fostering empowerment and independence, authors Anne Perrault and Ann Mitchell tirelessly worked to compile nutritionally balanced and simple recipes that do not skimp on

taste or quality. Explained with appealing illustrations and simplified text, everyone can now put Gordon Ramsay to shame. Freshly made chili, anyone? For information visit [www.aimercuisiniersante.com](http://www.aimercuisiniersante.com), or contact [aimercuisiniersante@gmail.com](mailto:aimercuisiniersante@gmail.com).

## *Step aside Captain Planet; Kit Planete is here!*

For children with different abilities, tasks such as sitting still, eating, or writing can present a challenge as the tools required are not adapted to their particular needs. Kit Planete to the rescue! This innovative company offers an impressive diversity of affordable therapeutic gadgets for every occasion and reality.

Designed with parents and educators in mind, the colorful website effectively groups products by environment (daycare, school, home), targeted focus area (fidgeting, fine motor skills, picky eater) and diagnosis to make searching for the right resource easier and more efficient. From posture aids and adapted school supplies, to stress balls, activity cards, and 'smarkers' (scented markers), the focus is to "empower parents and help [youth] develop confidence in their abilities".

The team's commitment is evidenced by the consistency in their messaging with locally purchased products and environmentally-sustainable packaging. Each product is accompanied by an informative factsheet with helpful hints to maximize the benefits of each tool. Help your children conquer the world, and add Kit Planete to your toolbox of resources! For information visit [www.kitplanete.ca](http://www.kitplanete.ca), or contact [info@kitplanete.ca](mailto:info@kitplanete.ca) or (514) 990-0473.





## Selfie request with PM turns into national conversation

By Joanne Charron

The students of the Westmount High School Mackay Satellite class, also known as the Leaders on Wheels, went to Ottawa for their end of year trip. It was their hope to meet Prime Minister Trudeau. In advance of the trip, they sent a letter to the PM's office requesting a meeting. It was a long shot, but they tried.

Unfortunately, the PM's schedule did not permit time for a visit. But their request was not left unattended. After their return to Montreal, the students were contacted by the office of MP Marc Miller. He wanted to meet with the students and had a special delivery for them.

Mr. Miller visited the school, congratulated the students for all their endeavours raising funds for their peers and giving back to the

community. He then surprised them with a letter from the Prime Minister acknowledging them and their selfless work. The students were quite visibly touched.

That is where the conversation began. Mr. Miller shared his own stories in relation to the special needs world. He was so open, attentive, and responsive to the students' concerns regarding those who will follow in their footsteps, and what will happen to individuals with special needs, including themselves, and their families, after the age of 21.

The students expressed that this is an issue that needs to be dealt with at the Federal level and that the Federal government should set the tone for the country when it comes to the issue of special needs. It is a humanitarian and ethical issue. They suggested that there is no reason to reinvent the

wheel. Canada could model systems from other countries that have proven effective, and this should be built into the social fabric of our country.

Systems and resources need to be put into place and standardized to care for, adapt, provide services, resources and programs to our special needs community from infancy through adulthood whether it be health, education, programs, social assistance, housing, transportation, etc...the list is endless.

Mr. Miller assured us that we would keep the conversation going and talked about the students being part of a round table discussion. He mentioned that there is a youth council, which we would like to be a part of. We agreed to keep in touch and that he would relay our issues and concerns directly to the Prime Minister.



MP Marc Miller visiting the Leaders on Wheels at the Mackay Centre School.

(Photo credit, Madison Lalonde)

It is a new world and we have to rise to meet it head on. Universal access is not a privilege. It is a right. It doesn't end at 21. To be continued.....

Joanne Charron is the English Montreal School Board parent commissioner for ACSES.



## Co-founding a revolutionary online legal platform

By Jay Jones-Doyle

I've always been entrepreneurial and inventive, and so at the back of my mind I always knew that I would be here overlooking the valley in which my future is unfolding before me. Getting to this point has been challenging, and has definitely taken me down some paths that I would have rather avoided – but all-in-all it has left me stronger and more determined for the trek.

The new venture is something that neither Quebec nor Canada has ever seen before, and is one that is poised to fundamentally shift the practice of law. I present to you Legal Lighthouse Inc. ([www.legallighthouse.ca](http://www.legallighthouse.ca)). Legal Lighthouse is an online marketplace where individuals or organizations can find affordable, flat-rate legal solutions. Prospective clients can search through the profiles of lawyers, book a free assessment with the lawyer of their choice to determine the scope of their legal needs, and can even pay their legal fees safely and securely through the platform. Conversely, lawyers create profiles where they display their bios, experience, and list their services (and associated

prices) for free. They enjoy the freedom to take on as many or as few client as they wish, are able to perform their jobs without the need for massive operational expenses (fancy downtown offices, legal secretaries, etc.), and also benefit from online payment. This new approach simultaneously reduces the stress of finding the right lawyer at the right price while empowering lawyers to attain the work-life balance that includes so many in the profession.

How did I get so lucky? I met two exceptional people who have chosen to entwine their fates with mine as co-founders: Danielle Linnen and Mikhail Chliakhovski. Danielle is the lawyer who originally conceived of the platform, and Mike the fabulously-talented software engineer who has coded the platform. We all shared a keen interest in solving larger societal problems, the determination to believe that we can actually make a difference, and the desire to look back on our professional lives with pride in what we accomplished.

After grueling rounds of investment presentations, we were selected to receive funding support from PME Montreal, office space in Technohub, and guidance from a wonderful and talented advisory board composed of top lawyers, business minds, and strategists. We are excited to be launching the platform now, and have received great feedback. I would appreciate any feedback, so feel free to contact me at [jameson@legallighthouse.ca](mailto:jameson@legallighthouse.ca).

*Jay Jones-Doyle the co-founder and VP Product Development of Legal Lighthouse Inc. He is also the President of Confidence Driven Coaching, the Chief Financial Officer of the Centre for International Sustainable Development Law, and worked with the UN's Business and Biodiversity programme. He holds two advanced degrees and was named one of Quebec's top three graduate students of 2011 as well as Concordia's Outstanding Student of the Year. He sits on the Board of Directors of the Concordia University Alumni Association, is an accomplished motivational speaker, a championship-winning junior hockey*

*coach, the proud father of a twelve-year-old boy, and has cerebral palsy.*



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# What if people with Down syndrome were philosophers?

By Wendy Singer



The 29th annual Canadian Down Syndrome Conference was held at the Delta hotel in Montreal last May. Co-hosted by Regroupement pour la Trisomie 21, this conference, Under the Montreal

Spotlights, had not been held in Quebec since 1996.

Jean-François Martin delivered the endnote address with an energetic presentation titled *What if people with Down syndrome were philosophers?* Father to 26-year-old Karl who has Down syndrome (DS), Martin is a professor of special education technology at CÉGEP du Vieux Montréal and has pub-

lished three books on the topic of intellectual disability. Martin opened his talk with a clear disclaimer: “I tell you up front that I am not a philosopher and this is not a philosophy course!”

In 2009, Martin instigated the Peru Challenge, which brought a group of six young adults with Down syndrome and six specialized education students (including Martin and his son) to Peru to climb Machu Picchu and deliver humanitarian aid to Peruvian families. A documentary titled *Trisomy 21: Le Défi Pérou*, directed by Lisette Marcotte, captures the peaks and lows of this adventure, from Simone’s constant struggles with her fear of heights to Marco’s superhero instinct to know exactly when someone needed a hug.

Martin interwove humorous and touching anecdotes, clips from the film, and philosophical musings by masters like Nietzsche and Sartre throughout his presentation, always connecting them to the thoughts and actions of Karl and the other participants of the Peru Challenge. In doing so, he demonstrated how people with DS offer a different

way of viewing the world. “My son’s birth allowed us to transform our lives. They (people who have DS) have a philosophy of life to offer us. And a vision of the world. If we grabbed only 25 percent of this, we’d have a better world,” shares Martin.

*A lack of humour betrays a lack of humanity - Dezső Kostolámi*

Martin draws on his shortcomings in order to support his theories: “I am looking for the meaning of life, and asking where we are going, what’s our purpose. People with DS don’t ask that. They have a life to live and they live it.”

*The secret to happiness in the family is to overcome the small misfortunes together - Boris Cyrulnic*

*The other is indispensable to my existence - Jean-Paul Sartre*



**Brandon Thielen (Vice-Chair of VATTA – Voices at the Table for Advocacy, Canadian Down Syndrome Society), Jean-François Martin, Matthew MacNeil (Chair of VATTA) at the Canadian Down Syndrome Conference in Montreal.**

Martin explained the satisfaction he felt when he found a doctor that saw Karl first before he saw DS. This opened up the possibilities of what Karl could bring to the world rather than the obstacles. “Philosophers interpret the world. Now we have to transform it,” he said, passionately, encouraging us to open our eyes and learn from our teachers.

## Inspirational Book Review



By Stuart Nulman

### A.D.H.D. Nation by Alan Schwarz (Scribner, \$37)

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder – or ADHD – is not a new phenomenon in the medical and special needs world. In fact, its first recognition dates back to as early as 1845, when German physician and psychiatrist Heinrich Hoffmann published a book as a Christmas gift for his son, which featured a series of his own drawings and poems, and one of them was about a rather hyper energetic child named “Fidgety Philip”.

However, it’s been more than 40 years that an effective treatment to control children with ADHD has been introduced, and that’s been in the form of a pill called Ritalin. Basically, Ritalin has been regarded as a “wonder drug”, in which a child who has been diagnosed with it, and takes the pill according to directions, can control their hyperactivity and experience a substantial improvement in their school work and grades.

But with the popularity of Ritalin came an explosion in demand for the pill. In fact, it has come to the point where not only doctors, but even educators, social workers and psychiatrists have taken it upon themselves to prescribe the pill (and its other pharmaceutical derivatives like Addenall) to an increasing number of people. The end result, because of reaching such conclusions in a non-scientific manner has resulted in countless misdiagnoses, and sometimes medications are not properly prescribed. And with one in seven American children getting diagnosed with ADHD – and more than half a million of them about to be diagnosed with the disorder for the first time by the end of 2016 – misdiagnoses and its trickle down effects can reach dangerous proportions.

Alan Schwarz, an investigative reporter for the New York Times, has tackled the subject of ADHD and how it’s treated in a fascinat-

ing book entitled *A.D.H.D. Nation*. This is a book that thoroughly examines what ADHD is all about, its history, its effects and how Ritalin has turned generations of American children into virtual Ritalin addicts. He squarely lays the blame on the ADHD explosion on one individual: Dr. Keith Connors, a psychology graduate from Harvard who developed the “Connors Scale”, an unscientific survey-type questionnaire which doctors (and later other medical and educational professionals) utilized to determine if a child in question did have the symptoms of ADHD.

However, the book does not bog the reader down with medical and scientific details and language. In fact, it reads more like an investigative journalistic piece that one could read in a newspaper or watch on 60 Minutes or Dateline NBC. As well, Schwarz profiles several ADHD patients from across the U.S.

## A.D.H.D. NATION

Children, Doctors,  
Big Pharma, and the  
Making of an  
American Epidemic

**ALAN SCHWARZ**

FINALIST FOR THE PULITZER PRIZE

to give a more human touch to the story. He shows how the disorder has affected them and their families, how drugs helped or hindered their control of it, and the sometimes sneaky ways they went through to get those drugs that at times were unattainable for them.

*A.D.H.D. Nation* is a book that not only effectively informs the general public to what this disorder is all about and how it can be treated, but also serves as an important wake-up call to how egos and greed can be quite dangerous for anyone directly or indirectly affected by ADHD.



## Adapted Travel by Mike Cohen



**NEW JERSEY'S WILDWOODS:** It is always exciting for my family and me to explore a brand new vacation spot. After experiencing Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, for the first time in 2015, we decided to follow this up with the Wildwoods in New Jersey ([www.WildwoodsNJ.com](http://www.WildwoodsNJ.com)). As usual, we got an early start at securing reservations, doing so many months in advance of a July visit.

Home to more than 180 special events and festivals throughout the year, some might consider the Wildwoods the "Events Capital of the East Coast." The events take place at various locations throughout the island's three distinct municipalities: Wildwood, Wildwood Crest and North Wildwood. Visitors can find an event happening nearly every day of the week throughout the summer at locations including the Wildwoods Convention Center, Fox Park, Olde New Jersey Avenue and on the beach and world-famous Wildwoods Boardwalk.

The Wildwoods' annual calendar of events not only draws visitors to the family resort, but also provides additional activities and entertainment outlets to those already visiting for vacation or business. From firemen to fishing tournaments, music to marbles, the Wildwoods have developed a unique offering of special events not equaled in any other resort destinations.

Spring is the time when the outdoor fun

starts rolling in the Wildwoods, with events like the Boardwalk Classic Car Show, Easter Weekend and the one-of-a-kind Sensational Spring Weekend taking place. These events get the year started off right and help set the tone for the rest of summer. Highlighted by great music, loud engines and family fun, spring events in the Wildwoods are a great reason to warm up after a long winter.

Once Memorial Day hits, the summer really starts heating up. The Wildwoods host their annual International Kite Festival (the largest such event in North America), National Marbles Tournament, Wildwoods Baby Parade, New Jersey State Barbeque Championships, the Anglesea Blues Festival and spectacular 4th of July Weekend. Traditional events like these attract hundreds of thousands of visitors from all over the country every summer.

Also taking place almost every weekend throughout the summer on the five-mile island are block parties, craft shows, conventions and many festivals. A wide variety of free concerts and live entertainment can also be found almost every single night of the week throughout the summer, including spectacular, free Friday Night Fireworks and free live concerts featuring national recording artists, oldies groups, dance and big band music and more!

Best of all, the fun doesn't end in the Wildwoods once September comes around. The

Wildwoods' "Second Season" starts up after Labor Day Weekend, offering visitors a host of events every weekend through the end of October. Fall events in the Wildwoods include the NJ Governors Cup and the Olde Time Italian Festival; the Irish Fall Festival; the Seafood and Music Festival and the amazing Fabulous '50s Weekend.

There's a little something for everyone on the Wildwoods Calendar of Events: Roller Derby, MMA, WWE Live and the Harlem Globetrotters for sports lovers; monster trucks, car shows and motorcycle rallies for auto enthusiasts; Comic, Sports Card, Toy, Postcard and Stamp Expos for collectors; a Barbeque and Blues Festival, Seafood and Music Festival and Italian and Irish Festivals for music and food lovers; and events like International Kite Festival and National Marbles Tournament for families. The best part about all of the Wildwoods' events is that they are open to everyone to come and enjoy – and most of them are free to attend!

The Wildwoods Calendar of Events is available online at [www.WildwoodsNJ.com](http://www.WildwoodsNJ.com) or by calling 1-800-WW-BY-SEA (800) 992-9732.

**WHAT TO DO:** There is an awful lot to do here and it all starts at The Wildwoods Boardwalk, often called "two miles of smiles." Here you will find spectacular amusement piers, world-class roller coasters, interactive waterparks, family atmosphere, carnival-style games of chance, shops and irresistible food. Imagine, nearly nine million visitors are attracted here each season. We just loved the atmosphere.

Since its birth as a mere 150-yard stretch of boards in the 1890s, the Wildwoods Boardwalk has always been the center of activity. Throughout the years, the Boardwalk has gone through many transformations, growing and evolving with the mood of the country, and in its 100-year history, was twice moved closer to the ocean with the changing shoreline. Today, it is one of the country's last great seaside promenades. Its rich history and world-famous ambiance has led to the very concept being replicated both in Disneyland and Hershey Park in Pennsylvania.

Stretching for two and a half miles, the Boardwalk offers pure sensory overload with over 100 rides and attractions (more than Disneyland) ranging from world-class roller coasters and wet 'n wild waterparks to carnival-style midway games, flashing arcades and a myriad of retail shops and eateries (more than the Mall of America).

The Boardwalk features Morey's Piers ([www.moreyspiers.com](http://www.moreyspiers.com)), containing three

action-packed amusement piers. Morey's Mariner's Pier, located at Schellenger Avenue in Wildwood, offers the atmosphere of a traditional amusement park. With classics like the Super Scooters, Teacups, Musik Express and the Giant Wheel, Mariner's Landing takes families back to the turn of the century when life was simpler. It's also the only place to experience Breakfast in the sky - a gourmet, white linen and china breakfast on the Giant Wheel, offering spectacular views of the ocean and all of the Wildwoods.

Morey's Surfside Pier, located at 25th Street in North Wildwood, is like stepping into a colorful seaside carnival. It was the first of Morey's three piers, opening in 1969 with a giant fiberglass slide that only costs 25 cents to ride. Surfside Pier mixes a variety of kiddie rides with family thrills in an environment fueled by neon colors, bright lights and music.

Morey's Adventure Pier is the one that rocks, packed with high thrill extreme rides, the world famous wooden coaster and the Three-Point Challenge Basketball Game. Soar through the air over the beach on the SkyCoaster, feel the G force of the Sky-Scraper or shoot your way to the moon on the SlingShot. A brand new stage features School of Rock.

Guests visiting the Wildwoods Boardwalk will find an array of exciting amusements, including three of the best seaside roller coasters in the country at Morey's Piers: the Sea Serpent, the Great Nor'easter - an inverted looping coaster, and the Great White - one of the tallest and fastest wooden coasters on the East Coast. Also, giant monster trucks offer a high-speed, bumpy ride along the beach; and the Wildwoods' three large beachfront water parks provide cool relief on a hot summer day - with plunging waterfalls, cool cabanas, spas, hydrochutes, speed slides, raft rides, tube floats, lazy rivers, waterslides, rope swings, water guns for soaking, and a 1,000 gallon dumping bucket. We secured special bracelets, which provided us with unlimited access for a full day to any ride in the amusement park as well as access to the water parks. You can also purchase tickets individually. I loved their flume ride, where we got happily soaked during two plunges, and the huge Ferris wheel. There were no huge lineups that you see at many amusement parks and that was appreciated.

Service Animals, defined as dogs or miniature horses that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities, are permitted in most locations at Morey's Piers. Service animals must be harnessed, leashed or tethered, unless these devices interfere with the service animal's work or the individual's disability prevents



The Adventure Ocean Inn pool.



using these devices. If a service animal is out of control and the handler does not take effective action to control it, or the service animal is not house broken, the handler may be asked to remove the animal from the premises. Service animals are welcome in all restaurant and merchandise locations, attraction queues, and most other locations. Due to safety considerations and the dynamic nature of their rides and attractions, service animals are not permitted on most rides. In both waterparks, service animals are permitted on facility grounds, but are not permitted to enter the water.

Most of the facilities are wheelchair accessible. There are specific boarding requirements and accommodations at most attractions for guests using wheelchairs. Some attractions feature auxiliary access entrances. These are intended to allow guests using wheelchairs more convenient access to the attraction, not to bypass the line. Guests utilizing the access entrances may be accompanied by up to three others. In most cases, if you are capable of transferring to the ride vehicle's seating (either by yourself, or with the help of another person in your party), you may do so. Some attractions are capable of allowing guests to remain in a standard wheelchair for all or part of the attraction experience.

Each of the facilities offers accessible restrooms designed for use by guests using wheelchairs or ECVs (ECVs are single-riders, for-wheel electric vehicles).

Another of the Boardwalk's most popular attractions is the Sightseer Tram Cars (<http://watchthetramcarplease.com/tramcar>), the source of one of the most familiar quotes to any visitor to the Jersey Shore and the Wildwoods Boardwalk: "Watch the Tram

Car, Please," transporting visitors from one end of the famous wooden way to the other. While I did not see any place for a wheelchair, someone who has difficulty walking will want to take advantage of this feature.

**WHERE TO STAY:** We were fortunate to get reservations at The Adventurer Ocean Inn ([www.AdventurerInn.com](http://www.AdventurerInn.com)), which I can confidently say is probably the nicest hotel in all of the Wildwoods. This is indeed an oceanfront location, which has everything that your family or group needs to relax and unwind at the beach. You can wake up to the sounds of the ocean, watch the sun rise from an ocean view or oceanfront balcony, enjoy breakfast in their oceanfront restaurant or simply bask in the sun at the beach or at the pool area. From this location, you can walk to the beach, the Boardwalk and waterparks, and the Wildwoods Convention Center with ease. It comes complete with a cardio room, convention/meeting rooms, Southern exposure outdoor pool and kiddie pool, and free outdoor and garage parking on the premises.

Mary Nell Murphy is the managing director and owner of the hotel, which was originally operated by her grandparents. While her dad Greg Lacivita is still involved, he is slowly drifting into retirement and allowing Mary Nell and her sister Joanna and brother Chris to keep the family tradition going.

We felt right at home at The Adventurer Ocean Inn the moment we arrived. This hotel features some of the largest and cleanest two, three and four room suites in the Wildwoods. Upgrades are done each off-season. They used to close from October until May. But given the increased activity at the Convention Centre, their opening date has been moved up to April, March and next winter February. We had a very comfortable two-room suite, which had a king size and dou-

ble bed in one area. This was separated by a sliding accordion door, opening up to a nice sized living room/full kitchen with a pullout sofa bed, a nice sitting chair and a table with five chairs, at which we ate. It also became my "go to" spot to do work on my computer.

As far as the pool facility is concerned, I want to give a huge thumbs up. On the eighth and final day of our visit, we felt very emotional leaving our very comfortable chairs and taking our last swim in the perfectly heated pool. There are plenty of chairs and umbrellas. You just need to give your room number and you will receive some nice sized towels for the day. We particularly appreciated the covered outdoor lounging area with an adjacent sundeck at the second level, which also had comfy couches. There is WiFi poolside so we could enjoy our different devices. At pool level there is an enclosed oceanfront lounge/meeting area, which connects to the beach. It also has tables to eat at, a TV to watch and washrooms.

The front office staff are extremely friendly and helpful. They will steer you in the direction of different tourist attractions. The reception area has an endless array of tourism flyers and booklets to choose from. There is a business centre with two computers and two printers.

The Adventurer Pancake House and Family Restaurant is located on the first floor on the oceanfront side of the building. It has been privately run by the same family for the past two decades.

There is a washing station on the oceanfront side of the building, just before entering. Guests are encouraged to wash sand off there before entering the building or the pool area. We swam in the ocean each day, which was happily quite warm in the month of July. It was an easy walk from poolside.

The hotel is located at the beginning of the Boardwalk, which has shops, eateries and arcades. The rides are three quarters to one mile from the Boardwalk, so you do not hear any noise from them.

Coin-operated laundry and ironing facilities are available on site. Groups can take advantage of a Penthouse convention / meeting room. There are elevators on each side of the building, complimentary cribs and cots and daily housekeeping service. I was very impressed with the number of luggage carts available in the garage. There is a large Acme Supermarket only a few blocks away from the hotel so we were able to do a full order to stock the fridge when we arrived and go back and forth during the week to pickup other items.

The hotel has excellent access for those using wheelchairs from the garage elevator. There is a ramp leading to the pool. Mary Nell plans to have a company come in the next off-season and conduct a needs assessment. She has already added roll-in showers to some rooms.

All of the 113 rooms are non-smoking and have individual climate control(s), private balconies, telephone(s) with automated voice mail, free wireless internet access, refrigerators and microwaves, an in-room safe, flat screen TVs, hair dryers and toiletries, iron and ironing boards, kitchens, coffee pot, a two burner stove, pots and pans, dishes and silverware and a toaster.

The beach is free and available for your vacationing pleasure. Umbrella and beach chair rentals are conveniently located directly on the beach; no need to bring your own! The Beach Patrol can also assist handicapped or wheelchair-bound individuals and their families onto the beach and/or to the waters edge. Guests can simply walk outside the building and enjoy!

This a fabulous family location and from speaking with many of the guests, they come back year after year. In fact it is fairly common for them to book their rooms for the following year upon checkout. By doing so they are able to lock in the rates that exist at the time.

I strongly recommend the Adventurer Ocean Inn! It made our trip and I thank the people from the Greater Wildwoods Tourism and Improvement Development Authority for recommending it.

**DINING OUT:** I would like to recommend two restaurants in particular, which are part of the Big Fish Restaurant Group: the Beach Creek Oyster Bar and Grill ([www.beachcreek.net](http://www.beachcreek.net)) and The Boathouse ([www.boathouseonline.com](http://www.boathouseonline.com)). Both promise outstanding dining experiences.

At the Beach Creek, located at 500 West Hand Avenue, general manager Colleen Guest and her team run a successful operation. You can tell this when you arrive and see the wait for tables. Intimately served indoors amidst copper and wooden decor, or outside on their waterfront deck, this place knows its food. Located directly on the water, the Beech Creek is known for its award winning contemporary international cuisine. This casual surf 'n turf restaurant and bar features an intimate dark lit dining room, a marina-side deck and live bands.



The famous Wildwood Boardwalk.

(Continued on Page 36)



(Adapted Travel continued from Page 35)

This restaurant has such a wide array of choices for wine, cocktails, appetizers and main courses that you will want to come back more than once. We began our meal with some cocktails, a Hawaiiitini and a Pineapple Express. It was difficult to select from the delicious looking presentation of appetizers. We settled on the Sunset Seafood Platter - six oysters, six top necks, six shrimp and colossal lump crab meat. It was amazing! We also shared some delicious seared scallops - cornmeal seared scallops and some more colossal lump crab meat, served over a tomato-basil bruchetta.

A Caesar and petite house salad were next, making way for the main entrées. The seafood à la vodka featured sweet sea scallops, tender shrimp and jumbo lump crabmeat in a vodka infused tomato cream sauce over penne pasta. The sea bass Champignon really stood out for us. This char-grilled Chilean sea bass filet was served with sautéed greens on a lobster risotto filled grilled Portobello cap and in a light grilled Portobello broth. Our final choice was the rib steak - 14 ounces of grilled Black Angus beef, served with sautéed greens and potatoes. This was an absolutely outstanding meal. We did save room for dessert, sharing a superb and nice-sized piece of double layer chocolate cake and a vanilla bean crème brûlée. The menu is on their website and I would recommend you take a look before going for dinner.

If you get to the Beach Creek before 6 p.m., then you can take advantage of the three-course early bird special. For \$25, you get

bread, bruschetta, soup or salad, an entrée and dessert. Keep in mind that the portions are very generous. The restaurant is wheelchair accessible. You can call them at (609) 522-1062.

At The Boathouse Restaurant and Marina Deck ([www.boathouseonline.net](http://www.boathouseonline.net)), located virtually next door at 506 West Rio Grande Avenue, there is ample seating indoors and on the deck overlooking the intercoastal waterway. We arrived to a nice atmosphere of live music and young children dancing to the tunes of the musician. General manager Rick Raduns and his team provide a warm welcome to all guests. The Boathouse has been in business since 1989. It was built on the site of old bait and tackle shop and serves lunch and dinner daily in June, July and August. Come September they offer dinner daily, and lunch on the weekends. They open for dinner on weekends in October, until October 15. Happy hour is from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. and take-out is available as well.

There is wheelchair access via a ramp. If you are wheelchair bound you will need to stay at the first level. We were seated in the nicely air conditioned second floor. Our lovely server Michaela went over the daily specials and some recommendations from the menu. I started off with a mouth-watering Pina Colada while another member of our party enjoyed a glass of Pinot Grigio. Some fresh dinner rolls arrived at the table piping hot.

We ordered two appetizers to share: the cold shellfish sampler contained three clams and

three oysters on the half shell and chilled shrimp cocktail, with some delicious dipping sauces; and the Maryland style crab cake, broiled and served with a siracha remoulade sauce. Michaela then brought a bowl of house salad for the three of us to share. It was superb, with a house vinaigrette dressing and plenty of croutons.

For the entrées, we had a wonderful choice among meat and poultry, pasta and fresh seafood. Our selections were the broiled seafood combination, seafood à la vodka and the king cut prime rib. The broiled seafood combo is the restaurant's best seller and includes a delicious sampling of fresh local flounder, shrimp, scallops, crab imperial and clams casino. Seafood à la vodka included shrimp, scallops, crab meat and penne, tossed in a cream rosé sauce. As for the prime rib au jus, it was cooked perfectly and cut like butter. All dinners are served with the garden salad, rolls and two choices from either French fries, baked potato, roasted red bliss, the daily vegetable, cole slaw or apple sauce. Pasta (marinara or butter) or for \$2 alfredo can be substituted for the two sides.

When it came time to order dessert, Michaela tempted us with her description of the homemade decadent chocolate pie. The recipe apparently comes directly via the chef's grandmother. Well, it was beyond "decadent" and highly recommended. The chocolate had a fabulous fudge flavor and there was plenty of whipped cream and chocolate sauce as well.

Take note that the sunset specials include two entrées for only \$29. There is also a children's menu, with items at \$8 each. You can call the restaurant directly at (609) 729-5301.

For more information or a list of dining options please visit [www.WildwoodsNJ.com](http://www.WildwoodsNJ.com) and click on the "Where to Eat" button or call 1-800-WW-BY-SEA (800) 992-9732.

**MORE INFO ON ACCESS:** In Wildwood Crest, there is wheelchair access to the boardwalks and beaches on 39 streets. Only Cresse and Washington are not accessible. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible rest rooms are available at the Sunrise Park at Rambler Road. Wildwood Crest is considering adding handicapped parking at Rambler Road as part of a new project for this area in the future. There are a limited number of surf chairs available at the different beaches. These are wheelchairs that are easier to manoeuver in the sand.

New walkways, ramps and dune crossovers were installed in North Wildwood two years ago, making the city's beaches more accessible to visitors with physical disabilities. Upgrades to improve access to the beach and Boardwalk saw the addition of new ADA compliant walkways made of composite materials that will lead from under the Boardwalk to the beach.

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

## Buddy Cruise set to sail in October 2017

By Pamela Arnoldson

**B**uddy Cruise is a non-profit charity serving individuals and families with special needs. Founded in 2008, it provides educational resources, advocacy and awareness for individuals and families with special needs. In addition to their annual cruise, Buddy has events scheduled across the country. They take part in conferences across the United States and recently took part in the Canadian Down Syndrome Conference in Montreal. They hosted their first charity golf tournament in Boston, and will be the recipient of a fundraising event generously arranged by Chef Robert Irvine.

In 2015, Buddy Cruise hosted its annual event on board Royal Caribbean's Independence of the Seas with over 350 in at-



**Buddy Cruisers having fun at '70s night on the Buddy Cruise 2015.**  
(Photo credit, Bluehuna)

tendance. They visited St. Kitts, St. Maarten and San Juan, Puerto Rico. The week was packed with workshops, activities, and ex-

cursions. They even hosted a Halloween carnival at sea! There was something for all ages and abilities. This October Buddy Cruise set sail on the Oasis of the Sea.

The annual "Buddy walk at Sea" takes place on the cruise to raise awareness for Down syndrome, and has over 800 participants. "We invite everyone to join us wheth-

er they have a loved one with special needs or not. You will have an amazing time. It's a life-changing event," said former "Apprentice" star and current Buddy Cruise director Troy McClain. "Join us once and you will become a Buddy Cruiser for life."

"We already have our 2017 event on the books for October 30th. It will be an exciting Halloween sailing. If you would like to join in the fun of this, or any other Buddy Cruise, call (877) 239-2789," adds Jorge Arnoldson, director and Lithia resident.

*If you would like more information about Buddy Cruise please email [joinus@buddycruise.org](mailto:joinus@buddycruise.org).*

*Pamela Arnoldson is the Director of Buddy Cruise Inc.*



Sports by Daniel Smajovits



## Armada hockey arena in Boisbriand fully accessible



For an evening of high-level hockey in a completely accessible environment, look no further than Boisbriand, home of the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League's Blainville-Boisbriand Armada.

Playing just 45 minutes north of Montreal, the Armada has called Boisbriand home since the 2011-12 season, entertaining fans of all ages over the past four seasons. With tickets priced as low as \$12 for adults and \$8 for children, an Armada game makes for an exciting, affordable, accessible and entertaining evening.

Capitalizing on the success and popularity of the Armada as well as the growing development of the Boisbriand community, around the corner from the Centre d'Excellence Sports Rousseau is the Faubourg Boisbriand, a large retail and dining complex. Either before or after a game, guests can dine at their choice of 15 restaurants, from chains such as Jack Astor's and Baton Rouge to local options La Belle et La Boeuf, Pizzeria No. 900 or Vertigo Boisbriand. The Armada

also offer a free shuttle from the complex to the arena, thus alleviating the expense and stress of parking.

For more information on the team or to buy tickets, visit: [www.armadahockey.ca](http://www.armadahockey.ca).



Daniel Walcott, Armada Alumni  
(Drafted by the New York Rangers, 2015).

## Canada shines at the Paralympic Games



Canada's Wheelchair Rugby team was part of the 154 athlete contingent at the 2016 Paralympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The Canadian delegation brought home 29 medals, including eight gold, setting 12 Paralympic records along the way. Congrats! (Photo credit, Michael Lamm).

## 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 20 years who are intellectually challenged, or who suffer from poor social skills or low self-esteem due to behavioural or learning difficulties.

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

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 years. 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!

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



Kelly-Anne Soutter – Director General

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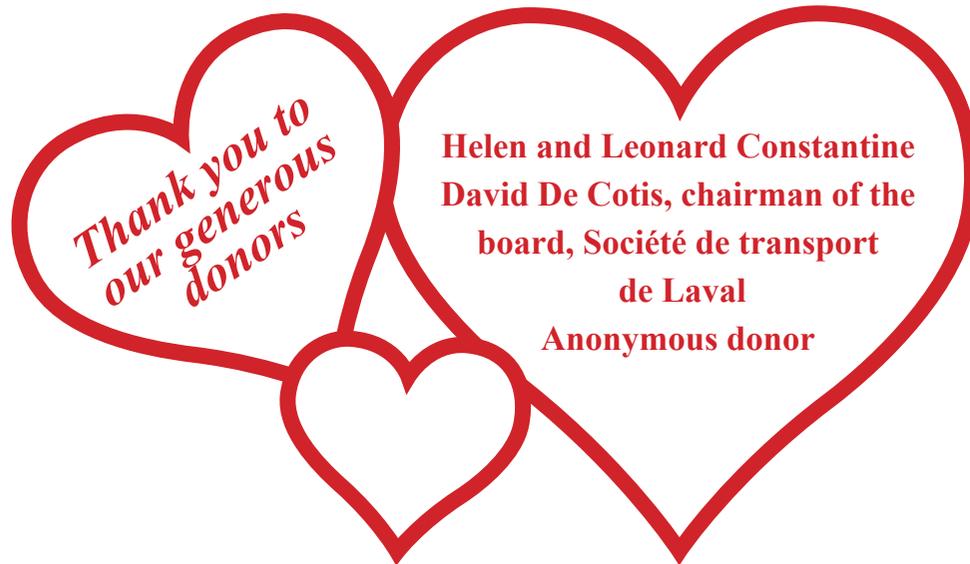


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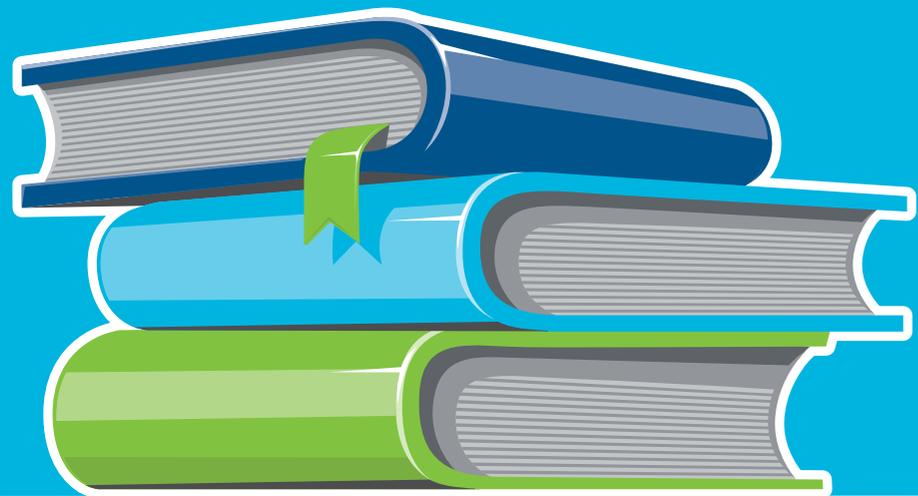
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