

5 years old / 5 ans

Vol.6 No.1

INSPIRATIONS



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



The Dynamic Funds Teacher of Inspiration 2013

The Dynamic Funds Teacher of Inspiration 2013 Kaylie Bernert with student Delphine Vranderick; Ormstown Elementary School Principal David Brisebois; students Geordie Woods and Kolyn Parisien. Front row, William Aldridge and Kyle Sharpe. (Photo credit, David Suliteanu)

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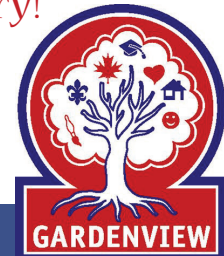


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The Dynamic Funds Teacher of Inspiration 2013: Kaylie Bernert inspires at a country school with a big heart

WENDY SINGER

Kaylie Bernert grew up on a farm in Franklin, Quebec. She earned her Bachelor of Education at Bishops University in 2009, and completed her final stage at Ormstown Elementary School (OES) of the New Frontiers School Board (NFSB) where she continues to teach today.

When she graduated, Bernert intended to use a constructivist teaching method. It took one day in the classroom to realize that she would need to be flexible and start by addressing the needs of her students including those with ADHD, severe physical disability, and soon-to-be-diagnosed autism.

Bernert leaned on her colleagues for guidance. "As new teachers, sometimes we feel the need to keep our classroom door closed and just try to survive, but our colleagues are such an asset. There are so many people that I cling to and asked to teach me everything they know. I would not be succeeding without the team at OES and NFSB," shares Bernert.



Kaylie Bernert in her classroom with students Delphine Vranderick, Geordie Woods, William Aldridge, Kolyn Parisien and Kyle Sharpe. (Photo credit, David Suliteanu)

Our Dynamic Funds Teacher of Inspiration 2013 handles the Grade 1 year with great care: "We take our concerns seriously, we speak to our school board, specialists, and have the children seen. It's challenging to

have the responsibility of cycle one on your shoulders. We have such an impact on their lives."

In her first year teaching, Bernert was concerned about one struggling student. "I felt like I was failing him. Everyone works at their own level, but something wasn't working for him," she explained.

The turning point was a diagnosis of autism. To decrease her stu-

dent's anxiety and sleepless nights, Bernert implemented a structured routine and visual scheduling, making things as consistent as possible between the home and school.

It turns out that scheduling proved to be beneficial all around. The anxiety level of the student with autism decreased, allowing him the opportunity to learn. The entire class became more focused and grounded, and once accustomed to scheduling, it made Bernert's preparation and teaching days flow more easily.

David Brisebois, principal of OES (fondly referred to as 'Mr. B.')

commends Bernert for creating a dynamic partnership with this student and his parents, and fostering a home program that closely resembles what is happening at school.

This compassionate teacher weaves two important life lessons into her teaching year-round:

1. We are all different, and; therefore, learn differently. For example, the student with

ADHD learns better when his body is moving.

2. Fair means you get what you need, and that might not be the same for everyone. A student with ADHD might be entitled to a fidget toy, a lap lizard, or permission to get a 'passport' stamped at the office if the student needs to move.

Mr. B. considers himself lucky to have this devoted and passionate teacher on his team. "Kaylie is only in her fourth year of teaching but shows wisdom, confidence and poise beyond these few years. In her room, education is magical. Learning is fun."

Thrilled to work at this 123-student country school, Bernert's love of teaching and her students is undeniable. She treasures each 'ahah' moment, and beams while sharing the news that her student with autism is thriving, recently achieving 100 percent on a math exam.

Bernert is influenced daily by the wisdom of her mentor Carole Creswell and internship supervisor Joy Palmer. Bernert often returns to advice that Creswell shared with her early on in her teaching career: "Some days your job is just to care for the students, listen to them, and send them home knowing they felt loved." "That," reflects Bernert, "is what it's all about."

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If you have a Caregiver of Inspiration to nominate, email mcohen@inspirationsnews.com.

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Inspirations honoured for excellence in health care communications



HCPRA Medalion

We were thrilled to learn that Inspirations was recently recognized with a third place Hygeia award in the external publications category at the Health Care Public Relations Association (HCPRA) annual conference in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

HCPRA is the only organization addressing the particular concerns of public relations professionals in Canadian health care. Their annual awards recognize excellence in health care communications across the country. The program encourages Canadian health care public relations professionals to strive to meet the highest standards in their communications work, regardless of size, resources or location of their place of employment.

What does this mean to the Inspirations team? We are continuously receiving positive feedback from our readers, the special needs community, our supporters in government, advertisers and sponsors. Recognition from HCPRA echoes your feedback, and tells us that the message that Inspirations Newspaper conveys is heard not just in our community of the Greater Montreal and surrounding areas, but across the country.

Feedback from the judges was both helpful and encouraging: "Well done. Exceptional. This newspaper hit the mark for its purpose and is to be commended for its content, extensive and appropriate advertising and

WENDY SINGER

distribution." Other praise noted the strong format and the bilingual approach.

Mike Cohen, Inspirations Editor, who created the newspaper in collaboration with Lew Lewis, Director of Student Services, EMSB, five years ago, was delighted to hear this news. "We are honoured to receive such recognition," states Cohen. "In five years we have not only grown as a publication, but as a true service to the special needs community. We are proud to tell such uplifting stories."

If you take a look at the 'Our Team' section on our website, you will see just why Inspirations is so unique. This newspaper is a collaborative effort that would not be what it is today without the support, guidance and input of every individual that participates. Our contributors provide their time to share the most current information about special needs, and you, our readers, guide us on what content is relevant to you.

Managing Inspirations is a privilege that I have embraced over the last four years. Not one day goes by that I am not inspired by someone I have met, by an amazing story, or through connecting people who will benefit from knowing each other. The Hygeia award has motivated our team and given us the confidence to delve deeper into our mission of sharing the news of our special needs community.

As we celebrate the fifth anniversary of Inspirations, we share this award with all of you, and thank you for your continued support.

HCPRA
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www.hcpa.org



Giant Steps welcomes Nick Primiano as Director General

Nick Primiano

Giant Steps has already begun the implementation of a before and after school activity program. Their goal is to work very closely with other school boards and partner with other schools, including CEGEPs and universities, in an effort to become a resource centre for autism in Montreal.

Community minded with a strong interest in natural medicine and Reiki, Primiano is eager to get to work. "This is the reward of a career in education, to have the privilege of running Giant Steps," says Primiano.

Giant Steps recently appointed Nick Primiano as Director General of Giant Steps School. Primiano began his career as a science teacher 37 years ago with the PSBGM. He taught at FACE, EMSB for six years before becoming the Vice Principal, and then Principal for 15 years. Primiano moved on to the SWLSB, where he was Principal of Lake of Two Mountains School and Laurier Senior, prior accepting the post at Giant Steps.

Nick Katalifos, Chairman of the Board of Giant Steps School, is delighted to welcome Primiano to the school. "I am grateful for everyone that has worked at Giant Steps in the past. Nick is a highly respected principal, an out of the box thinker who always believed in inclusion and the role of the arts in education. We are now looking at the future of the school and its direction with a more pedagogical approach," says Katalifos.

The school is also pleased to welcome Marie-Noel Mondoux-Lemoine Financial Coordinator, Magdalena Grzechowiak, Pedagogical Director, Kim Hewel, Inclusion Coordinator on the English side, Caterina Bitetto, Transportation Coordinator and Secretary to the Director General, and Richard Lewis, Educator and Coordinator of the before and after school activity program called Camp Caravane.



Stephanie Mitelman receives the 2013 First Track Award for Innovation in Sexology

Stephanie Mitelman

Stephanie Mitelman, owner of Sexpressions™, was awarded the 2013 First Tracks Award for Innovation in Sexology by Honest Exchange, a New Jersey-based sexuality education consulting firm. Honest Exchange president Melanie Davis, PhD, chose Mitelman because of her groundbreaking sexuality education resources that address the learning styles of youth with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs).

As an authority on and advocate for sexuality education for youth with ASDs, Mitelman creates innovative workshops, publications, and teaching tools for use by teachers, counselors and parents. She is one of the only educators in North America helping adults with ASDs and their partners to build relationship skills. For more about Mitelman's work, visit www.sexpressions.com.



Connie Primiano

The Inspirations team is expanding!

**Connie Primiano,
Community
Relations Advisor
&**

**Rikee Gutherz-Madoff,
Advertising and
Sponsorship Specialist**

Connie Primiano began her career in education as a French immersion teacher at Roslyn Elementary School, English Montreal School Board, where she remained for 24 years. Connie guided all grade levels from K to 6 in learning French in innovative ways such as writing children's plays and creating French clubs. She was the interim Vice Principal at Roslyn and Vice Principal at Nesbitt before she became Principal at Cedarcrest, Dunrae Gardens, and then Honoré Mercier. Prior to her retirement from the EMBS, Connie was the Assistant Director of Human Resources, working with support

staff. She is also a Zumba instructor, and is working on becoming trained to lead Zumba for children with special needs. The Inspirations team is proud to welcome her in the role of Community Relations Advisor, and looks forward to tapping into her wealth of knowledge in the field of education, administration, and her flare for event planning.

Rikee Madoff holds a Master of Arts in Religion, a diploma in Institutional Administration, and a Bachelor of Arts in Literature and Drama. Rikee worked as an advertising representative for the Canadian



Rikee Gutherz-Madoff

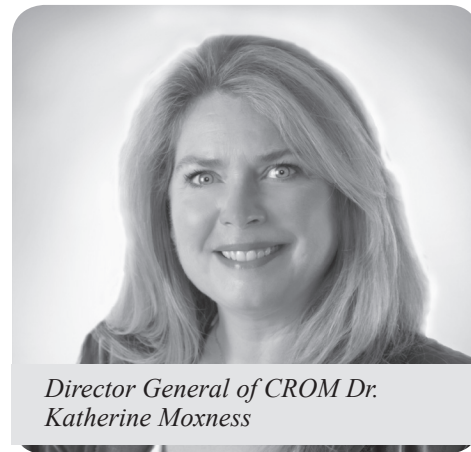
Jewish News for 18 years. With a penchant for the arts, her impressive list of credits includes film and television actress (including voice and radio work), documentary writer and director, interviewer for Steven Spielberg's Shoah Foundation, theatre critic for CBC Daybreak, and drama and literature teacher. She has also worked as a social counselor. We have much to learn from Rikee's varied experience, particularly in the area of sales, and welcome her to Inspirations as our Advertising and Sponsorship Specialist.

West Montreal Readaptation Centre (WMRC-CROM) appoints new Director General and Director of Professional Services



Director for the Department of Professional Services Dr. Marjorie Aunos

West Montreal Readaptation Centre (WMRC-CROM) recently appointed Dr. Marjorie Aunos as director for the Department of Professional Services (DPS). Dr. Aunos began working for WMRC as a psychologist in 2002 and was promoted to coordinator, Ultra-Specialized Services, in 2008. She holds a Ph.D. in educational psychology from the Université du Québec à Montréal, with specialization in the fields of intellectual disability and parenting. Dr. Aunos' appointment took effect in September 2013.



Director General of CROM Dr. Katherine Moxness

Dr. Katherine Moxness, previously director of Professional Services for WMRC, assumed her duties as director general on May 3, 2013. She has devoted her career to the treatment, support and study of people with autism spectrum disorder, from her training as a psychologist to her current role. Widely published, Dr. Moxness earned her doctorate in Psychology, Counselling and Educational Psychology from McGill University. In 2009 Dr. Moxness was instrumental in lobbying for Law 21 to allow Quebec psychologists to diagnose autism.

Summit School appoints new Director General



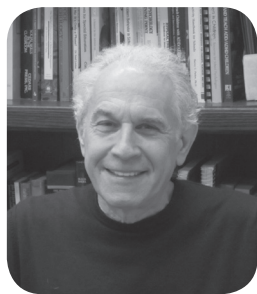
Herman Erdogmus

Herman Erdogmus has worked at Summit School for over 30 years as a teacher, educational consultant, Vice Principal, and Principal. He holds degrees in psychology, education and special education from Concordia University, University of Windsor and McGill University. While settling in to his new role as Director General of Summit School, Erdogmus was delighted to share his thoughts: "As newly appointed Director General of this outstanding educational setting, it is my goal for Summit School to continue to excel in the academic, creative arts, community and vocational programs in providing our students an environment for individual growth."

Le sou

*Dans la poche de mon grandpere
J'ai trouve un petit sou
Chanceuse chanceuse
Et j'ai trouve la reponse
Rapidement rapidement
J'ai trouve simplicité
Et je crie la verite
Et mon grandpere il m'a dit
Il m'a dit, mon petit fils
Garde le pas ce petit sou
Garde le pas garde le pas
Donnez-le, mon petit
Donnez-le. mon garcon
Donnez-le a quelqu'un
Qui n'a rien
Et je criais la verite
Mais personne n'a ecoute
Donnez-le, donnez-le
Donnez-le a pauvre fou
Et le fou il a souffre
Et il souffre toujours
Et je lui ai donne vite
Mon petit sou, mon petit sou
Et le fou il a commence
A pleurer a pleurer
Et le fou et mon petit sou
Ont danse danse ensemble
Et j'ai commence a chanter
A chanter avec le fou
Et le petit sou est devenu
Un petit fou et le petit fou
Est devenu une ange qui danse
Et le fou et le sou ont danse sur la lune
Et la lune est devenu un petit sou
Un petit sou
Et le fou a vole dans la lune
Et la lune est devenu
Un petit sou un petit sou
Et la lumiere dans la lune est devenu
du soleil
Et le petit sou le petit sou est devenu
le soleil*

Ecrit par Rikee Gutherz-Madoff



Celebrating five years!

A MESSAGE FROM LEW LEWIS

How time has passed by so quickly! It is very difficult to imagine how a rather short edition of Inspirations, which was initiated about five years ago, has now expanded to a 40-page twice yearly publication, distributed within the Greater Montreal and surrounding areas.

We have been most energized by an incredibly hardworking and committed team which has been instrumental in generating Inspirations as a publication which has ultimately had a most positive impact within the special needs

community. This includes both the recipients of a diverse range of services and the dedicated caregivers who are responsible for the provision of such services.

We are also extremely proud of the increasing French content of Inspirations as we commit ourselves to reach out to our francophone counterparts within the special needs community – this initiative has been most impressive!

I would like to extend our sincere appreciation to the many individuals (too numerous to mention) who have played a significant role in the success of Inspirations. As well, a

huge vote of thanks is extended to Mike Cohen who, in fact, initially conceived of this very worthwhile publication about five years ago after which he “inspired” others (myself included) to become integral partners in this very exciting initiative.

On behalf of all the individuals who contribute to the high quality of Inspirations, we look forward to continuing to be “inspired” by this endeavor for many years to come.

Lew Lewis is the Director of the Student Services Department of the English Montreal School Board.

INSPIRATIONS

Inspirations is produced by the Communications and Marketing Division and the Student Services Department of the **English Montreal School Board** and distributed across the Greater Montreal, Laval-Laurentians and South Shore areas.

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Une source d'inspiration qui dure depuis cinq ans...

■ JULIE RENÉ DE COTRET

Voilà presque trois ans que j'ai l'occasion d'être membre de la belle famille du journal Inspirations. Une famille qui ne cesse de grandir à chaque nouvelle édition. Le journal Inspirations est réalisé par une équipe dynamique et dévouée afin de rendre chaque publication toujours plus intéressante.

Initialement, l'équipe d'Inspirations était majoritairement composée de membres du personnel de la commission scolaire English-Montréal. Aujourd'hui, nous avons des personnes venant de l'extérieur qui désirent participer à cette belle création. Bien que ce journal fût initialement uniquement anglophone, Inspirations contient de plus en plus d'articles en français. Le désir est de devenir un jour complètement bilingue.

Le journal Inspirations porte bien son nom, puisqu'il donne l'opportunité aux lecteurs de connaître les défis, comme les succès, de jeunes et d'adultes ayant à vivre avec des besoins particuliers. Également, les articles relatant les témoignages d'intervenants qui

œuvrent auprès de ces enfants sont également une source d'inspiration. Que ce soit en tant que personnes ayant des besoins particuliers ou en tant qu'intervenant, ces gens nous enrichissent par leur courage et leur détermination. Avoir la chance de partager une petite tranche de leur quotidien, nous permet de mieux comprendre leurs cheminement. Le journal Inspirations devient par le fait même un recueil de leçons de vie.

Il peut arriver, en tant que parent, que nous puissions parfois se sentir à bout de souffle et sans ressources. Le fait de savoir que d'autres personnes vivent des situations similaires à la notre et qu'ils ont su trouver des ressources ou des moyens d'intervention peuvent s'avérer très réconfortant. C'est principalement l'objectif de ce journal. Inspirer les lecteurs page après page.

Le journal Inspirations a vu le jour il y a maintenant cinq ans. Je tiens à remercier M. Mike Cohen pour l'initiative de cette merveilleuse idée ainsi qu'à M. Lew Lewis pour avoir donné l'opportunité à cette merveilleuse aventure de prendre forme.

Si vous avez une histoire inspirante à partager avec notre équipe n'hésitez pas à communiquer avec nous. Il y a de nombreuses histoires inspirantes qui méritent d'être partagées.



Jacques Chagnon
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Permettez-moi de profiter de cette occasion pour saluer le travail, l'engagement et la générosité exceptionnels de toutes les personnes associées à la publication d'une des revues les plus inspirantes, le *Journal Inspirations*. Je vous souhaite une bonne continuation et un joyeux 5^e anniversaire!

Permit me to take this opportunity to salute the exceptional work, the commitment and the generosity of the many individuals associated with the publication of one of the most inspiring journals, Inspirations Newspaper. I wish you all much success and a happy 5th anniversary!

Jacques Chagnon

Julie René de Cotret est la directrice adjointe des services aux élèves, commission scolaire English-Montréal.



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From solitude to animals and 'Angry Birds': Amazing things happen when a community embraces autism

■ JULIE-CHOU LACHAPELLE

“Four legs good, two legs bad!”

As I watched my son Benjamin and his classmates rehearse these words on stage, I was simply overcome with emotion. Smiling from ear to ear and bouncing like his feet were made of springs, he could hardly contain his joy. This was the day Ms. Hall's Grade 5 class was to perform "Animals Farm", a play (very, very loosely based on Orwell's novel) that Benjamin wrote, with the help of his teachers and the use of a laptop. I was witnessing the happiest moment my son has ever had in all his years of mainstream education.

Like most autistic children, Benjamin could live in his own world. He rarely sought the company of others and could be content drawing, sculpting or playing with animals (his obsession) by himself. His sensory integration disorder, repetitive behaviour, communication and social interaction difficulties made conforming to a regular school environment extremely challenging. Even with the support of attendants, each passing year brought on one crisis after another at school; Benjamin was not learning a thing and he was sinking deeper and deeper into himself. We felt helpless, miserable and no longer believed in full integration for our son.

As a last resort before permanently home-schooling, we took a chance and enrolled Benjamin at Laurentian Elementary School (LES) in Lachute, Quebec, for the 2012-2013 school year.

Pat Downing was assigned as Benjamin's attendant and Jennifer Hall was to be Benjamin's teacher. Neither had worked with au-

tistic children before. But this combination of an astute and fully committed attendant, an energetic teacher ready to think outside the box and an entire community willing to embrace diversity, in all its forms, changed everything.

Right from the start, Ms. Hall worked to establish a positive attitude in her classroom. She talked to the class about autism before Ben's arrival. She taught the other children to not only accept Benjamin's differences; she challenged them to see his intrinsic worth. She made the children understand his unique hurdles and encouraged each child to help Benjamin in his social development.

The students were excited to help Benjamin fit in. They protected him on the playground, accepted his non-verbal responses and supported him when he sang, told a story or made animal sounds in front of the class or shared pictures he made on an iPad that he had access to due to a MELS grant. They became like an unstoppable army of little therapists, coaxing him out of his world. By Christmas, he was talking to some students and making eye contact!

Ms. Pat recognized the significance of Ben-

jamin's sensory challenges and engaged him in his world of animals, "Angry Birds" and creativity. She focused on what he could do, and where his passions lay, rather than concentrating on his shortcomings. His "Animals Farm" play was just one shining example.

When Benjamin returned to LES this year

he was overjoyed to see his old friends and teachers, and meet new ones. At the end of the day he told me that he loves to go to school. For the first time, I feel truly hopeful. LES now has five students diagnosed with ASD and a couple awaiting evaluation. With this caring community behind them, these amazing kids may one day exceed all our expectations.



The performance of Benjamin's play "Animals Farm". Benjamin is sixth from the left in the first row, with his class. (Photo credit, Julie-Chou Lachapelle)



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Celebrating social integration at Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board

HEATHER HALMAN

A one-of-a-kind program is in place for young adults with special needs at the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board. The program offers adults with a disability, intellectual and or physical, a safe and fun learning environment. The Social Integration Services (SIS) program, which operates in collaboration with the Centre de réadaptation Normand-Laramée, is housed in a vocational training center in Pont Viau, Laval, but its impact reaches far and wide. This five-day a week program provides opportunities to enhance and maintain the social skills needed for everyday life and working environments.

With the support of the staff and the center these exceptional young adults are experiencing meaningful learning and group experiences. In addition to social skills and some academic training, students receive information on healthy living, are encouraged to socialize through supportive interactions, and build lasting relationships in a warm and friendly environment. At SIS we believe that the next generation of young people approaching adulthood today should be able to have more opportunities to pursue

adult lives that reflect their values, dreams, goals and life ambitions. Our team works closely with families as well as the students to provide exceptional services through education and knowledge building.

The quality of support and stimulation these young adults receive is exceptional. The dedicated team provides a supportive and nurturing environment where learning takes place and the students experience success. There are meaningful and relevant activities that encourage creativity, communication skills, self-expression and that develop independence while supporting the special challenges these young people face. Their sense of engagement and belonging in the center is evident with their daily baked goods sales. Students learn how to shop, to bake and to serve their products to other adults in the vocational training center during break times.

This is a program that gives not only to the students and their families, but gives back to the community as well. Our SIS students raise funds through the sale of baked goods and their own jewelry creations, and make donations to Sun Youth on a regular basis. They have received several awards over the



SIS students at Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board display their creative and culinary creations.

years for their entrepreneurial activities from the Ministry of Education. Our students are also regular visitors to our Administrators meetings where they give presentations on their activities, and sell their unique jewelry. It is fantastic and very inspiring to see how their levels of confidence and self-esteem grow as a result of these experiences. This

program is proof that social integration of special needs adults can thrive in a caring community-based program.

Heather Halman is the Director of Adult Education and Vocational Training Services at the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board.



MINDY NILOFF-BACKLER

Tips on motivating your child to practice speech therapy exercises at home:

We may hear, "I don't want to," or "I can't" when we ask our children to do something. However, we can help our little ones participate in, and complete tasks to achieve goals. Most preschoolers and young school-age children have a strong sense of their likes and dislikes. The first step to motivating your child is figuring out what he likes by exposing him to different activities (toys, games, arts and crafts). We can then integrate his preferred activities with the skill we want him to learn. For example, your five year-old has to practice 20 words that begin with the /s/ sound everyday. You must present this task in a fun and interesting way...according to him. If your child likes board games, he can be encouraged to repeat a target word or phrase for each turn, such as, "spin" or "I

move a space." Another activity could be making a collage of pictures from magazines that begin with the /s/ sound. Your speech therapist can help you tailor practice activities to your child's interests.

Set realistic expectations for when, where, and how much your child practices. Include your child in decision-making about his exercises. He is more likely to participate in a plan that he helped develop. If your child resists during practice, offer him choices to empower him to complete the task. For example, "We have two more minutes of practice, do you want to finish this game or play another one." Young children love routines, and spending uninterrupted time with their parents. Set up the activity as a special time to play together. Establish and follow a consistent practice schedule so your child can look forward to the experience. Your child likes to imitate you, and help you, so if you're excited to practice,

he will be too.

You can also motivate your child with external factors. Verbal praise goes a long way to keep your child motivated. Kids get excited when you make a big deal about how well they're doing. For example, "Wow, you said that word really well; I'm so proud of you, or I see how hard you're working." These are powerful words to a young child. Most children also benefit from tangible rewards such as stickers, or small prizes (think dollar store!) to help them stay motivated... and that's ok too. Finally, be patient and open to trying new ways to get the desired result.

Mindy Niloff Backler, M.S. CCC-SLP is a licensed speech-language pathologist, mother of four, and clinic director at Speech Therapy Montreal, a pediatric speech therapy center located in Côte Saint-Luc. The clinic is open weekdays

and weekends. Services include; individual and group therapy, social skills groups, and home/daycare/school visits. For information consult www.speechtherapymontreal.com or email mindy@speechtherapymontreal.com.





The Dynamic Funds Caregiver of Inspiration: Honouring Patricia Sansone

■ WENDY SINGER

Staff and students at Giant Steps School welcomed Inspirations and the EMSB Student Services Department to an intimate ceremony in appreciation of the Dynamic Funds Caregiver of Inspiration 2013 Patricia Sansone.

Sansone worked as an Inclusion Coordinator for Giant Steps (GS) where, over 16 years, she went to extraordinary lengths to ensure that all students with autism were respected, accepted and included within their community schools. She is currently a Special Education Consultant at the EMSB.

Editor of Inspirations Mike Cohen welcomed Dr. Jocelyne Lecompte, former Director General, GS; Francine Langan, Director General, GS Foundation; Natasha Fontes, Operational Planning Coordinator, GS; Roma Medwid, Deputy Director General, EMSB; Lew Lewis, Director of Student Services, EMSB; Julie René de Cotret, Assistant Director of Student Services, EMBS; and Nick Katalifos, Chairman of GS. Also present were several GS students and Sansone's family.

Dr. Lecompte complimented Sansone by comparing her to Mary Poppins – almost perfect in every way! “You supported the educators in finding innovative ways to accommodate, adapt and modify the environment and the curriculum in community schools to ensure students succeeded,” said Lecompte. “You demonstrated outstanding advocacy for our students, and you continue to do so within the realm of the EMSB. This award is very much deserved.”

In the role of parent, Nick Katalifos thanked Sansone for her dedication. Donning his EMSB hat (Principal of Pierre de Coubertin Elementary School) he added: “I’m thrilled to have yet another resource at our disposal. As the number of special needs kids skyrockets in the school system, it is critical to have someone with your talent and commitment.” According to Lew Lewis, the number of students with autism has increased by 50 percent in the last five years.

Caring, dynamic, compassionate, knowledgeable, expert and experienced were just



Nick Katalifos, Julie René de Cotret, Lew Lewis, Patricia Sansone, Jason Goldsmith, Linda Mahler, Wendy Singer, and Mike Cohen at Giant Steps School.

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a few words that Lewis used to describe Sansone, adding: “You have only been with the EMSB for several months and you’ve already made your mark.”

Jason Goldsmith, Founder of The Big Blue Hug, and his son Ellis, a student at GS, presented their painting ‘People, like flowers, make a garden’. It was a delight to see Ellis, who is the creator of the drawings that inspire Big Blue Hug paintings, present to Sansone, who counseled Goldsmith when Ellis began attending GS years ago.

Sansone accepted gifts from Tim Hortons and Cinémas Guzzo, generous sponsors of the award along with Dynamic Funds.

A gracious Caregiver of Inspiration, Sansone thanked her audience with sincerity, explaining that the inclusion process would

not have been successful without the educators advocating for students in the schools. “I share this award with the educators and the entire Giant Steps staff. You can’t do it alone. It requires a team. This school is a jewel with lots of talented, passionate, caring individuals,” said Sansone.

Guests enjoyed treats courtesy of Tim Hortons, marking a wonderful collaboration between two dedicated institutions.

Special thanks to Dynamic Funds, Cinémas Guzzo, Tim Hortons, ‘The Big Blue Hug, and Giant Steps School.

If you have a Caregiver of Inspiration to nominate, email mcohen@inspirationsnews.com.

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"We are proud to support Inspirations Newspaper, which is fulfilling an important role in our community. Congratulations on your fifth anniversary!"

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Un service handicapé

MARIE-EVE VEILLEUX



Un soir d'hiver, en 2013, trois jours après une chute de neige ordinaire pour un hiver montréalais, le service d'autobus de la STM était toujours interdit aux personnes utilisant un fauteuil roulant. Les arrêts sur les principales artères que je croisais (Sherbrooke, St-Laurent, St-Urbain, Guy) étaient déneigés. Les trottoirs de ces grandes rues, et même des plus petites, étaient praticables. Alors, pourquoi cette interdiction? Pourquoi tant d'ingérence dans la vie des personnes handicapées?

Vers l'heure du lunch, la STM s'est réveillée et a levé cette interdiction. Bon, merci de nous redonner le droit de bouger! Toutefois, comme par magie, quelques heures plus tard, voilà que le service est encore une fois suspendu. Pourquoi? Il est tombé une fine neige en après-midi, puis le tout s'est transformé en pluie parfois verglaçante. Rien qui selon moi justifie cette nouvelle interdiction. Les trottoirs étaient toujours aussi praticables, les arrêts des grandes artères que j'ai croisées à mon retour du boulot étaient toujours aussi bien déneigés.

Ma soirée s'est terminée une heure plus tôt que prévu et, plutôt que d'attendre mon transport adapté, j'ai choisi de sortir, de me mêler à la foule, au vrai monde, et de prendre l'autobus. Mon trajet était simple. Évidemment, je n'aurais pas pris cette décision si j'avais habité dans un endroit moins achalandé, moins déneigé, moins piéton-friendly. Je partais de l'UQÀM (Sherbrooke et St-Laurent) et j'allais au métro Sherbrooke : des valeurs sûres.

Donc, j'attends à l'arrêt, l'autobus s'approche. Le chauffeur m'accueille d'un « le service est suspendu pour les personnes à mobilité réduite. » Je lui réponds « mais il n'y a même pas de neige! » Il m'a finalement laissé monter à bord. Au débarquement, toujours pas de trace de neige, tout se passe

sans anicroche, le danger extrême qui m'attendait selon la STM ne s'est pas produit. Eh ben.

Je me demande bien de quel droit la STM vient s'ingérer dans ma vie privée quand elle m'ordonne de ne pas utiliser son service même lorsque les arrêts que je souhaite utiliser ne présentent aucun problème lié à la neige. Je peux très bien comprendre que la STM veuille mettre des règles pour protéger son équipement et même ses usagers quand il y a un risque réel. Déployer une rampe sur une montagne de neige, ce n'est en effet pas super. Toutefois, interdire le service aux personnes en fauteuil roulant sur tout le territoire desservi par la STM même trois jours après une chute de neige, je trouve que c'est inacceptable et discriminatoire. Les arrêts d'autobus sont déneigés en priorité. S'ils ne sont pas déneigés adéquatement, qu'on s'adresse à la Ville pour que ce soit mieux fait, mais qu'on n'emprisonne pas les personnes handicapées chez elles!

La STM donne un service et sa responsabilité s'arrête lorsque ses usagers cessent de l'utiliser. À l'extérieur de l'autobus, les personnes handicapées sont responsables d'elles-mêmes. Nous sommes capables de décider par nous-mêmes de sortir ou non. Nous sommes capables d'user de notre gros bon sens pour faire notre trajet.

J'ai utilisé le transport en commun trois jours après ladite chute de neige, tout s'est bien passé. De grâce, cessez d'infantiliser les personnes handicapées!

Marie-Eve Veilleux est coordonnatrice des traductions pour l'Étude longitudinale canadienne sur le vieillissement. Elle fait également des études de deuxième cycle en bioéthique.



Merci à l'équipe d'Inspirations de contribuer à faire de la métropole un milieu de vie mieux adapté à l'ensemble des familles montréalaises.

Jean-François Lisée

Ministre des Relations internationales,
de la Francophonie et du Commerce extérieur
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CRDITED de Montréal

Partenaire à l'intégration et à la participation sociale

■ SYLVIE CARLE

Partenaire du milieu de l'éducation, le CRDITED de Montréal est un établissement du réseau de la santé et des services sociaux offrant des services spécialisés d'adaptation ou de réadaptation et d'intégration sociale à des personnes qui présentent un déficit intellectuel (DI) ou un trouble envahissant du développement (TED), ainsi que d'autres troubles associés.

Le CRDITED de Montréal offre également des services d'assistance éducative spécialisée aux familles, ainsi que des services de soutien spécialisé aux partenaires de la communauté, dont les CSSS, les commissions scolaires, les CPE ou les entreprises offrant des milieux de stages en emploi individuels ou de groupe (plateaux de travail).

Issu de la fusion volontaire de trois centres de réadaptation montréalais spécialisés en

DI et TED, le CRDI Gabrielle-Major, le Centre de réadaptation Lisette-Dupras et les Services de réadaptation L'Intégrale, l'établissement CRDITED de Montréal a été créé le 9 juin 2011.

Cette fusion visait d'abord l'optimisation de l'accessibilité et le développement d'une offre de services spécialisés de qualité, mieux adaptée aux besoins particuliers actuels et futurs de la clientèle DI-TED montréalaise, et à favoriser la création de partenariats fructueux, l'avancement de la recherche et l'adoption de pratiques de pointe.

Avec près de 4500 usagers en service, de 1200 employés et de 2000 places en ressources résidentielles (RI/RTF), le CRDITED de Montréal exerce ses activités sur 75 % du territoire de l'île de Montréal en partenariat avec huit des douze CSSS montréalais et des établissements du réseau de la santé et des services sociaux et du milieu de l'éducation, dont trois commissions sco-

lares francophones et une anglophone, ainsi que le milieu associatif.

La mission du CRDITED de Montréal s'actualise en complémentarité avec ces différents partenaires afin de favoriser une réponse adaptée aux besoins des personnes DI et TED, ainsi que de leur famille.

Ainsi, en réponse aux besoins des jeunes requérant des services spécialisés d'adaptation et de réadaptation au cours des différentes périodes de transition de leur scolarisation, des travaux ont été amorcés en octobre 2011 entre le CRDITED de Montréal et le Commission scolaire English-Montréal.

Fondé sur les principes de l'entente de complémentarité des services entre les réseaux MSSS et MELS, ce partenariat vise la mise en place d'une offre de service complémentaire et concertée, lorsque requis, afin d'éviter les dédoublements de fonctions et de services, tout en respectant les missions

respectives des instances requises et les besoins des jeunes. Cette entente s'actualise notamment, dans le cadre d'une démarche de Transition de l'école à la vie active (TEVA), où une planification concertée est élaborée en fonction du «projet de vie» des élèves.

Enfin, le CRDITED de Montréal reconnaît que la participation sociale des personnes présentant une DI ou un TED ne peut se concrétiser qu'avec de solides collaborations entre tous les milieux concernés et l'implication d'organisations en mesure de répondre aux besoins ponctuels qui se présentent au cours des différentes étapes de la vie de ces personnes. L'école, le CSSS et le CRDITED sont ainsi appelés à jouer un rôle à chacune de ces étapes. Ce partenariat est garant du succès de l'intégration de ces personnes.

Sylvie Carle est une agente d'information, CRDITED de Montréal.

It is our pleasure to support the entire team at Inspirations whose noble efforts have made a real impact within the special needs community! Happy 5th Anniversary!



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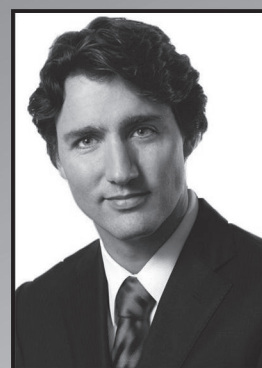
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Inspirational Book Review

Raising Cubby by John Elder Robison (Doubleday Canada, \$32.95)

STUART NULMAN

Fathers and sons have a tendency to share a lot with each other as that relationship develops over the years. But what happens when the father is diagnosed with Asperger's well into adulthood, and suspects that his son is also carrying that gene?

For author and lecturer John Elder Robison, he could have approached it with a great deal of dread; however, he decided to approach his relationship with his son – whom he named “Cubby” – with a great deal of affection, understanding and especially humour. This is quite prevalent in his recently-released memoir “Raising Cubby”.

Asperger's is a type of neurological syndrome in which the person in question develops special interests with certain things and are doggedly determined to learn everything they could about them. In John's case, that certain subject was cars, in which he built a successful car customizing business

as a result. And in Cubby's case, his chief interest was chemistry, in particular how to use his chemical knowledge to create military-grade explosives.

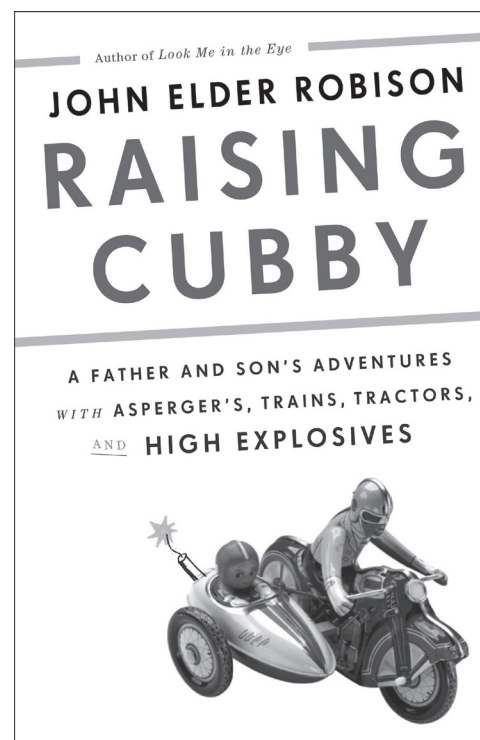
It's Cubby's fascination with high grade explosives that forms the crux of this book. As a teenager, Cubby was arrested and charged on three counts of possessing explosives with the intent of harming other people or property, which could have landed him in prison for up to 60 years. The case and subsequent trial, which takes up the last third of the book, is a clear example of a state prosecutor's hunger for a conviction that would get him plenty of headlines and his lack of understanding of a teenager with a special need whose only crime was his rather obsessive interest with a volatile form of chemistry.

The other aspect of the book that makes it so unconventionally enjoyable is John's delightfully comic narrative that echoes his unconventional relationship with Cubby. His wild imagination on how he explains to

Cubby certain things in life (including the story of how Santa – during his time as a whaler in the Northern Ocean – got his reindeer, which is reprinted in the book in its entirety) or how he was “born” (in which John explains that he was “purchased” at the Kid Store) shows how unique this father-son relationship is.

“Raising Cubby” is an out of the ordinary, eye opening memoir of a father and son who are bonded by Asperger's, and how this bond gives them a peculiar approach to what a typical father and son relationship should be like. As John concludes in the book:







“Right now, all over the world, several million young people are coming of age with Asperger's or some other form of autism. Many of them are wondering if they will be able to find love, friendship, and a good quality of life. Cubby's life shows that such a thing remains possible even today. I did it years ago, and he's doing it now. I can't believe how far he's come.”



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Les enfants alphas

■ CATHERINE KORAH, M.ED., C.O.

Quel argument saurait expliquer pourquoi certains enfants s'efforcent à avoir le dernier mot? Qu'ils luttent pour dominer afin de prendre charge de la situation? Selon le Docteur Gordon Neufeld, psychologue, ces enfants présentent des instincts « alphas » bloqués.

Tout d'abord, il est primordial de saisir que ces instincts détiennent une fonction vitale dans le contexte de l'attachement. Dans l'optique de permettre une proximité et une connexion, l'attachement doit être structuré de façon hiérarchique plutôt qu'égalitaire. Ainsi, celui qui éprouve un besoin doit consentir d'être pris en charge et d'être « dépendant ». L'autre personne qui perçoit le signal de besoin, doit assumer la position « alpha » et prendre soin de celui qui recherche la sollicitude.

Lorsque qu'un enfant refuse d'assumer la position de dépendance et demeure « bloqué » par son instinct alpha, celui-ci détient, selon le Docteur Neufeld, un « complexe alpha ». Dans cet instance, l'enfant devient absorbé par la quête de dominance.

Le jeune devient autoritaire, peu réceptif aux consignes d'adulte et les conséquences et punitions sont perçues comme étant des provocations significatives.

Selon le Docteur Neufeld, le complexe alpha peut survenir en deux contextes distincts nommé « alpha par défaut » et « alpha défensif » ou en combinaison de ces deux derniers. Dans la première situation, l'enfant bloque suite à l'absence de modèle alpha. Il est possible que le style parental soit trop faible ou inadéquat, sur demande, égalitaire ou permissif, qu'il comporte une attitude passive. Un enfant dans le contexte « alpha défensif », fuit la position de dépendance en raison de la vulnérabilité ressentie. Il serait probable que l'enfant soit face à une séparation accablante ou qu'il vive un épisode troublant, qu'il ne se sente pas pris en charge, qu'il soit maltraité ou exploité, ou qu'il soit extrêmement vulnérable ou hypersensible.

Afin d'apprivoiser un jeune qui détient un complexe alpha, il faut faire en sorte que l'enfant se sente à l'aise avec vous. En initiant la relation et en prenant l'enfant en charge, ceci faciliterait l'engagement du jeune. Subséquemment, Il est essentiel

de conserver votre position alpha auprès de l'enfant en lui suggérant que vous êtes apte et prêt à vous occuper de lui. Ainsi, il ne faudrait pas rendre l'état de dépendance déplaisant et décourageant pour l'enfant. Finalement, vous devez tenter d'attendrir le cœur de l'enfant alpha en minimisant les expériences blessantes et en le protégeant.

En somme, il serait facile d'étiqueter les enfants alphas comme ayant des troubles du comportement et ainsi d'accorder des conséquences pour leurs actions. Toutefois, selon le Docteur Neufeld, notre évalu-

ation de ces jeunes se limiterait au niveau symptomatique et de ce fait, nos solutions ne procureraient que des effets éphémères. L'instinct alpha n'est pas dysfonctionnel en soi et il comprend une raison d'être naturelle et indispensable. Il serait préférable de se concentrer sur la nature du blocage de l'enfant et sur les diverses solutions qui lui permettraient de s'épanouir.

Catherine Korah est une Spécialiste en gestion du comportement, Commission scolaire English-Montréal.



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Information overload!

Where do I even start finding resources for my child?

"Getting information off the Internet is like taking a drink from a fire hydrant." Mitchell Kapor



The other day I wanted to research ways to teach the alphabet to my preschool aged son. I started with Google and got 476,000 results. I scrolled through the first two pages or so and tried to bookmark some of them based on the initial descriptions but I got overwhelmed. I stopped.

Isn't this similar to what happens when we search for special needs resources? We have so much information at hand, yet we often end up with so little. Sometimes we read and read but have no idea how to incorporate the information to our needs and lifestyle. Other times we think it is what we need and invest so much time into it only to realize the results were minimal. There

are times when our research pays off but usually those times are a result of hours spent plowing through articles and organizing them by relevance. As vested partners in the lives of a special needs child, there is limited time to engage in this kind of thorough research.

How do we get the best resources for our special needs children without spending ridiculous amounts of time to find the relevant information?

This is where EDUCATE Montreal comes into play. EDUCATE Montreal connects parents to the best available resources, optimizes educational planning and effectively transfers educational

strategies to the home. EDUCATE Montreal helps you manage the information so you can make informed, effective choices for your child.

Gamoon Lau is a special education teacher. She has taught from preschool through high school students and in inclusive and enclosed classrooms which has allowed her to have a global view of the educational development of a child. For more information regarding how EDUCATE Montreal can help you visit www.educatemontréal.com or contact Gamoon at 514-294-8453.



EDUCATE montreal



Certified pet therapist Alain Tourigny shows a Galileo student how to groom a rabbit. (Photo credit, Christine Tremblay)

■ ANNALENA HUBER AND WENDY SINGER

When thinking of pets, one immediately pictures a friend, a loyal, trusting companion who is there for you no matter what. Who would have thought that our favorite creatures could be therapists of sorts! Welcome to the pet therapy program at Galileo Adult Centre in Montreal North.

Last year, Galileo began collaborating with the CRDITED de Montréal (Centre de Réadaptation en déficience intellectuelle et en troubles envahissants du développement) and the EMSB (English Montreal School Board) to give 17 students ranging in age from 25 to 66 with varying intellectual disabilities the opportunity to explore, learn and have fun.

These students come to Galileo several

times a week and participate in activities, from cooking, indoor and outdoor recreation, gardening, art classes, and pet therapy, that are craftily designed and intertwined to be educational, artistic and therapeutic. This collaboration has been successful due to an energetic team comprised of teacher and recreation therapist Louise Panet-Raymond, certified pet therapist (and green thumb) Alain Tourigny, educator Christine Tremblay, and administrative staff.

Tourigny explains that everyone can benefit from pet therapy, from Alzheimer's patients to people with intense phobias. An average session lasts up to 90 minutes, is often spontaneous, and varies based on the needs and moods of the students.

"Having contact with the animals is the

Little helpers work wonders: Galileo Adult Centre, EMSB and CRDITED bring pet therapy to students with special needs

most important thing," says Panet-Raymond. "It is non-threatening and lets students tap into their feelings. It allows for the expression of emotions that are difficult to express."

The effects of pet therapy have been magical. Being entrusted with a living creature, often for the first time, makes these students feel relaxed, elicits pride, responsibility and a sense of self-worth, whether they are taking Australian Shepherd Pepper for a walk, cleaning the rabbit cage, feeding the turtles or simply watching the birds. It has also improved the communication and socialization skills of the group. Students in Galileo's literacy, academic and Social Integration Services Program (SIS) have also interacted and benefited from the CRDITED Pet Therapy program.

"Learning how to socialize around animals helps the students learn how to be around other people," shares Tourigny. "This group has also

integrated with the Galileo school community. It is often the mainstream students first time meeting people with intellectual differences, so we are sensitizing everyone."

Galileo Principal Martina Schiavone is delighted to include this class with the other 800 students that attend Galileo. The Adult Education and Vocational Services department, in collaboration with Galileo Adult Centre and Rosemount Technology Centre, recently renovated the gymnasium to make it fully accessible. "The physical well-being of all students is at the forefront of the EMSB objectives. Special needs students are now participating in Zumba classes and team sport activities. They bring such energy to the school," says Schiavone.

For information contact louisepanet-raymond@live.ca. For information about pet therapy visit www.zootherapiequebec.ca.

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Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: Putting the pieces of the puzzle together

■ LORI RUBIN

Merilee was a timid Grade 4 student who recently transferred to a new school after she and her mother moved out of their family home into an apartment in a new neighbourhood. Prior to the move, they had spent three weeks in a shelter for battered women.

Although Merilee's father was never physically aggressive with her, he was psychologically abusive towards her mother (yell-

ing, name-calling, threats), and at times, after consuming large amounts of alcohol, would become violent. Merilee was often found cowering in her closet with her hands covering her ears to block out her father's abusive shouts and the "thud" of her mother being shoved against the wall, followed by the slam of the door when he stormed out of the house.

Merilee awoke one night to the worst fight yet. Her mother was slumped against the wall in a semi-conscious state, bleeding. In the hospital emergency room, Merilee clung to her mother and wouldn't leave her side. She slept with her on the gurney, nauseous

from the smell of antiseptic.

Now, six months later, Merilee still startles when she hears loud, unexpected noises. She cowers when she hears yelling (especially if it's a man's voice) and cannot tolerate the smell of antiseptic cleaners. The sight of blood makes her dizzy. She frequently has nightmares and is described as "emotionally fragile" at school. These visual, olfactory and auditory cues are powerful reminders of the numerous times she witnessed the victimization of her mother, evoking fear and feelings of powerlessness as if she was experiencing these events all over again. It is a completely paralyzing force that prevents her from moving forward with her life.

After consulting with the school psychologist and the CLSC social worker, Merilee was eventually seen in the child psychiatry department of the Montreal Children's Hospital and diagnosed with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). First used to explain the night terrors and psychological instability of soldiers who had experienced combat, PTSD is a chronic, debilitating condition that develops after an initial traumatic event. Often, "sensory triggers" (smells, sounds, etc.) that remind the victim of that event, can result in nightmares, flashbacks, and invasive thoughts, interfering with the sufferer's ability to function in school, at work or in social situations. In Merilee's

case, she relived the witnessing of her father's abuse of her mother whenever she smelled antiseptic cleaners, saw blood, or heard a man yell.

Following diagnosis, there are many effective treatment options available. These can take the form of anti-anxiety medications, desensitization therapies, trauma-focused cognitive behavioural therapy; often in combination with each other. Since most people with PTSD desperately want to end the cycle of re-living the traumatic event, they are highly motivated to seek help.

Merilee responded well to treatment. Her mother worked closely with school and hospital personnel to help her daughter overcome the disorder. They both sleep through the night and are well on their way to regaining the "lost years".

For information about PTSD, contact Ami-Québec (Montreal) 514-486-1448, amiquebec.org; National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) nasponline.org/resources; or the Canadian Mental Health Association, cmha.bc.ca/get-informed/mental-health.

Lori Rubin is a Behaviour Management Specialist at the English Montreal School Board.



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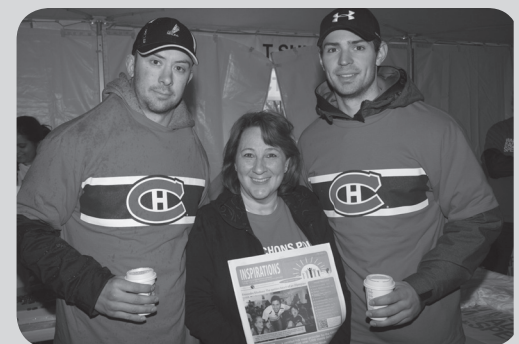
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Team Canadiens – Former Montreal Canadiens goaltending coach Pierre Groulx raised \$9,526 for the 2013 Montreal Walk now for Autism Speaks Canada. Representatives from the Habs and the Montreal Canadiens Children's Foundation were on hand to walk for autism and meet and greet the crowd. Fundraising continues until December 31, 2013 at www.autismspeaks.ca. In the photo: Josh Georges and Carey Price, with Inspiration's Coordinator of Educational Outreach Linda Mahler.



Productivity prevails at Donald Berman UP House: Focus on mental wellness

■ ELAINE COHEN

Visitors entering Donald Berman UP (Urban Padres) House, at 6909 Decarie Boulevard, are greeted by friendly faces amid cheerful surroundings. Touring the premises, one detects the absence of personnel titles on door or wall plaques, whether it's the library, multi-media centre, commercial kitchen or administration.

"We have a board of directors but members conduct daily operations," says Ruth McLellan, Director, Donald Berman UP House, since inception in 2010. McLellan and three facilitators don't occupy private offices. "We work as colleagues side by side with the members designing websites, organizing fundraisers, gardening, preparing lunch or answering the phone."

Modeled on the nonprofit ICCD (International Center for Clubhouse Development) concept, the Montreal facility is one of 350 worldwide. The first clubhouse was established in 1948 in New York City. The clubhouse credo is recovery from serious mental illness must involve the whole person in a supportive community.

Adults of all ages possessing diverse academic, professional, linguistic and business acumen pool resources and assist each other in achieving goals such as returning to work, school or independent living. All of these individuals are living with the challenges of mental illness.

"Personal choice, mutual respect, self-determination and empathy form the heart of programs. Donald Berman UP House is the only clubhouse in Quebec and the first bilingual one in the world," McLellan explains, adding UP House does not yet receive government funding but supports itself through fundraisers and contributions from foundations and private donors. Some 30 to 40 members choose to attend the clubhouse each day.

"One in five people are diagnosed with mental illness but four out of five are touched by it," McLellan says. "We have a liaison with organizations in the city and serve as advocates for members seeking guidance with issues. On an international

level, we attend a bi-annual conference and this fall it's in St. Louis (Missouri)."

Thea Apostolopoulos, an active member of Donald Berman UP House, looks forward to attending the conference. She participates in fundraisers such as the annual gala, bake and book sale. "Donald Berman UP House helped me restore self-confidence and stay connected," Apostolopoulos relates.

Simon Pauzé lists Radio UP, the in-house Internet radio station (www.radio-up.org) as a pet project. Like Apostolopoulos, he enjoyed working on the successful May gala "Moments to Remember" at Outremont Theatre, which featured vocal stars from the 1960s. Both Pauzé and Apostolopoulos are elected member representatives on the Board of Directors.

"Here everyone has a purpose in life," Pauzé says, recalling how UP House helped motivate his recovery after a severe setback.

"At UP House, you find members persevere and unite as a team," observes Marty Zidulka. "They get on with life."

Members volunteer to do work tasks to help the clubhouse function. Members and staff prepare lunch together. UP House is not a clinical treatment centre. Membership is lifelong and participation is flexible.

For information, phone (514) 764-5599 or email info@uphouse.org or visit www.uphouse.org.



Donald Berman UP House club members pitch in to prepare nutritious, delicious lunches. (Photo courtesy of Donald Berman UP House).

John Grant student recognized



Congratulations to John Grant High School graduate Zoe Chalkousi on receiving the Governor General's Award for first place academic achievement, which is awarded to students graduating with the highest average from a high school, and the Ralph Harris award for academic achievement. This 19-year-old with cerebral palsy, which causes her fine motor difficulties, participated in JGH's Work Orientation Program. Determined and persistent, Chalkousi has not let anything, including serious surgeries, get in the way of her academic achievement. She is currently attending the Endeavour Program at Place Cartier of the Lester B. Pearson School Board.



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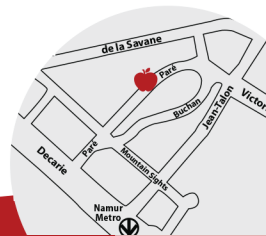
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Lester B. Pearson School Board catches the "Brain" wave

■ SUE-ANNE ROSS

“Brain research has been a springboard for mind-blowing advances in teaching practices.” (Judy Willis, Ignite Student Learning). Sophisticated scanning techniques and brain mapping has uncovered a wealth of information about the brain. Educators are learning to translate neuroimaging data into classroom strategies and students are learning to understand how their brain works. The potential is unlimited!

As Consultants for Special Needs at LBPSB, we have been exploring this topic for the past few years. With the help of an educational grant, Lester B. Pearson School Board is “catching the brain wave”. The goal of this initiative is to facilitate differentiation in our classrooms within the framework of brain-based teaching and learning. The project is four-fold: provide professional development on brain-based teaching; change teaching practice to reflect what we now know

about the brain and how students learn; provide strategies to educators and students based on the latest research on brain plasticity; and begin a paradigm shift.

In the last year we have had sessions with Dr. Reggie Melrose, Barbara Arrowsmith, Dr. Judy Willis and Dr. Tim Kennedy who are all experts in the area of brain research and education. We have purchased a library of books related to brain-based learning; created kits that schools can borrow to help jumpstart their journey into the brain; put together a menu of workshops that we offer school staffs; provide monthly “Catch the Brain Wave” newsflashes to all schools; and donate exercise equipment to schools that begin their own brain-based initiative.

Various projects are already taking place. Selected students at Mount Pleasant Elementary School in Hudson go to “Powercise” class every morning, and have the exercise circuit available to them throughout the school day. According to Principal Stephanie Herauld the Powercise Program has made a difference. “Overall, the number of discipline issues seems to have been reduced and are not as recurrent,” says Herauld. “Participating students begin their day feeling grounded, focused and looking forward to coming to school.”

Riverview Elementary School in Verdun has incorporated a skipping class in the morning for students who need it. “Aside from the smiles and enjoyment we see these

children exhibit while they are with us, there is rarely a behavior problem and their respect for the rules and following directions has improved dramatically,” shares Resource Teacher Nancy Roy.

So jump on board, begin the journey, and “catch the brain wave.”

Sue-Anne Ross is a Consultant for Special Needs at the Lester B. Pearson School Board. For information contact Sue-Anne at sross@lbpsb.qc.ca and follow them at #catchtbw on Twitter.



A student at Mount Pleasant Elementary School exercises to re-energize for a brain gain.

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EMSB speech-language pathologists: Tech-savvy with iPads

■ PAMELA GOLDSMITH, KAORI OHASHI, SUSAN WAITE

Electronic devices such as iPads are changing how EMSB speech-language pathologists (SLPs) are working. Students with communication challenges are benefitting from this highly effective and modern tool.

Mobile devices offer numerous benefits. For instance, iPads incorporate tactile, auditory, and visual information simultaneously. A touchscreen provides easier manipulation for students who struggle with fine-motor skills. Countless educational apps target various speech and language goals such as articulation, pre-reading and literacy skills, vocabulary development, receptive and expressive language, and narrative skills. In addition, many interactive books are readily available.

iPads increase students' motivation to learn as they provide instant feedback and tasks are presented in the form of games. Stu-

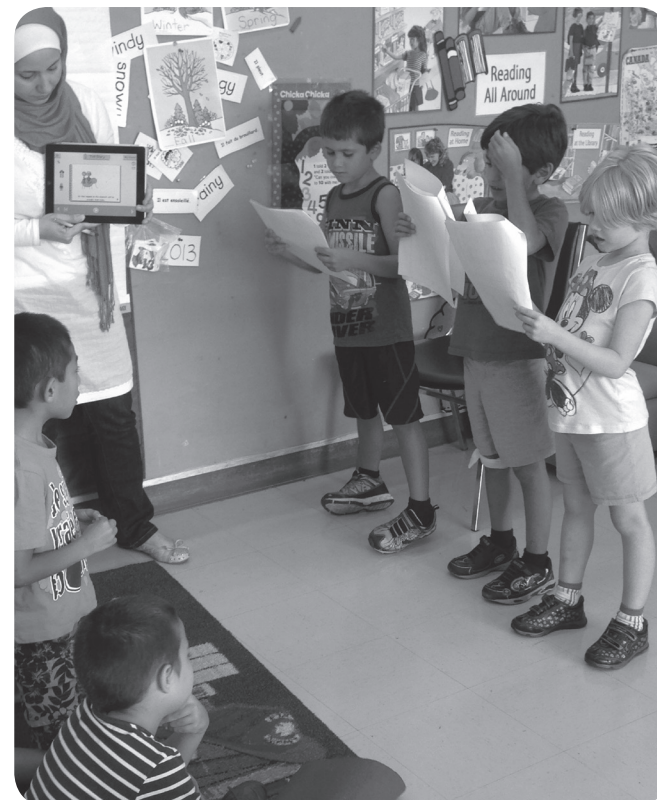
dents are likely to achieve their goals faster as they are doing essential repeated practice while performing an engaging activity. iPads may promote learning in a natural and meaningful context, especially if they are used as a tool to carry out every day tasks, such as listening to instructions and expressing knowledge and ideas with pictures.

SLPs used iPads to work on language and literacy skills at the EMSB summer language camp, which took place the first two weeks of August 2013 at Honore-Mercier Elementary School. For example, to work on their story-telling skills, the students watched wordless videos to learn how to identify the parts of a story. Eventually, they generated their own stories using an interactive story-making app. This app allowed the children to select and paste pictures to create story scenes, type words and record their own voices to go with the scenes that they had created. The use of this app helped the children develop their self-awareness and allowed the SLPs to monitor progress.

Many parents and educators think that giving iPads to students and having them play

on educational game apps will magically improve their language and literacy skills. Unfortunately, this is not the case. It is important to keep in mind that iPad apps do not replace speech and language intervention programs designed by qualified SLPs. Although students enjoy playing on the iPad, this alone cannot help them achieve their language goals. SLPs play an essential role in selecting suitable apps for therapy, targeting appropriate goals, monitoring progress, making changes to the intervention when needed, and assisting students in reaching their potential.

Pamela Goldsmith, Kaori Ohashi, and Susan Waite are speech-language pathologists at the English Montreal School Board.



The children at the EMSB Summer Language Camp present the story they have created using a story-making iPad app.



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“This is a very exciting time for both EMSB Base Daycare and Proset Autism Special Needs Sport Program,” says Philippe Manning, Founder, President and Head Therapist of Proset Autism. “The extra-curricular time is well spent. The students are achiev-

ing the core goals, which are motor development, joint attention, participation, socialization, and motivation.” Proset will begin a program at the Mackay Rehabilitation Centre in January 2014. For information visit www.prosetautism.ca.



Occupational therapists in EMSB schools

■ CLAUDIA DE LUCA

The Occupational Therapy Service is one of the most recent additions to the Student Services Department at the EMSB. Still in its infancy, this service was launched only four years ago. In general, occupational therapists are relatively new to the education team; however with the increasing enrolment of students with special needs, it is becoming more apparent that the need for occupational therapy services is a fundamental and essential support to the academic and non-academic success of these students.

There are currently four occupational therapists that make up three full-time equivalent positions within the EMSB. The occupational therapists provide direct and indirect services to all elementary schools within the EMSB territory as well as to the special edu-

cation schools i.e. LINKS, John Grant and St. Raphael. By contrast, only indirect consultation is provided at the secondary levels. Given that there are presently only four OTs, the service primarily offers consultative services and does not offer any therapy. The occupational therapists collaborate with teachers, parents and other school staff in identifying personal and environmental factors that affect the student's ability to carry out school-related tasks; ultimately facilitating the student's participation in the least restrictive environment.

Occupational therapists are known to typically work with children with developmental delays, autism, musculoskeletal conditions, etc. However, there is another group of students that are often misunderstood. In many classrooms, there are at least one or two students who teachers find to be a real puzzle. These are students that have normal intelligence, but have difficulty carrying out everyday tasks such as, handwriting, using

scissors, performing gym activities and self-care tasks. They are an under recognized group of students who have a condition known as Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD).

DCD is classified as "a motor impairment that affects a child's ability to perform the skilled movements necessary for daily living, including the performance of academic and self-care tasks". DCD is estimated to affect five to six percent of school age children. It is known to affect boys more than girls. Many of these children often remain undiagnosed and parents often spend years trying to understand the symptoms their child displays. Children with DCD are often described by their parents and teachers as being "clumsy" and have a history of difficulties with motor skills.

Occupational therapists understand the impact that motor coordination difficulties can

have on academic success, and in collaboration with teachers and parents, can assist in identifying children with DCD and evaluating the extent that motor difficulties impact day to day functioning. Occupational therapists, along with the education team can provide accommodations within the school setting to help improve a student's performance and foster success at school. Children with DCD will not outgrow their motor difficulties, however with the knowledge and awareness of their caregivers these children can experience more success earlier in their lives thus reducing the emotional, social and physical consequences that are often associated with the disorder.

Claudia De Luca is an occupational therapist at the English Montreal School Board.

For more information on Developmental Coordination Disorder please visit www.canchild.ca

Galileo Adult Centre bronze medal winner at the Abilympics

■ MARTINA SCHIAVONE AND MARIO MARRAZZA

The English Montreal School Board is proud of its first Abilympics bronze winner Nancy Leopardi for Outdoor Photography. Nancy, a Galileo Adult Centre student, took part in photographing the two-day Skills Canada's National Competition in Vancouver, British Columbia that took place on June 4 to 8, 2013. Accompanying Nancy to the Skills Canada Competition were her coach Lu Termini, Principal Martina Schiavone and the EMSB's Abilympics coordinator Mario Marrazza.

This was the first time the Abilympics Canada Association hosted its national skills competition in conjunction with Skills Canada's National Competition in Vancouver. Abilympics Canada strives to celebrate and enhance employability skills of persons with disabilities through inclusive skills competitions that foster independence, international exchange, friendship, and public awareness. The EMSB is the Quebec partner for Abilympics Canada Association, headquartered in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Throughout the four-day competition Nancy's project was to photograph the Skills

Canada National Competitions. Her pictures had to tell a story about 40 skilled traders' talents competing in this national, Olympic-style and multi-trade technology event. Each of her pictures had to showcase students from each province and territory competing in six skilled trade and technology categories: transportation, construction, manufacturing, information and technology. Being a true competitor herself, Nancy validated the excitement and energy of over 500 competitors with her pictures. This experience was challenging and exciting for her.

On June 9, 2013 the closing ceremony was held in Vancouver at the Pacific National Exhibition. Over 200 medals were awarded to the top champions in six skilled trade and technology categories. Nancy, along with Canada's best and brightest skilled trade and technology students, received official recognition for their outstanding performance by the official spokesperson Mike Holmes.

Nancy was so proud to participate, and is grateful to the entire EMSB team that made this experience possible. "When I was called up to the podium a rush of emotions caused shivers up my spine. From the bottom of my heart, thank you to all of you who had faith in me. It was a wonderful experience which I will never forget," shares Nancy.

For the complete results and more information, visit the Skills Canada website at www.skillscanada.com, or www.abilympicscanada.ca.

Martina Schiavone is the Principal of Galileo Adult Centre. Mario Marrazza is the EMSB's Abilympics coordinator.



Nancy Leopardi proudly wearing her bronze medal. (Photo credit, Lu Termini).



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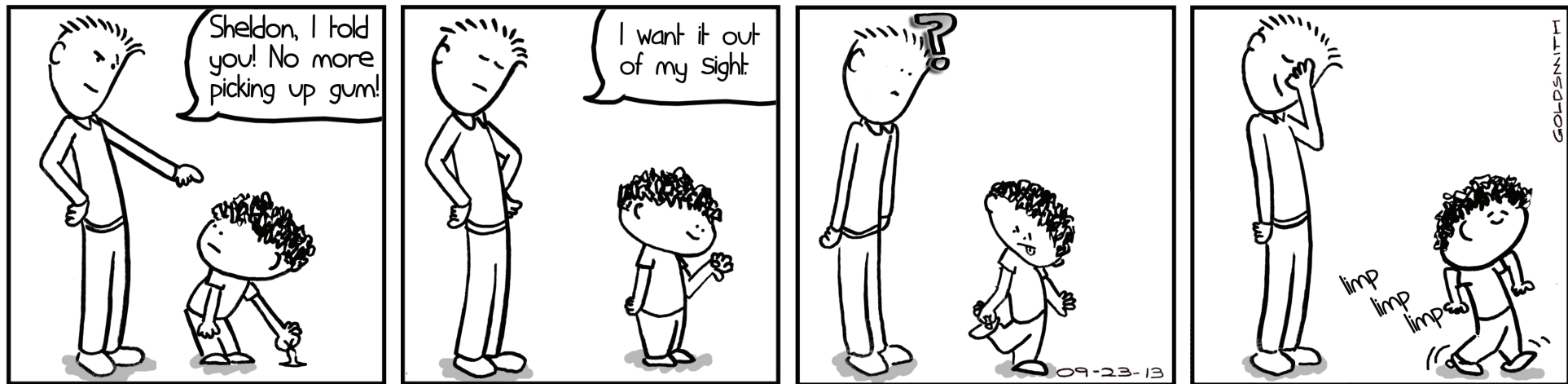


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Planet Sheldon is loosely based on Jason's experiences being a single dad and raising his autistic son Ellis. Do you have a funny story about your child with autism? Would you like to see your story in our cartoon strip? If so, tell us your funny, crazy or silly story about your child and we will incorporate your anecdote into Planet Sheldon! Contact Jason Goldsmith: jgoldsmith@thebigbluehug.com

Apps for College and University students with learning disabilities

■ ANDREA PRUPAS

For students with learning disabilities (LD) who are attending CEGEP and university, there are many apps that can offer support in areas such as reading, writing, studying, note-taking and research. Here are a few effective apps in the area of note-taking to have a great (and well-organized) school year.

Evernote – This app is a note-taking and organizational system like no other. The app organizes notes into a virtual notebook according to the chosen course or subject, and then syncs the notes across devices-giving the student the ability to access them anywhere. Students can create notes on their tablet, switch to a computer for additional editing, and then re-read it on the bus on their smartphone. Other amazing features for students with LD: the ability to record audio notes instead of writing, drop photos and other content from the web into notes, and the ability to share notes and collaborate (available in premium version only). Cost: FREE

PaperPort Notes – One of the unique elements of this app is that it allows students to dictate notes verbally using built-in speech recognition (Dragon voice recognition). The app is surprisingly accurate, making this a useful feature for students who need to take notes from a text but have difficulty writing; simply dictate important points instead.

Cost: FREE

AudioNote – This app synchronizes audio with a student's note taking. On playback of the notes, the student can hear the captured audio at that specific point in time along with their own notes. This reduces the necessity to take extensive notes and allows students to have an extensive guide for review. Another feature that is helpful for students with LD is the ability to write notes and record the lecture on top of a PowerPoint presentation or PDF. This reduces the writing load and allows the student to focus on active listening strategies during the lecture. Cost: \$4.99

A few recommendations for use of these apps:

Students should be taught directly how to use these apps in the context of the specific course and should develop a comfort level with the app prior to using them in class. Using active note taking strategies (designed specifically for students with learning disabilities) in conjunction with these apps will increase note-taking success.

To see reviews of three more apps (*EverWebClipper*, *Skitch*, and *GoodReader*) please see the full edition of this article at www.inspirationsnews.com/onlineextra.

Andrea Prupas is the co-founder of *inov8 Educational Consulting*. *inov8 Educa-*

tional Consulting provides individualized consultations and presentations for families and schools on highly effective assistive technology tools. New this year: inov8 will

be offering webinars on active note-taking strategies and apps for college and university students. Please visit www.inov8-ed.com for more details.

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Inspirations Notebook

Wendy Singer



Agence Ometz welcomed over 1,000 guests to Place des Arts for their annual fundraising gala **A Chance to Shine**. Quebec celebrity **Jasmin Roy** was honoured for his passion in leading the fight against bullying and violence in schools. Since 2012, **La Fondation Jasmin Roy** has collaborated with Ometz, writer **Camil Sanfacion**, and the CSQ (Centrale des syndicats du Québec) to develop a bilingual toolkit to help schools across Quebec deal with bullying and violence.

Thanks to patron **Herbert Black** and event Chair **Arlène Abitan**, over \$340,000 was raised. Ometz serves hundreds of Montreal children and their families with programs including speech and occupational therapy, tutoring, mentoring and play therapy, and more.

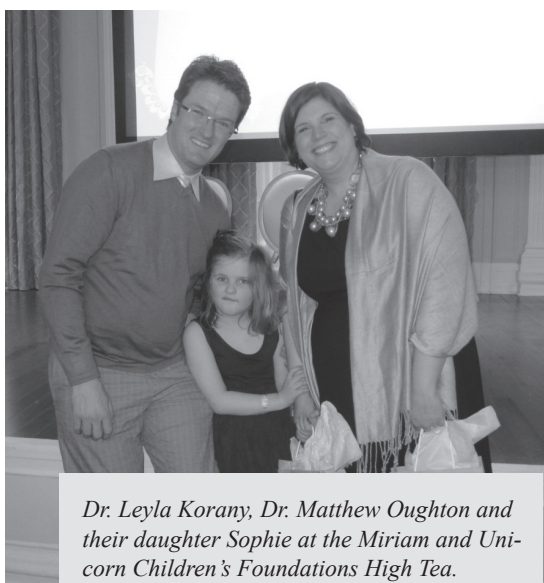
Agence Ometz is celebrating its 150th anniversary! To mark this milestone, Ometz has launched the website www.ometz150.ca which showcases the evolution of delivering services to the Montreal community through a timeline and a virtual tour. Share your stories of how Ometz has impacted your life on this new site.

The **Light a Dream** program is a vital component of the **Lester B. Pearson School Board's** co-op education program that attempts to ease the transition from school to the world of work, build self-confidence and self-esteem, and increase autonomy, amongst other goals. Their venue is a candle store located in Dorval where students come on a part-time basis to gain work experience. Since we last wrote about Light a Dream, they have expanded their product line to include soaps, bees wax chapstick and other hand-made items. Light a Dream is gearing up for their **Casino & Auction Night Fundraiser** on November 15, 2013. To learn more about the event check out page 19 of this edition. Staff and students will be at the tables to greet you, so be sure to stop by and say hello!

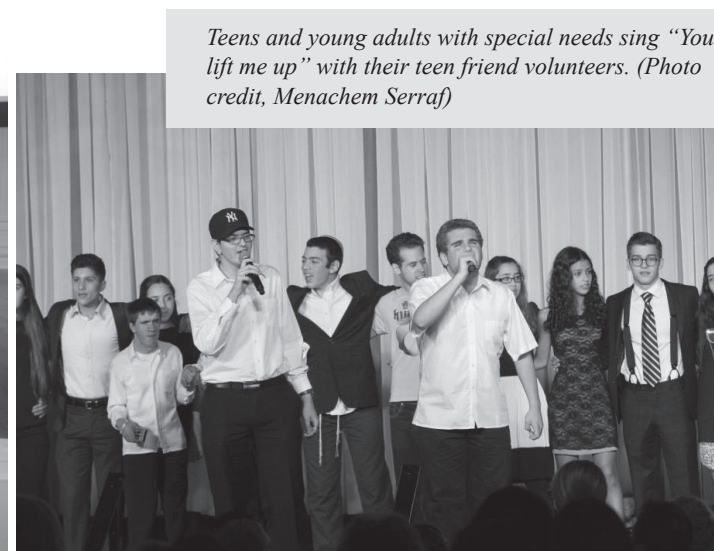
Under the impeccable coordination of **Nancy Smith**, The **Miriam Foundation** held two successful fundraising events. In collaboration with the **Unicorn Children's Foundation**, the **Alice in Wonderland High Tea** at the Ritz Carleton, chaired by **Stephanie Hoolahan** and **Rhoda Vineberg** whisked guests into another realm for a delightful afternoon tea that included scones and cream and **DAVIDsTEA**, music by the **Face Chamber Orchestra** and a touching speech delivered by father of **ABILI-T** student **Sophie**, **Dr. Matthew Oughton**. Funds raised will create new e-learning opportunities that will provide parents easy access to knowledge through the Parent and

the Support Worker Training Series.

The 3rd Annual Miriam Foundation Art Auction at The Sofitel celebrated 40 years of presidency with a tribute to the Foundation's past (and current) presidents. Each was honoured for their accomplishments and their role in the growth of the Foundation. Auctioneer **Rock Fournier** masterfully auctioned off works by renowned artists, raising \$100,000 to help people with autism and developmental disabilities live a full life and develop to their potential. Congratulations to event Chairs **Carol Tryansky**, **Judy Wolfe**, **Franki Yanofsky** and **Jeannette Hoffman-Zaffir**.



Dr. Leyla Korany, Dr. Matthew Oughton and their daughter Sophie at the Miriam and Unicorn Children's Foundations High Tea.



Teens and young adults with special needs sing "You lift me up" with their teen friend volunteers. (Photo credit, Menachem Serraf)

'Speed dating' with AMDI. (Avec l'autorisation de Parrainage Civique de Montréal)



Tory Lackman sings "Hey Jude" to a captivated audience at Friendship's Got Talent. (Photo credit, Menachem Serraf)



Alicia Salama, Howard Berger, Arlene Abitan, Gail Small, Jasmin Roy, Howard Lohner at Ometz's A Chance to Shine. (Photo credit, Vadim Daniel Photography)



The Miriam and Unicorn Children's Foundation High Tea committee (Photo credit, Julian Haber)

An epic premier of the 2014 Bentley Flying Spur by **Bentley Montreal/Decarie Motors**, took place at L'Arsenal. The venue was transformed into The Temple of the Flying Spur for the unveiling of the fastest, most powerful four-door Bentley ever built. As with the previous two events, CTV's **Paul Karwatsky** spoke on behalf of the Miriam Foundation. **Joel Segal**, **Cheryl Blas** from Bentley Montreal and **Warren Greenstone**, Executive Director of the Miriam Foundation announced winners of the event's raffle, which collected \$18,500 for the Foundation's "Adopt a Child" program.

REISA is a dynamic organization of community and public partners that work to develop and promote access to English-language health and social services in the east end of Montreal. Established in 2005, REISA assists partnership development in: expansion of local-level services, outreach to new services, and community capacity-building within the youth, seniors, intellectual deficiency and mental health sectors. Funded by the Community Health and Social Services Network, REISA demonstrates an excellent network model that is thriving due to persistence, continuity and passion of a team that is dedicated to its work. For information visit www.REISA.ca.

(Continued on Page 27)



Summit School TECC students celebrating after completing a distribution of Inspirations Newspaper.



Irene Miller, EMSB; Pina Evangelista, EMSB; Ghislaine Prata, REISA; Dora Cesta, EMSB; Josie Primiani, East Foundation and Centre for Dreams and Hopes; Giovanna Colasurdo, Almage Senior Centre; Dominic D'Abate, Consensus Mediation; Dorothy Williams, Black Community Resource Centre; Fatiha Gatre Guemiri, REISA; Gerry Tullio, Toxic-Stop; Maria Maiolo, Italian Canadian Community Services of Québec; Ella Amir, AMI-Québec; Howard Nadler, Batshaw Youth and Family Centres; Claudia Maiolo, REISA. (Photo courtesy of REISA)



Team Inspirations accepts award at Montreal Walks Now for Autism Speaks Kick-Off and Awards reception. With Vanessa Rossi, Tania Piperni, Krista Leitham and Jason Goldsmith. (Photo credit, Ross White)



Warren Greenstone, Cheryl Blas, Paul Karwatsky at the launch of the Bentley Flying Spur. (Photo courtesy of Bentley Montreal)



Co-op students at Light a Dream's Casino & Auction Night 2012: Back row left to right, Pamela Scullion, Hagop Shah-Bazian, Jonathan Colias, Corneilyo Samuels, Mark Kuchiran, Jessica Sauve, Lisa Rakabowchuk, Kyle Abrans. Front row left to right, Wayne Siu, Eddy Lefevre, Matt Beaulieu, Marni Spunt, Vanessa Law, Chris Cocja. In front Jed Bermillo. (Photo credit, Diana Crawford)



Police gather for a breakfast event at Chez Cora in honour of the Special Olympics. (Photo credit, Bob Bailie)



The Miriam Foundation past and current presidents honoured at the 3rd annual art auction. (Photo credit, Julian Haber)

The Law Enforcement Torch Run is a worldwide effort to raise awareness and funds for the Special Olympics and their mission to enrich the lives of people with intellectual disabilities through sport. Police officers organized four friendly races in various parts of Montreal which saw over 500 runners from the Service de police de la Ville de Montréal, la Sureté du Québec, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, many municipal police services, peace officers and several Special Olympics athletes take to the streets. Year round, police services and police officers across Quebec show their support by holding Law Enforcement Torch Run campaigns and events. Check out Daniel Smajovits' article on the Special Olympics, held this summer in Pointe Claire on our new Sports Page on page 34.

Speed Dating Pour La Cause organized by L'association de Montreal pour la déficience intellectuelle (AMDI) / The Montreal Association for the Intellectually Handicapped (MAIH) offered service providers that cater to people with intellectual difficulties the opportunity to become acquainted in a relaxed, festive environment.

Inspirations' Coordinator of Educational Outreach Linda Mahler and I were delighted to meet so many of our colleagues from organizations like AMDI, Altergo and Exeko who all work towards improving the lives of those with intellectual difficulties. We look forward to collaborating with these organizations in the future.

Approximately 200 participants attended the Montreal Walks Now for Autism Speaks Kick-Off & Awards reception at the Cosmodome in Laval. Organized by Montreal Autism Speaks coordinator Krista Leitham, attendees included new and returning walkers. Tania Piperni, Autism Spectrum Disorders Consultant, English Montreal School Board and Captain of Team Inspirations accepted a gold level award for the team, which raised an amazing \$6,090 in 2012. Autism Speaks Canada awards family services community grants across the country with funds raised through the walks. In 2011, Crestview Elementary School, Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board was awarded a grant of \$24,000 to purchase Smart Tables and iPads for their special education classes.

Summit School's Copy & Print Centre is a non-profit initiative for 16 to 21 year-olds that creates a dynamic learn to work environment for youth with special needs. They have been Inspirations' partners in the distribution of our newspaper for three years now, and we could not get it done without them. This team of students is hard-working, detail-oriented, and gets the job done in record time. There is no way to really express our gratitude, but we sure do try. Each of our volunteers receives gift certificates to a movie of their choice courtesy of Cinémas Guzzo.

The Friendship Circle's 12th annual Gala Friendship's Got Talent brought over 500 people together at Congregation Shaar Hashomayim to celebrate friendship, volunteerism and fun. Talent show acts by teens and young adults with special needs included karate, singing and piano, and were received with resounding applause. Tributes to the late Joan Chisling, volunteer and karate sensei extraordinaire David Pinchuk, friends of the year Norma and Rabbi David Woolfson, and the swearing in of incoming president Joshua Cummings rounded off a magical evening. The performers linked arms with their teen friend volunteers for the final number: "You lift me up...to more than I can be," which truly exemplified the mission of the Friendship Circle.

If you have any tidbits to share, send them to info@inspirationsnews.com.



Riverside School Board

Entrepreneurs in training win awards at ACCESS

WENDY SINGER

“Bead It” is an online project run by special needs students at ACCESS Adult Education and Career Training Centre of the Riverside School Board. The goal is to develop real-life transferable entrepreneurial skills, and it has been so successful that it is winning awards.

Robert More teaches math and economics at ACCESS, and has a knack for starting up online businesses. The natural step for him was to teach his students how to set up their own endeavors. “Far too often people with special needs want to get a job but employers may be biased. Online there are no biases.” says More.

The students make necklaces, key rings, bracelets and fishing lures, and then sell them online on Etsy, and will soon have their own website. Their crafts are also a big hit at the Centennial High School craft fair.

These ACCESS students are young men and women with autism, Williamson, and As-

perger’s syndrome, and range in age from 16 years and older. The primary goal of the project is to help these students build the confidence to apply for work and know that they can make a positive contribution to a work environment. It has been so effective that some students continue with their business ventures independently.

More likes online sales because of its anonymity: “Most of the products are sold to customers who do not know the students are mentally or physically challenged. The students can compete and earn in a market where their unique characteristics are not prejudged.”

Last year, Bead It was honoured with several awards, including The Quebec Entrepreneurial Contest’s Coup de Coeur in the special needs category. Bead It was also recognized as a contender in the Student Stock Exchange, which does not have a category for special needs. They receive over 90 entries and the top four or five are nominated for awards. Bead It received nominations for Best Company Name, Most Environmentally Friendly Company, Best Video,

and Outstanding Achievement. More was delighted to share that Bead It won the Outstanding Achievement award.

Norman Latour, the student CEO of Bead It won the ACCESS adult education award for entrepreneur of the year; yet another award that did not have a special needs classification. Latour continues to sell fishing lures within the community today.

Stay tuned for ACCESS students’ latest venture called “Cut it Out”, where they use an Ellison press to make shapes for elementary school teachers.

For information or to purchase shapes contact Robert More at rmore@rsb.qc.ca.



Teacher Robert More with “Bead It” student showing a fishing lure made with a beer cap.

Check out the “Bead It” online store “Student Shop 2013” at http://www.etsy.com/shop/StudentShop13?ref=si_shop



Commission scolaire English-Montréal
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François Tim Fortin : un modèle d'inclusion

■ SABRINA FONTAIN, CÉGEP DU VIEUX MONTRÉAL ET LE CENTRE DE RECHERCHE POUR L'INCLUSION SCOLAIRE ET PROFESSIONNELLE DES ÉTUDIANTS EN SITUATION DE HANDICAP

S'impliquer dans la vie collégiale, jamais François-Tim Fortin n'aurait pensé que cela pouvait être envisageable dans sa condition. Voué à redoubler d'efforts à l'école, il concentrait toutes ses énergies à sa réussite scolaire.

François-Tim Fortin, 23 ans, est atteint depuis sa naissance du glaucome, une maladie dégénérative du nerf optique qui provoque une diminution irrémédiable du champ de vision. Ses capacités visuelles sont ainsi diminuées. « Au secondaire, je n'étais pas capable de lire le dictionnaire. Alors, j'avais tenu pour acquis que j'étais nul en orthographe et que j'allais toujours avoir de mauvais résultats. » François-Tim n'a jamais fréquenté d'école spécialisée et avoue avoir eu un parcours particulièrement difficile au primaire et au secondaire.

Le SAIDE

En faisant son entrée au cégep du Vieux Montréal dans le programme Informatique de gestion et langues, François-Tim fut surpris de constater qu'il n'était pas le seul étudiant dans sa condition et qu'il pouvait



François-Tim Fortin (Photo crédit, Julie Parent)

bénéficier du Service d'aide à l'intégration des élèves (SAIDE) du Cégep pour favoriser ses apprentissages. Le SAIDE lui a fourni des outils lui permettant de mieux lire les caractères au tableau ou sur un écran d'ordinateur. Il pouvait aussi bénéficier de preneurs de notes et on lui accordait plus de temps pour compléter ses examens.

Son cheminement scolaire étant ainsi simplifié, François-Tim a commencé à s'impliquer dans la vie étudiante du Collège, notamment dans l'Association générale étudiante. « Je me suis beaucoup impliqué dans la vie collégiale et je ne sais pas si je me serais senti à l'aise de m'impliquer autant si je ne mettais pas senti aussi bien intégré. »

Le CRISPESH

François-Tim s'est également impliqué au-

près du Centre de recherche pour l'inclusion scolaire et professionnelle des étudiants en situation de handicap (CRISPESH). « Le SAIDE m'a approché pour créer un site Internet sur l'intégration des personnes handicapées pour le CRISPESH. J'ai trouvé ça génial puisque c'est ce que j'ai toujours aimé faire en informatique. De plus, la cause était vraiment intéressante. » Il a aussi créé un site Internet pour promouvoir le festival de films *Un regard sur le handicap*, qui en était à sa première édition cette année. Ces deux expériences se sont avérées très enrichissantes pour lui.

Récemment, François-Tim s'est découvert une passion pour les langues. Il poursuit actuellement des études en allemand à l'UQAM.

Le Service d'aide à l'intégration des élèves (SAIDE) a pour mission de favoriser l'accessibilité aux études supérieures d'étudiants ayant une déficience auditive, visuelle, motrice ou toute autre limitation physique permanente. Le SAIDE offre des services aux étudiants du cégep du Vieux Montréal et soutient les collèges de l'ouest du Québec, sous le nom de Centre de soutien à l'intégration (CCSI), à travers un réseau de répondants locaux.

Le Centre de recherche pour l'inclusion scolaire et professionnelle des étudiants en situation de handicap (CRISPESH) est un centre collégial de transfert de technologie en pratiques sociales novatrices. Le Centre a pour mission l'avancement des connaissances ainsi que le développement et la promotion de pratiques sociales favorisant l'inclusion scolaire, sociale et professionnelle des personnes vivant une situation de handicap.



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EMSB piloting specialized classes

■ TANIA PIPERNI M.ED

The English Montreal School Board (EMSB) has once again piloted classes to address the needs of students with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) as well as for at-risk students.

Two new Welcoming Classes have been opened for students with ASD at the kindergarten/grade one level; one at Westmount Park School and the other at Parkdale School. The goal is to facilitate the eventual inclusion process into a regular grade two class. The classes have a maximum of seven students with one specialized teacher and one child care worker. The program is adapted to fit the level of the student, be it for academic purposes as well as social-emotional development.

Marylene Perron, principal at Parkdale School, is excited about this new program: "For our students with autism, entering school could create anxiety which will make their first year extremely difficult. The aim of the Welcoming Class is to give structure and strategies to the students. The lower ratio will help all educators know the students better so the interventions can be more personalized. The transition from home or day-care to a regular setting should be easier for the students."

Welcoming Classes had been piloted last year at Pierre de Coubertin School and Elizabeth Ballantyne School. Nicholas Katalifos, principal at Pierre de Coubertin, is very proud of the development of their Welcoming Class: "The teacher, Ms. Cynthia Di Luigi, has worked very hard, with the assistance of the dedicated team of professionals from the EMSB's Student Services Depart-

ment, to ensure the students' success. Just as important is the fact that the entire school community is excited about this project and views the work being done as an integral part of our school."

A junior ASD class at Edward Murphy School has also been opened and is geared towards students with ASD in Grades 1 to 3. They follow an adapted program in a classroom with a smaller adult to student ratio; there is a maximum of seven students for one specialized teacher and one child care worker. Edward Murphy has also added a Harmony Room, a safe place for all students to gain perspective, work through conflicts and learn to self-regulate. Techniques and strategies from the work of Dr. Melrose and Dr. Neufeld are utilized by the school staff to help the students better cope with emotional meltdowns, anxiety and anger. Principal Franca Cristiano explains: "It's about

finding equilibrium and learning to negotiate the obstacles around us. Although it's only been a few weeks, the students have already gravitated to this new space that is all about them."

Lastly, St Gabriel School has piloted a SEEDS class (Strengthening Emotional and Educational Development of Students). The class is designed for at-risk students with behaviour difficulties. The objectives include strengthening the emotional stability and sense of safety of students; facilitating the acquisition of social skills as well as to promote self-regulation and autonomy. There is a maximum of six students at the cycle one level with one teacher and one child care worker.

Tania Piperni is the Autism Spectrum Disorder Consultant at the English Montreal School Board.



■ STEPHANIE WINTERFORD

When we began our crazy Autism journey in Quebec in 2009, my son was three years old. We had no formal diagnosis for my son, and no services in place. It took years of effort – and a fair amount of luck – to develop a support network, and at some point we were able to sit back and say, with some disbelief, “Huh. We’re kind of okay.”

Last year we packed everything up and moved to France.

So apparently the grass is always greener somewhere else; except that ours was looking pretty green in Terrebonne. To give due credit, Bordeaux gives most places a run for their money – but we were leaving a lot behind. Zach, who was now seven years old, attended an outstanding school, we’d become a part of a community of families, friends and professionals who understood and loved our quirky family, and the idea of starting from scratch seemed insane. How would France measure up? What services would be provided to us in this country with its (in?)famous social systems and ostensibly daunting educational methods?

Five months in, and this is how things compare:

1 There are no school boards in France; school registration takes place at City Hall. If a diagnosis is already in place, the family is referred to the district’s “Medecin Scolaire” and assigned

a Special Education Consultant, the latter being responsible for school placement. Parents have the right to request either a contained class (a maximum of 12 kids with a teacher and an assistant) or a

mainstream class with a “shadow”; either of these must be granted swiftly, and the school must be located within reasonable proximity to home.

2 The Medecin Scolaire refers the family to the “Hopital du Jour”, where the family is assigned a Psychiatrist who will see them on an ongoing basis and refer the child for any necessary services (behaviour therapy, nutrition etc). These free therapy sessions coincide with the child’s school day so that appointments don’t take place after school when kids are tired. Adapted, free transportation is provided

3 between school and the appointments.

All applications for disability tax credits, handicap stickers, etc., are completed by parents together

with the Special Education Consultant. This doesn’t mean that requests are processed any faster than in Quebec, but how delightful was it to sit with one woman, fill out one set of forms, and know that everything had been requested and filled in correctly.

In our case, all of the above were completed within four weeks – stop gasping. We’ve learned that, in France, if you’re told that you have “the right” to something, generally it’s obtainable without delay.

While the speed has been impressive – and I have to add somewhere that the wine makes most things more bearable – the compassion here is questionable. There is not the same awareness of disabilities in France as there is in Canada; this is either frustrating or shocking, depending on the situation. So we spread awareness where we can, and practice patience where we have to. We’re still finding our feet here in Bordeaux – but we think the outlook is positive.



Saint-Émilion, a small wine village near Bordeaux, France



Eating disorders: Part 1 of 2

■ DESPINA VASSILIOU, PH. D.

50 percent of girls in Grade 4 and 90 percent of adolescents diet. Five percent of adolescents who diet will develop an eating disorder. Boys are no longer immune either, as the rate of eating disorders has increased for them. Examining the body measurements of the figurines geared for boys demonstrates that they too, are experiencing societal pressure to conform to an unrealistic body image, just as girls had to live up to images of Barbie. These are the chilling statistics that Dr. Clare Roscoe, psychiatrist, shared in a packed auditorium which captivated the audience at the Royal Mental Health Centre in Ottawa last May.

There are three different types of eating disorders: (1) anorexia nervosa (AN): primarily characterized by a body weight that is 85 percent less than expected; (2) bulimia nervosa (BN): characterized as a vicious cycle of dieting followed by binge eating which then triggers guilt that leads to the restrictive dieting and starts the cycle over again; and (3) eating disorders not otherwise specified (EDNOS) is the most commonly diagnosed type of disorder; however, it applies to those whose symptoms do not meet the criteria for either AN or BN.

There are a number of warning signs to look for including physical, behavioural, and psychological characteristics. The physical characteristics include weight loss, dizziness, and feeling cold. Behavioural characteristics include: frequent weighing; avoidance of family meals or eating in front of others; starting to "eat healthy"; insisting to have different meals from others; significant increase in exercising; restlessness (al-

ways in need to be in motion such as walking or pacing); and frequently visiting the bathroom after eating. The psychological symptoms include: wearing baggy clothes because of a distortion of their body image; increased preoccupation with anything to do with food (e.g., recipes, cooking); change in personality (e.g., irritability, withdrawal) which have also been found to occur in instances of severe malnutrition; and stressed when unable to exercise.

Some of the characteristics listed above are actually deemed as very positive by society (e.g., eating healthy and exercising), particularly with the campaigns to combat obesity. However, with eating disorders the preoccupation with these behaviours is exaggerated.

Most who suffer from an eating disorder also suffer from poor self esteem. They feel better when they have control and power, and for those who suffer from eating disorders they gain power by controlling their food. Eating disorders are very complex and serious, but the earlier we intervene the better the prognosis.

Visit http://www.inspirationsnews.com/pages/Inspirations_Online_extra.html to read Part 2.

If you suspect your child has an eating disorder please consult a medical professional.

Despina Vassiliou is a psychologist at the English Montreal School Board.



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Arts & entertainment

Crossing barriers with music



Anastasia Demacheva playing the violin.

■ ANDREA DI TOMASO

back of the music room. “Family, friends and a support network are integral to the development of someone like Anastasia, and she has a lot.”

Anastasia decidedly has a natural talent for the violin, and is proud of her accomplishments. Her classmates and teachers are equally as proud and excited about her ability to play so well. It was both endearing and heartwarming to see how many of her fellow students were interested in the violin and in Anastasia, asking her and her teacher many questions about violin technique and why she chose to play it instead of another instrument.

“Because I like doing this,” says Anastasia to her class as she demonstrates the motion of drawing her bow across the violin strings as if the real instrument were already in her hands.

The love of music is universal all over the world and the joy that music can make us feel is hardwired into our brains, it crosses the barriers of language and culture and speaks to the heart of anyone who will listen to it. Musicians have a special relationship with music, they can be both the creators, interpreters and messengers of this incredible emotional language.

Anastasia Demacheva is a student at Hampstead Elementary school, a typical eight-year-old girl, active, curious, and sometimes shy. Fluent in spoken English and Russian, she is now learning French as her third language.

Taught by her mother, Anastasia took up the violin at age seven and practices every

day at home with simple songs like Happy Birthday, Jingle Bells and even classical pieces. She also has Down’s Syndrome and has been successfully integrated into a regular grade two class, after completing her first two years at Hampstead in a smaller sized class.

“Anastasia’s love for the violin came as a surprise,” says Steven Erdelyi, who was principal of Hampstead School. “Her mother approached me at the beginning of the year about having her perform at school. She gave a solo performance at our Festival of Lights last December and the whole audience was blown away. I was blown away. We were so impressed with how well she did.”

From her energy and eagerness to par-

ticipate, Anastasia seems to love music class, although she admits that she does not have a favourite subject at school, but likes them all. She works hard in all areas with the help of her regular teacher Ms. Petracco and music teacher Mr. Cooperwood.

It was Mr. Cooperwood’s first year as music teacher at Hampstead, and although he had only had Anastasia in his class this past school year, he marvels at how much she has progressed in such a short time.

“Anastasia would not have improved so much (at school) if she didn’t have a teacher like Ms. Petracco,” says Cooperwood. “She is amazing.”

“Not only me,” replies Petracco from the

Anastasia is always willing to display her talents in front of an audience large or small, and has been performing for local area schools and daycares almost as soon as she was able. “I don’t get nervous,” she says, scoffing at the thought. “I like to play in front of people.”

The power of music is something that we all can relate to, and for young Anastasia Demacheva, the violin is her instrument of choice to express her love of music. Anastasia says only a few words when asked how much she loves to play: “A lot, all the time!”

Anastasia plans to keep practicing and playing the violin her entire life: “For myself,” she says, standing up and poking her own chest, the words of a true musician.



Déficience intellectuelle :

s'ouvrir à la différence, tous les jours, à tout moment !

■ NATHALIE GOUDREAU

L'Association de Montréal pour la déficience intellectuelle (AMDI) tient à applaudir le succès retentissant du film Gabrielle de la Québécoise Louise Archambault. La réaction positive, autant du côté des critiques que du grand public, nous permet d'espérer une plus grande ouverture face à la déficience intellectuelle.

« Cette visibilité qu'offre le film Gabrielle sur la déficience intellectuelle est une occasion en or de rappeler que pour une Gabrielle présentement sous la lumière des projecteurs, des milliers d'autres personnes vivant avec une déficience intellectuelle demeurent dans l'ombre, avec des défis quotidiens à relever », a affirmé Nadia Bastien, directrice générale de l'AMDI. « Il faut savoir que 3 % de la population vit avec une déficience intellectuelle », a-t-elle ajouté, « ce qui représente plus de 228 000 personnes au Québec : des chiffres qui parlent d'eux-mêmes ».

Souhaitons que cette incursion dans la vie de Gabrielle soit une invitation à rester aux aguets : de simples gestes de votre part peuvent faire une grande

différence pour une personne qui vit avec une déficience intellectuelle. Offrir de l'aide pour les orienter dans les transports en commun, répondre à leurs questions à l'épicerie ou encore devenir bénévole dans un organisme de parrainage, contribue à faire en sorte que les personnes qui vivent avec une déficience intellectuelle prennent davantage la place qui leur revient dans la société.

Encore une fois, chapeau bas à tous les artisans du film Gabrielle, qui ont su mettre en lumière le fait de vivre avec une déficience intellectuelle, un aspect souvent oublié de tous.

Nathalie Goudreau est la coordonnatrice, communications et événements AMDI.

Depuis 1935, l'AMDI offre des services qui répondent aux besoins des personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle et de leur famille. Notre mission est de favoriser la participation sociale des adultes ayant une déficience intellectuelle et d'offrir des services de soutien aux familles dans l'exercice de leurs responsabilités.

Using music as therapy

As seen with Anastasia, music is accessible and enjoyed by everyone. And music therapy can be highly beneficial to people with special needs. This non-verbal creative art is often used to help children develop greater self-expression, social engagement, relaxation, language development, emotional regulation, increased communication skills and self-esteem.

"I have over 150 musical instruments at my disposal, creative arts supplies and various therapeutic tools. I witness excellent progress with children and youth that have varying special needs, from autism spectrum disorder, Asperger's, PDD, ADD/ADHD, difficult life circumstances, developmental disabilities, and behavioural problems," shares Alison Usher-Jones, music therapist and director of Westmount Music Therapy.

For information, peruse our database for Music Therapy resources (www.inspirationsnews.com/pages/Inspirations_Database.html, page 30). To speak to Alison Usher-Jones call (514) 942-0698 or www.westmountmusictherapy.com. If your focus is piano, contact Rady at Piano Art (514) 254-2533.



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Sports Section

The 2013 International Paralympic Committee Swimming World Championships at Parc Jean Drapeau

■ ANNALENA HUBER

Longueuil's Benoit Huot (middle) accepts his SM10 Gold Medal in the Men's 200 metre Individual Medley, with André Brasil and Ian Jaryd Silverman. (Photo credit, Vincent Ethier, IPC)



When I walked into Parc Jean-Drapeau on Saint Helen's island, heading towards the 2013 International Paralympic Committee (IPC) Swimming World Championships, I didn't know what to expect. With over 500 competing athletes from over 50 different countries like Canada, Germany, and Japan, there was certainly a lot going on.

I watched the warm-ups and eventually the finals of this competition in awe as athletes with three, two or no limbs at all covered the length of the pool within times that would make most able-bodied people like myself look old and tired.

Swimmers with physical impairments compete within sport classes ranging from S1 – S10 which are based on the severity of their condition. An athlete classified as S1 may use a wheelchair or suffer from loss of control in their legs, arms and hands, while S10 represents an athlete living with lesser impairments such as the loss of a hand or significant limit in the functioning of a hip joint. Classes S11-13 include athletes with visual impairments while S14 represents athletes with an intellectual impairment.

It was amazing to see competitors who shouldn't be physically able to hold their bodies on the surface of the water complete their laps just as any other athlete would. And if one contestant took a little longer to finish his race, the spectators made sure to support him until the end, no matter what nationality he represented or which country the crowd was cheering for.

The sound of cheering was overwhelming, naturally, for the Canadian contestants, particularly Benoit Huot, who, in addition to being tremendously successful in the London Paralympic Games in 2012, managed to claim the world championships in the 200 metre individual medley and the 50 metre freestyle at these Montreal games.

Aside from celebrating Huot's success, my day at the IPC Swimming championships gave me something unexpected to think about. It opened my eyes to the fact that it is not the times or the medal placements that count. All the contestants have already won. They have beaten the disability that could have kept them from living their everyday lives to their fullest. They've shown that nothing can stop you from doing something you are passionate about.

The IPC is an international non-profit organization and the global governing body for the Paralympic Movement. The IPC organizes the Paralympic Games and functions as the international federation for nine sports. Founded in 1989 in Düsseldorf, Germany. The IPC Swimming World Championships were initiated in 1994. The next competition will take place in Glasgow, Ireland in 2015.

For Information, visit <http://www.paralympic.ca> or <http://www.paralympic.org>.

Annalena Huber is a student at Auguste-Patberg-Gymnasium in Mosbach, Germany, and was a summer journalism intern for Inspirations.

A special summer for Pointe-Claire and the Special Olympics

■ DANIEL SMAJOVITS

In the heat of the summer when most people actively try to find ways to avoid exertion, over 700 athletes living with an intellectual disability descended upon Pointe-Claire for the 2013 Special Olympics Quebec Summer Games.

Over the course of four days, the athletes competed in ten sports: athletics, softball, basketball, bocce, powerlifting, golf, large pin bowling, rhythmic gymnastics, swimming and soccer.

For Francis Scarpaleggia, MP for Lac-Saint-Louis, it was an honour for his riding to be able to host the games, but while the competition provided much excitement, for him, the highlight was the Opening Ceremonies.

"Excitement, enthusiasm, pride, and joy enveloped the Pointe-Claire arena as the athletes streamed into the building with flags waving," said Scarpaleggia. "The energy was truly infectious and swept up all present in loud celebration: parents, friends, supporters, and local invited officials."

"The opening ceremonies of the Quebec Special Olympics were a truly wonderful, uplifting and memorable event – an unforgettable moment in the life of our West Island community," he added. "At evening's end, I returned home with a genuine feeling for peaceful calm and thankful appreciation for the wonderful values we hold and share in our West Island community, our province and our great country."

Preceding the Opening Ceremonies was the Law Enforcement Torch Run, which featured 20 police officers carrying the Special Olympics flame through the streets of Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, Longueuil, Île Saint-Hélène, Montreal and finished in front of 1,400 spectators at the Bob Birnie Arena in Pointe-Claire.

While competition is the foundation of the Games, for Daniel Granger, president of Special Olympics Québec, the true meaning of the Games is to give people living with an intellectual disability the opportunity to live an incredible experience in a sports environment.



Laval resident and swimmer Andrew Perez displaying his medals at the Pointe-Claire Special Olympics 2013. He won six gold medals! (Photo credit, Bob Bailie)

"The 2013 Summer Games were a huge success. Especially for our athletes who surpassed themselves, participating in each game and event with great pride, determination and concentration in order to obtain the best results," said Granger. "Motivated by their coaches and the crowd of supporters, all these athletes thoroughly enjoyed the medal awards that recognized their respective accomplishments."

In addition to friendly competition, these games carried an extra incentive for athletes as it was one of the main qualifiers for the selection of Team Quebec, which will participate at next summer's Special Olympics National Summer Games in Vancouver.

For more information on the Special Olympics movement or to get involved, please visit: www.specialolympicsquebec.ca.



Sports Section



The Pin Pals: CEGEP student starts a bowling league with LBPSB schools

WENDY SINGER

Last spring the resource department at Lakeside Academy in Lachine, Lester B. Pearson School Board were approached by first year Dawson College student Kyle Ross, who was mandated to engage a group of people with special needs for his community recreation leadership training course.

Lakeside Academy Resource Teacher Sandra Mills, and Special Education Technician Sherri MacCallum (our 2011 Caregiver of Inspiration) put their heads together and came up with a terrific idea. Bowling!

Mills, MacCallum and Ross struck a deal with nearby Valois 'Salle de Quilles' in Pointe Claire, who agreed to open the alley for one hour on Friday mornings for this group of staff and eight students.

The owners of the bowling alley saw how engaged the students were when bowling, and suggested that other schools be invited to join in. MacCallum put a call out to her LBPSB colleagues, and in no time a bowling league called 'The Pin Pals' was created. Participating schools included Macdonald High School, Life Program at Lindsay Place, and Transitions.

"This worked out incredibly well as a social activity as we insisted on mixing up the students from different schools," says MacCallum. "As a recreational activity it was excellent. Some kids could bowl and others couldn't. They helped each other, and some even learnt how to keep score. They all loved it!"

The Pin Pals having fun at Valois 'Salle de Quilles' with Special Education Technician Sherri MacCallum.



Soccer player makes inspirational Impact

WENDY SINGER

Inspirations awarded Super Sonics Soccer player Adamo Morrone and his family with tickets to an Impact soccer game. This family of four came to the game from Vaudreuil in full Impact regalia!

Adamo loves soccer and enjoys being on the field with his teammates. He is homeschooled and attends a private school on a part-time basis. His sister Amanda attends Pierre Elliot Trudeau Elementary School and plays soccer for Les Trois Lacs.

Mom Anna Maria is an occupational therapist who began her career 20 years ago at the Douglas Hospital and now works part-time at the Centre of Dreams and Hopes at the East Foundation in Montreal North, which provides support to families with children of special needs.

Anna Maria, in collaboration with club manager Kelly-Anne Soutter and Ron Mckeown (father of an Super Sonics player), was instrumental in the creation of the Lakeshore Soccer Club's Super Sonics league.

Super Sonics caters to children with special needs, and John Morrone sums up the league very well: "The biggest impact, no pun intended, comes from lead coaches Martin and Barbara Cheetham, whose devotion, respect and leadership towards the Super Sonics children, in teaching and inspiring them to participate in the beautiful game of soccer is by far the largest contribution to this Lakeshore club's continual success. Many of these kids and parents have been part of the Super Sonics group since the very beginning six years ago."



Amanda, Anna Maria, John and Adamo Morrone attend the Impact soccer game.



Adapted Travel by Mike Cohen



Vancouver and Whistler

My family and I spent our 2013 summer vacation in beautiful British Columbia, splitting our time between Vancouver and Whistler. Both spots are most accommodating to individuals with special needs.

ACCESSIBLE VANCOUVER: With an estimated one in eight people worldwide living with a disability, disabled travellers now make up one of the fastest growing tourism markets. In North America alone, people with disabilities spend more than \$13 billion each year on travel. Their biggest challenge - finding accessible travel destinations that will meet their special needs and heighten their travel experience.

Consistently among the top five most liveable cities in the world, Vancouver also enjoys a reputation as one of the world's most accessible places in which to visit. Thanks to its progressive transportation systems, innovative housing and recreational opportunities, people of all ages with visual, hearing or mobility impairments can fully enjoy business and leisure time in Vancouver. It is refreshing to see an entire section on the Tourism Vancouver website (www.tourismvancouver.com) dedicated to the city's accessibility. Special needs travellers can select from a

number of categories, such as getting to and from Vancouver, experiencing the city and finding the necessary resources.

THE CITY: Surrounded by water on three sides and nestled alongside the Coast Mountain Range, Vancouver has spectacular natural scenery and a bustling metropolitan core, and boasts one of the mildest climates in Canada. The Greater Vancouver region is home to more than two million people in 21 municipalities, making it the third largest metropolitan area in Canada.

WHERE TO STAY: We were fortunate to discover a new spot, the Sunset Inn & Suites (www.sunsetinn.com). Located at 1111 Burnaby, their long list of amenities gives you more for less. Hotels often promote "extra" services that will raise the cost of your stay.

The executive one-bedroom suites are one of the newest offerings at the property. They have been extensively redecorated and offer a luxurious, relaxing setting that is more similar to home than hotel. These spacious apartment-style accommodations have all of the comforts of home. Among the amenities are two TVs, a DVD player, an iPod/iPhone player and charger clock radio, wall mounted air conditioning units

in both the bedroom and living room and a private balcony.

The hotel has free gated parking for one vehicle during your stay, a true rarity for downtown Vancouver; a locked bike room; new and greatly improved high speed wireless and hard wired internet; a continental breakfast you can take back to your room, a daily newspaper delivered to your door and free local calls. Soon after checking in we had a minor question about something in our room and called the front desk. They said someone would come up. For more information call toll-free at 1-800-786-1997 (within North America). The main entrance and the first level garage are both handicapped accessible.

WHAT TO DO: Grouse Mountain (www.grousemountain.com) offers the perfect destination for a truly rewarding and memorable experience. Here there are a variety of cultural, educational and outdoor adventures to choose from. Most of Grouse Mountain's summer and winter activities are complimentary with an admission ticket.

We began by taking the wheelchair accessible Skyride up the mountain. High above towering Douglas firs, breathtaking views of the city of Vancouver, sparkling Pacific Ocean, Gulf Islands, and snowy peaks unfold as you take this journey. North America's largest aerial tramway system is your gateway to the majestic nature of The Peak of Vancouver, and an experience in itself. Whether you're in search of the perfect photo, or a picturesque dinner at The Observatory, your adventure begins with the Skyride. It operates 365 days a year, departing every 15 minutes from 8:45 am to 10 pm. In summer months, the first downhill Skyride departs at 7:30 am. A round trip Skyride is included with an Alpine Experience ticket or annual membership.

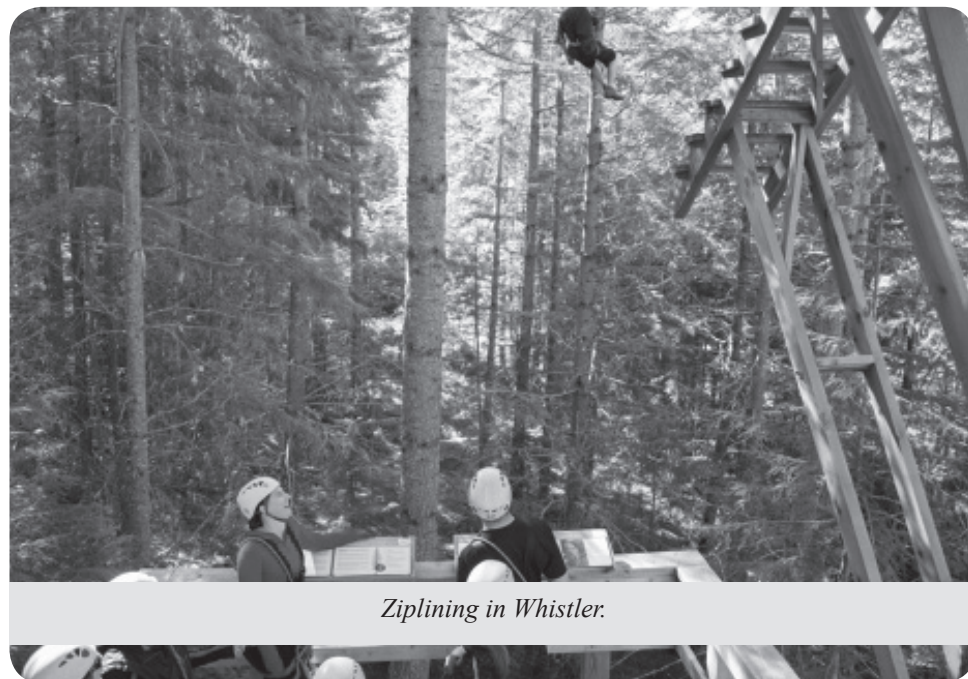
Once up there, we headed directly to a fabulous show where some special birds were the stars: a falcon, an owl and a hawk. Guides spoke about their respective backgrounds and even had them do some tricks for us. Right next door was the bear habitat, with two grizzlies protected from the public by electric fences. We watched as they walked about, ate grass, lay on their backs and inched closer than we expected to folks with cameras in hand.

The Eye of the Wind, meanwhile, is inspiring and revolutionary. This is the world's first and only wind turbine that allows you to stand in a clear glass view POD at the top of the tower, three metres from its massive, rotating blades. Stand in awe of 360-degree views as you come face to face with the future of responsible energy. The scenic Peak Chairlift will transport you to the apex of Grouse Mountain in a ride time of 14 minutes. At the summit, you will be amazed by a spectacular panorama that reveals the beauty and scale of Vancouver, and the grandeur of the Pacific Ocean as it graces the coastline for as far as the eye can see.

At the Vancouver Aquarium (www.vanaqua.org) you come face-to-fin with over 70,000 animals, including beluga whales, steller sea lions, dolphins, seals and more! Enjoy the dolphin and whale shows, sea otter feeds, and shark dives. Free-roaming animals abound in their popular Amazon Gallery. For a unique hands-on adventure, ask about the Animal Encounters program. You can call their easy to remember phone number - 604.659.FISH.

Visitors with a disability or special needs can request a 50 percent discount off of the general admissions price, or a free attendant when paying full price admissions. Attendants with children under three with a disability can request a 50 percent discount off the attendants' general admissions price. There is also a special accessibility window.

PNE: If you like amusement parks, Vancouver's Pacific National Exhibition (www.pne.ca) on East Hastings Street is the place to go. The 15 acre Playland Amusement Park is a popular attraction. Open from late April through the end of September it has hosted millions of thrill seekers of all ages since it opened in 1910. Playland's marquee attraction, the beloved 1958 Wooden Roller Coaster, remains the most popular ride on the site and one of the most highly regarded wooden coasters in the world. Designed by the legendary ride construction team, Carl Phare and Walker LeRoy, the Playland Wooden Coaster rides over half a million people



Ziplining in Whistler.



A delicious dessert from Joe Fortes.



The Peak 2 Peak is an incredible experience.

annually. The flume, though, ranks as my favorite ride. The PNE is wheelchair accessible. Disabled access is provided at one bathroom stop near the midway.

If you are planning a summer visit to Vancouver, then you must include Theatre Under the Stars (www.tuts.ca) at the Malkin Bowl. The program's best of Broadway musicals have been delighting audiences in Stanley Park since 1940. Every July and August they present two wonderful productions on alternating nights. The summer of 2013 featured *Legally Blonde* and *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying* on the stage. My family and I saw the former, purchasing our tickets online. Reserved tickets are \$29 to \$42 for adults and \$24 to \$29 for children and youth. We really enjoyed this our second experience of watching theatre "under the stars." Stay tuned to their website to see what productions are planned for 2014. The Malkin Bowl is located right at the entrance of Stanley Park. It is easily accessible for wheelchairs.

If you are a baseball fan, then the months of June, July and August represent an opportunity for you to see some good old fashioned minor league ball. The Vancouver Canadians (www.canadiansbaseball.com) play out of the prettiest little ballpark in North America – 57 year old Scotiabank Field at Nat Bailey Stadium. There are 5,187 seats here, every one of them dandy. The Canadians are the short season rookie "A" ball affiliate of the major league Toronto Blue Jays, having switched over two years ago from the Oakland Athletics.

There are a number of wheelchair reserved parking spaces at the ballpark and these are located in the parking lot off of Ontario Street along the east end of Scotiabank Field at Nat Bailey Stadium. The team recognizes the needs of guests with disabilities, and provides a wheelchair access viewing platform for fans with accessibility needs and their guests located down the third base line of the ballpark. Wheelchair access is provided through the third base gate located at the Southeast corner of the stadium. On the night I attended, the

Developmental Disabilities Association (develop.bc.ca) had a special promotion for which more than 200 of its workers and sponsors were in attendance. Official Jason Smith told me the Canadians are great supporters of his cause. The Developmental Disabilities Association is a community living agency that provides over 50 community-based programs and services to children, adults and families with developmental disabilities in Vancouver and Richmond. They create extended networks of support, invest in individual needs, and strive for an inclusive and safe community.

Over 1,600 individuals and families in the Vancouver and Richmond area are serviced by the Developmental Disabilities Association every year.

ARTS CLUB: Check out the magnificent Arts Club Theatre Company (www.artclub.com) at 1585 Johnston Street next to the public market. Shows are Tuesday through Sundays at what is called Western Canada's largest not for profit organization of its kind, having been in operation for 49 years. Each year, over a quarter of a million people experience the best in professional theatre. Popular productions range from musicals and contemporary comedies to new works and classics. While we were in town, the Arts Club was presenting the Tony Award winning *Avenue Q*.

The Arts Club partners with VocalEye Descriptive Arts Society in presenting live, audio-described theatre at the Stanley Industrial Alliance Stage and the Granville Island Stage. Performances are described for patrons who are blind, partially sighted, and visually impaired. They are given a personal receiver and single earpiece that allows them to hear both the show and the live audio description at the same time. Wheelchair seating is available at each of their theatres. Just provide a heads up when you book your tickets.

FLY OVER CANADA: FlyOver Canada (www.flyovercanada.com) is a breathtaking, all-ages ride like no other. Here you take off into a huge domed screen with the latest in projection and ride technology, creating a true flying experience. The flight takes you from east to west across Canada, over some of the most spectacular scenery the country has to offer. High tech special effects and a beautiful original soundtrack all combine to make FlyOver Canada an unforgettable experience. Operating hours are 10 am to 9 pm. This \$16-million, 30-minute virtual flight ride experience is located at the Canada Place pier in the former IMAX theatre.

FlyOver Canada is committed to making the experience for guests with mobility disabilities as convenient as possible.

While they are unable to physically lift guests from wheelchairs in and out of the ride's seating, if you may need assistance transferring from your wheelchair to a ride seat on your own, bring a caregiver to assist. The caregiver's ticket is provided free of charge.

If you will be visiting and require a wheelchair, it is helpful to provide advance notice of your attendance. Call 604-620-8455 or email info@flyovercanada.com to plan your visit.

CAR RENTAL: In preparing for my Vancouver trip, I made the rounds with the different rental car companies. Whether I called them directly, went online or tried the Priceline.com or expedia.com routes, the prices were always much too high. Then I came across Lo-Cost Rental Car (www.locost.com), an outfit based just near the Vancouver International Airport and the best prices and customer service I can report upon. If you have special needs requirements, be sure to tell them.

DINING OUT: There are some superb restaurants in Vancouver. Here are two in particular I strongly recommend.

Joe Fortes Seafood & Chop House (www.joefortes.ca) on downtown Thurlow Street is indeed one of the city's finest restaurants. With a commitment to freshness, the Joe Fortes kitchen receives daily local deliveries, ensuring that you're guaranteed to find the freshest ingredients on your plate every day. The main dining room is anchored by a soaring horseshoe oyster bar. This Grand Room boasts large, cozy booths. The entrance is handicapped accessible so make sure to state your needs upon making a reservation.

The Joe Fortes kitchen prepares each dish with a focus on natural flavours and features the finest ingredients collected from

Pacific Northwest farmers, fishermen and food artisans. Serving more than 50 kinds of fresh fish, including their legendary three-tiered Seafood Tower on Ice, premium oysters and succulent chops, their signature dishes have become a favourite of locals, celebrities and tourists alike.

I also recommend the Sandbar Restaurant on Granville Island at 1535 Johnston Street. There is live music here seven nights a week and quite a marvelous ambiance. The 300 seat restaurant was packed the night we chose to dine there. Guests can enjoy the bustle of the market, the non-stop energy of False Creek and the shores of Vancouver's West End. The Sandbar serves up the freshest seafood in a warm, sophisticated atmosphere. Along with your menu comes a clipboard called the Seafood Fresh Sheet, with holes punched next to the items that are fresh that day. We started off with some splendid sushi as an appetizer and also shared shrimp dumplings and cold poached prawns. For the main courses, selections varied from the amazing Mahi Mahi, the Ahi Tuna, a two pound Atlantic lobster and pan seared scallops. Open seven days a week from 5:30 pm. onwards, we will definitely return to this spot on our next trip and hopefully try other members of the group. There is an elevator to the right of the main entrance that can take guests with mobile needs directly up to the first or second floor. Handicapped stalls are also located in all restrooms.

ACCESSIBLE WHISTLER: How accessible is Whistler? Norm DePlume broke his neck skiing here a few years ago. "I won't go so far as to say, 'No big deal,' but life rolls on, and so do I," DePlume says. "I'm still skiing in Whistler, laughing at jokes, calling my mother on Sun-

(Continued on page 38)



A view from a table at the Sandbar Restaurant.



days and generally being a happy, healthy, and productive member of the community. Life rolls on.

“Admittedly, not many people think of Whistler as a place to find a lot of people with disabilities. It’s known for a rather active lifestyle and, thanks to the many after-school TV specials focusing on ‘the struggle,’ people with disabilities aren’t generally stereotyped as being all that active.”

DePlume explains that while some people are born with disabilities, a large number acquire a spinal cord injury later in life. They were active before their accident and have no desire to give up on that lifestyle just because they now use a wheelchair to help them get around.

In 1999, with just a handful of equipment stored in a closet, the homegrown Whistler Adaptive Sports Program began taking people up the mountain to experience sit skiing. These days the program has grown to the point where they’re able to provide over 1,400 lessons each ski season, and have expanded into summer programs that include hiking, biking, canoeing, and kayaking.

Accessibility is built into Whistler Village with pedestrian-only streets, paved access to the Valley Trail and close proximity to transportation. The following links provide further information on getting around the town:

There is a comprehensive website for visitors with disabilities at www.whistlerforthedisabled.com. Wheelchair accessible taxis are available from Whistler Resort Cabs - call 1.604.938.1515 to book.

BACKGROUND: This was my family’s first visit to Whistler (

A dolphin at the Vancouver Aquarium.

ismwhistler.com), which is less than a two hour drive from Vancouver and one of the host cities of the 2010 Winter Olympics.

The ski season in Whistler typically begins around the third weekend in November, coinciding with American Thanksgiving. From there, both mountains are open daily for winter operations until late April. Blackcomb Mountain stays open for spring skiing and snowboarding until mid-May. Summer glacier skiing and riding on Blackcomb Mountain starts the third week of June. In summer Whistler Mountain Bike Park opens as a haven for riders of all levels and the Village Gondola, Peak 2 Peak Gondola and Peak Chair are open for sightseeing.

There is no better experience than the Peak 2 Peak Gondola. You first take the Whistler Express Gondola from the Village, which takes 25 minutes. You’ll arrive at the Roundhouse, a lodge where you can have lunch or a snack, and take in the spectacular view of the mountains on the opposite side of the valley. From here, hop on the Peak 2 Peak Gondola for a thrilling 11-minute ride over to Blackcomb Mountain. We then took a short bus ride to the 7th Heaven open air chairlift way up to the top of the mountain, enabling us to view glaciers and whole lot of summer skiing. The Peak 2 Peak is wheelchair accessible in the summer while a sled is used in the winter to transport those in need to the summit.

ZIPTREK: Prior to this trip members of my family and I had never gone zip lining. However, upon discovering Ziptrek Ecotours (www.ziptrek.com) we felt secure enough to give it a try.

Ziptrek Ecotours is the pioneer of zipline tours in North America! With an award winning ecological curriculum and the highest, longest, and most ziplines around, Ziptrek offers an entertaining combination of education and adventure. On the Ziptrek Bear Tour, one gets to experience stunning aerial vistas over Fitzsimmons Creek. This tour is perfect for families, groups and those who have never ziplined before. There are five incredible ziplines, joined by a network of suspension bridges, boardwalks and trails. I was quite nervous in the weeks leading up to this experience, but because the first zipline was really one for beginners it removed all of my jitters. Our two guides, Catie and Niall were fantastic and really made us all feel at ease. Ziptrek is an outdoor adventure activity and operates in all weather conditions. Reservations are strongly recommended. There is a 24 hour cancellation policy, a 275 pound upper weight limit. Guests must be a minimum of 15 years old to zip without a guardian. Ziptrek will be setting up shop in Mont Tremblant, Quebec next spring. If you are visually impaired, you can participate in this program but must have a personal guide. Unfortunately, this is not an accessible activity for someone in a wheelchair.

WHERE TO STAY: I have always appreciated exploring Fairmont hotels. We had a great experience at The Fairmont Chateau Whistler Resort Hotel (www.fairmont.com/whistler), which does indeed define mountain luxury.

An all season resort destination, The Fairmont Chateau Whistler hotel offers a seamless blend of year-round adventure and unsurpassed guest service for business or pleasure. With mountainside ski out the door convenience and an on-site Whistler golf course, the classic elegance of this award-winning hotel offers a modern alpine setting featuring exceptional dining, full resort amenities, a Vida Spa and Fairmont Gold - Fairmont’s exclusive lifestyle hotel experience. There are an incredible 550 rooms here (15 of which are fully handicapped accessible), an in-house reservation centre for all Whistler activities and a rental station for bikes and ski gear. A small and pretty shopping plaza is part of the facility as well, featuring an art gallery and some boutiques. We just loved the two outdoor pools, one for lap swimming and the other which connects to an indoor one. There are three whirlpools, sauna and steam rooms and two outdoor plexipave surface tennis courts. There is a spa and health club. The entire facility is wheelchair accessible.

For dinner, the Wildflower and the Grill Room are particularly popular. The latter is Whistler’s newest destination for exceptional chops, steak and seafood. Our group had the pleasure of experiencing the latter. Reservations are highly recommended and they can be made online or by telephone. This is fine dining at its best, with delicious appetizers such as the heirloom tomato salad. Their eight and 10 ounce tenderloins, rack of lamb and seared halibut are recommended. For the table, there is a selection of side dishes you can share. We opted for the truffled Yukon gold mashed potatoes and the sautéed BC mushrooms. For dessert, the chocolate mousse cake went over well.

DINING: We heard some very good things about the Brewhouse Restaurant (<http://www.markjamesgroup.com/brewhouse.html>) and our party of five was not disappointed. This is one of the busiest spots in the Whistler Vil-



An outside view of Nat Bailey Stadium.

lage all year round. With a separate restaurant, bar and mezzanine, the Whistler Brewhouse is capable of accommodating groups large and small. The pub has a cozy two-sided fireplace and lots of TVs, making it the perfect place to watch the game when you’re tired from playing all day. The restaurant is warm and family friendly with a great kids’ menu and a huge patio for Whistler’s long, hot summers. The cuisine is an inspired and appetizing mix of barbeque and rotisserie classics, with exceptional pizza and pasta options. These flavours are complemented by their range of handcrafted ales and lagers, brewed on-site. Our party of five shared some starters, the fish tacos and tuna maki roll and decided upon a few different main courses: the wild mushroom pizza, mac & cheese, a 12 ounce angus tripline and chicken & ribs. The food and atmosphere was great. We particularly liked the cute model train which made its way through the restaurant on miniature tracks above us. The main entrance is wheelchair accessible.

Mike Cohen is the editor of Inspirations. Email him at mcohen@inspirationsnews.com, follow him on Twitter @mikecohencsl and at www.sandboxworld.com/travel.



A view from the top of Grouse Mountain.



Social Integration Services Program at CDC Vimont

Needs
Disability
Impaired
Disabled
Special
Fragile
Physical
Learning
Autism
Delay
Developmental
Challenged
Aspergers
ADD
ADHD
Visually

Looking to have your loved one feel fulfilled? The Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board, offers a Social Integration Services Program at CDC Vimont. This program will help promote social and work integration skills needed to live within our community.

Social Integration Services is a program that will offer Adults with an Intellectual or Physical Impairment an opportunity to maintain and enhance basic social skills and work integration skills needed to live and work within the community.

CDC Vimont within the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board is pleased to be able to offer a diverse program that will promote self-esteem, self-worth and improve overall health of your loved one. With basic life skills teaching, your child will maintain a more independent role. We can help by creating a personal routine through weekly attending school.

For more information about how our program can help, please call 450-688-2933 ext. 4141.



COMMISSION SCOLAIRE SIR-WILFRID-LAURIER
SIR WILFRID LAURIER SCHOOL BOARD

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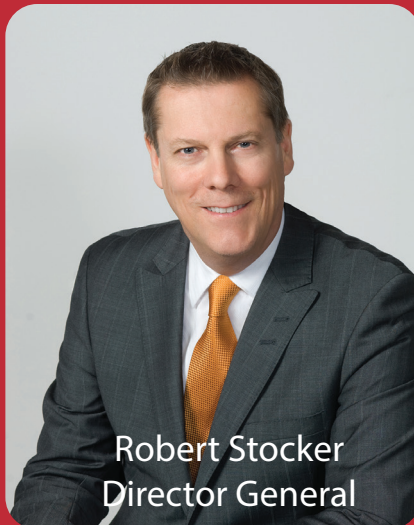


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The English Montreal School Board is proud to have been the initiator of Inspirations, a snapshot of our special needs community.



Angela Mancini
Chairman



Robert Stocker
Director General

Congratulations to our Student Services Department and the Communications and Marketing Division for showing the vision to introduce such an extraordinary publication to our educational landscape.



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