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From the House:

Interview with Minister Qualtrough on new legislation on a 'barrier-free' Canada ... p. 5

All Access Life Review:

The Xbox Adaptive Controller ... p. 9

Help wanted: Tips to prepare young adults for job hunting ... p. 17

Self-contained classrooms give students the chance to succeed ... p. 20

Partners pitch in to celebrate *Inspirations* at 10 years ... p. 24, 25

Building problem-solving skills ... p. 28

La danse pour tous ... p. 34

Adapted travel ... p. 40 to 42

Inside this edition

Mathieu Auclair gets ready to play ball with his Challenger Baseball Québec group in Laval. (Photo, Carole Brochu)



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The Dynamic Funds Caregiver of Inspiration 2019:

Tracey Reed spreads happiness at Huntingdon Adult Education and Community Centre

By Cindy Davis

When Tracey Reed talks about her job as an attendant in the Student Integration Services (SIS) program at the Huntingdon Adult Education and Community Centre (HAECC), she giggles infectiously. Reed, who has been at the Centre for seven years has an obvious love and passion for her work.

"Someone asked me the other day, if I won lots of money would I quit my job, and I said 'there is no way'" she says. "I mean it; I absolutely love it. This is my second family."

Located an hour southwest of Montreal in the rural town of Huntingdon, Quebec and very close to the American border, HAECC is a bilingual adult education centre that provides students the opportunity to learn a trade, finish high school and prepare for CEGEP. It houses one of two SIS programs offered by the New Frontiers School Board – the other being NOVA in Chateaugay.

Reed is an attendant in the lowest functioning class of the SIS program, and is responsible for the care of 11 to 13 students at a time, along with one teacher



Tracey Reed with some of the students in the SIS program at Huntingdon Adult Education and Community Centre. From left: Jason Ford, Suzie Carpentier, Éric Odermatt, Rene Gobeil, Tracey Reed, Cindy Scott. (Photo, Tiffany Dickie)

and another attendant who is solely responsible for the needs of one individual. The students range in age from 21 to 71 and have various disabilities ranging from autism to cerebral palsy, as well as two

students who use wheelchairs. Though the work can sometimes be physically challenging, Reed genuinely feels that the work is as much a gift for her as it is for her students.

"They are all wonderful," Reed gushes. "They are all different and wonderful. They inspire me because they are always happy. They are willing to learn, and they never give you a hard time. Of course, they are just like everyone else and have their bad days, but even then, they are always happy."

Students are bussed in from various areas in the region such as Valleyfield, Saint-Louis-de-Gonzague, Saint-Chrysostome, Chateaugay and as far away as Hemmingford, which is approximately 45 minutes from the Centre. A typical morning in her class starts at 9 a.m. and includes a chat and reading time - either as a class, with the teacher Tiffany Dickie, or one-on-one with Reed. The class then goes over the daily news and weather reports, goes for walks and has gym class

three days a week. Afternoons are filled with activities like meditation, baking, and a life skills program that teaches students important day-to-day tasks like doing laundry, shaving and cooking. The students are all given chores to complete at the end of the day and are always ready to happily return the next day.

Reed started at HAECC approximately seven years ago when the program began. She had been an attendant at Heritage Elementary School, working with children with behavioral issues and made the switch when the school principal, Daryl Ness, took on the position of director of HAECC. Reed says that at first she was hesitant to work with adults, but with Ness's encouragement, she made the leap and hasn't looked back.

It was Ness who nominated Reed for the Caregiver of Inspiration Award in recognition of her devotion to her students throughout the years.

"Tracey is incredibly caring and cares for each of our students as if they were her own children," said Ness in his nomination letter. "I am nominating Tracey because of her dedication to the happiness and well-being of her students. She constantly ensures that there are added value activities, that differentiation occurs within the classroom and that the families/caregivers are happy with our program."

"Her caring and commitment to our program is infectious and very obvious to everyone who enters our Centre. Tracey inspires other educators and ensures that our students are appreciated and valued within the school and Chateaugay Valley community."

Congratulations to Tracey Reed for being an outstanding Caregiver of Inspiration.

If you have a Teacher or Teacher Team of Inspiration to nominate, email us at info@inspirationsnews.com.

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From one school board to another, OT ideas go north

By Hyunkyo Choi

As a school-based occupational therapist (OT) with the Lester B. Pearson School Board (LBPSB), I really enjoy a dynamic and diverse work environment. The opportunity to go up North to the Kativik School Board in Kuujuaq to supervise OT students from McGill University, however, was a unique and amazing experience.

We often joke that a school-based OT often lives and works out of the trunk of his or her car. This became a strange new reality once we began to plan and pack. My two students, Olivia Di Marino and Julia Gentile, and I wanted to have ample equipment with us. This meant packing numerous boxes of supplies in addition to our personal necessities. Any good trip and adventure starts with good planning and packing, and we were determined to take as much with us as possible.

In September 2018, we headed north, where we had the opportunity to work at Pitakallak Elementary School and Jaanimmarik High School. It took some time to adjust to the new external and school environments. Kativik schools truly are community schools that integrate the local culture. Depending on the season, there are various times when the school activities will change to be in line with the community activities, such as berry picking or scavenger hunts. These activities take place during school hours with the whole community and are real-time educational experiences. This experience was novel to us, providing a concrete meaning to the saying, "It takes a village to raise a child."

The focus of our work was to provide as much indirect service as possible, including fine motor activities, ergonomic principles, environment modification and staff education. We



Olivia Di Mario, Hyunkyo Choi, and Julia Gentile during a berry picking excursion. (Photo courtesy of Hyunkyo Choi)

were able to demonstrate and make recommendations on how to improve fine motor skill development. We started implementing a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) environment in a classroom to meet the different needs of the students. UDL is used to facilitate creating a learning environment that is more organized and relaxed by having different styles of working stations, such as lap tables on the floor or standing tables. Furthermore, we were able to provide suggestions on the setup and the type of equipment that would be beneficial within their "Nurture Room," which is part of a specialized program that simulates a home-like environment to help improve the development of life skills.

The ability to introduce an OT perspective within the Kativik schools was a privilege, and I sincerely believe that this pilot project is just the first step in building a partnership between our two communities and enriching our understanding of each other.

This project was a collaboration between McGill University, the Lester B. Pearson School Board and the Kativik School Board. It included Erik Olsthoorn, the director of School Operations at KSB, Professor Caroline Storr from McGill's School of Physical and Occupational Therapy, and Victoria Stuhc and Hyunkyo Choi, OTs at the LBPSB.



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FROM THE HOUSE

Interview with Minister Qualtrough on new legislation on a 'barrier-free' Canada

By Jack Silverstone

"We want to build inclusive systems from the beginning. Canadians with disabilities should not have to wait until they are discriminated against before they can get help. We're going to be proactive in eliminating barriers," explained the Hon. Carla Qualtrough in a meeting I had with her in the beautifully remodeled West Block of the Parliament buildings in Ottawa on April 12. The structure is now home to the House of Commons while Centre Block, with its famous Peace Tower, undergoes a massive multi-year renovation.

Carla Qualtrough, lawyer and former Paralympic swimmer — she is legally blind but functions seamlessly with corrected vision — was elected as the Liberal Member of Parliament for Delta, BC, in 2015 and was appointed Canada's first-ever Minister of Sports and Persons with Disabilities. Today she has the weighty position of Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility.

The Minister pointed out that some 60 percent of human-rights complaints in this country arise from disability and accessibility issues. She emphasized that the government, with the Accessible Canada Act: An Act to Ensure a Barrier-free Canada, currently referred to as Bill C-81, wants to move disability discrimination from tribunals and courts and shift the conversation

away from handouts and charity to inclusion for all. The proposed legislation, the only one to receive all-party consent when it was introduced in the Commons, is currently in the Senate for review, and every indication is that it will clear the upper chamber and become law before Parliament breaks for the summer. When the bill received second reading in the House of Commons last September, Minister Qualtrough, as the lead minister, declared it to be "...an historic day for disability rights in Canada."

Minister Qualtrough then turned our discussion to the economic benefits of a barrier-free country. She noted that persons with disabilities tend to be well-educated and with proper accessibility can assist with Canada's labour shortage. She also pointed out, with a passion undiminished from the minute we began our interview, that accessible tourism is worth some \$5 billion to the Canadian economy. Already hotels and conference and convention centres are being preferred if they are barrier-free.

While the pending bill deals only with areas under federal jurisdiction, such as rail and air travel, banking and telecommunications, Minister Qualtrough expressed the hope that the federal initiative would serve as a model for those provinces and territories that have not yet enacted accessibility legislation and that there would be a level of harmonization so that accessibility is in place across the country. She noted with pride that there



Minister Carla Qualtrough meets with a guest at the 2018 International Day of Persons with Disabilities Reception on Parliament Hill.
(Photo, Employment and Social Development Canada)

is already a deputy minister for an accessible public service on the job as the proposed law will extend to virtually every area of the federal government. Indeed, there is already a recruitment process underway for a CEO and board members for the proposed Canadian Accessibility Standards Development Organization, mandated in the bill, as well as a Chief Accessibility Officer.

Minister Qualtrough affirmed that despite initial concerns voiced by some advocates over timelines, enforcement and scope of the bill, she was gratified by the overwhelming support she has received for this federal legislative initiative from

accessibility organizations nationally. "There has been a change in attitudes in this country. Persons with disabilities in Canada now have a political voice. All Canadians benefit from an accessible Canada. A real culture change is being felt across the country as more and more people understand the importance of accessibility. We need that culture change" she concluded.

Jack Silverstone is Inspirations' Ottawa Bureau Chief. He is a lawyer and was chief of staff to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration from 2005-2006. He is counsel to The Rothwell Group.



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Galileo's SIS services continue to grow with higher enrolment, more internships

By Lisa Trotto and Martina Schiavone

At Galileo Adult Education Centre, we are proud to announce the growth of both our Social Integration Services (SIS) and Sociovocational Integration Services (SVIS) programs. We began this initiative five years ago with 20 SIS students. This year, we have welcomed over 140 francophone and anglophone students from across the island of Montreal, Laval, Repentigny and Terrebonne, filling a vital need. Our program is an example of integration and community support at its finest.

Our SVIS work preparation program has flourished. We have worked hard to build strong partnerships with our community partners at the Centre de réadaptation en déficience intellectuelle et en troubles envahissants du développement (CRD-ITED) de Montréal and several CIUSSS. Now, more than 30 special needs students are participating in both individual and group internships within our com-



Galileo SIS students enjoy painting a mural in their cafeteria/gym on March 25 to enhance their surroundings. (Photo courtesy of Galileo Adult Education Centre)

munity, compared to five students when we began the program three years ago. Our SIS students are taking part in stages at reputable companies such as Canadian Tire, Shell, Maxi, Home Depot, STM, Café Brossard, Cavan, Super C and Long & McQuade.

Students are thriving in their new work environments and gaining practical hands-on experience that translates into personal growth and increased autonomy and independence. Not only are students able to gain tangible skills, but it also allows them to feel a sense of belonging and purpose in the wider community.



Galileo SIS students pose for a group photo at their school. (Photo courtesy of Galileo Adult Education Centre)

Dream, presented by the Galileo SIS students

On May 24, Galileo Adult Education Centre's SIS students invite you to their theatre production of *Dream*. For the past five years, Galileo students and staff have been mesmerizing parents and community members with their incredible acting and artistic skills. They do it all: singing, dancing, acting, playing Brazilian percussions, creating stage props and making culinary delights for their guests. Galileo students keep excelling in their SIS and SVIS programs in collaboration with the integration of their peers in the Language and Academic program.

We believe that there are no boundaries when it comes to learning, whether it be language or ability. At Galileo, we offer both English and French programs and adapt all of our activities to our students' varying educational needs. These include programs such as art therapy, which has a wonderful benefit of decreasing anxiety through creative expression. This year, our students have created a mural, beautifying the school with their work. And our favourite traditional activities continue to take place during the year, such as our camping trip, outings, and therapeutic horse ranch visits. In addition, we are currently building a sensory

room that will be ready in May 2019, thanks to donations from the No Better You Foundation, Italiani di Montreal e Amici and the English Montreal School Board's Adult Education and Vocational Services Department.

With our main goal being the success of our students, we offer limitless encouragement and support. Galileo is more than a school. Together, we are a family.

Lisa Trotto is a SIS teacher, and a Martina Schiavone is the principal of Galileo Adult Education Centre.

SIS students give back with School of Sudz



Galileo Adult Centre staff and students accept a cheque from Italiani di Montreal e Amici on January 18. Featured in the front row: Nick De Vincenzo, Martina Schiavone, Carmelo Tortolano, and Silvana Di Flavio.

to end, from choosing scents, colours and molds to packaging. The precision in weighing all the oils, pouring the batter into molds, and sealing the soaps (which are made with 100 percent natural oils) teaches students valuable work skills.

ICI Télévision was present not only to film the students making these products, they were there to celebrate a special collaboration between Galileo and non-profit group Italiani di Montreal e Amici, which was founded by Carmelo Tortolano and raises funds for the Cedars Cancer Foundation, Giant Steps School and Galileo. After filming SIS students preparing their products, Italiani di Montreal e Amici presented Galileo with a cheque in the amount of \$4,000. These funds, raised at an autism awareness bowling fundraiser on November 17, 2018, will fund the SIS students' visit to a therapeutic horse ranch in June. To show their appreciation, Galileo prepared beautiful gift baskets with all of their products, which Italiani di Montreal e Amici in turn sold for Valentine's Day. All proceeds were donated to the Cedars Cancer Foundation.

Galileo Adult Education Centre's new School of Sudz welcomed ICI Télévision's Nick & Silvana to their workshop on, January 18, to share their process in making lip balms, scented soaps and candles. The SIS students and their teacher Miss Lisa and Miss Natalia named this new sensory project The School of Sudz after an introductory soap making class last year went off without a hitch. The students actively engage in different processes from beginning

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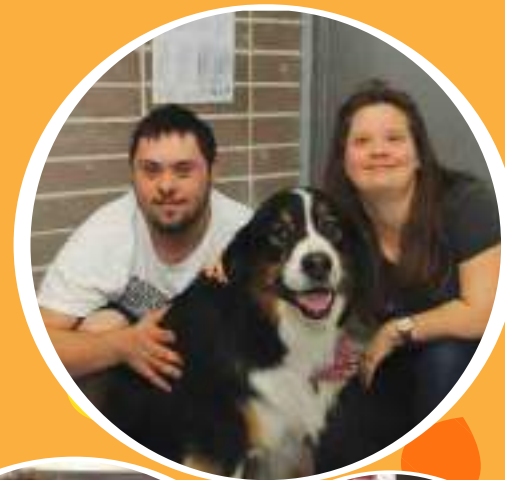
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How to create awesome high-tech visual supports...for free

By Andrea Prupas and Olivia Colalillo

Visual supports are an important component of learning for many of our students. Extensive research has established the benefits of using them, such as better comprehension when information is provided both visually and orally, and taking advantage of greater strengths in visual processing compared to auditory processing.

Visuals can be used as a support for behaviour, language and social interactions. Visual schedules, first-then boards, choice boards, communication boards and social stories can be important supports for many of our students. If you are interested in learning more about using visual supports specifically for your child, some helpful professionals you might want to consult are: your child's teacher, occupational therapist, speech-language pathologist or your school board's assistive technology consultants. For a catalogue of visuals and for some inspiration, check out the Geneva Centre's visuals gallery: <https://visuals.autism.net/>.

How can you create your own visual supports at home for your child? Keep in mind that they don't have to necessarily be high-tech. However, if you want to try some higher tech tools, we're big fans of using free resources when they get the job done.

Here are three ways that you can get started with some easy-to-use assistive technology tools:

ConnectABILITY.ca is a Canadian web-based visuals engine that is available in both French and English. Choose from multiple layouts and templates, and access real pictures or symbols in their images bank. There is also the option to import your own image file. You can save the visual as a PDF afterwards or print for immediate use.

<https://bit.ly/2tKysnr>

LessonPix is a web-based visuals engine that requires a paid subscription for use

of all of its features. Low-cost, it's a worthwhile purchase if you want to create visuals with advanced features, including importing your own photos. However, if you want to simply create different types of visual supports with the symbols provided, the free resources are a quick and easy option. Be sure to click on the "clip art" menu on the site, as this is where the "create materials" tray is located. Drag your photos onto the tray, click "done" and *voilà!* Your visuals are now ready to be downloaded, saved or printed as a PDF. Note, available in English only unless a paid subscription is purchased.

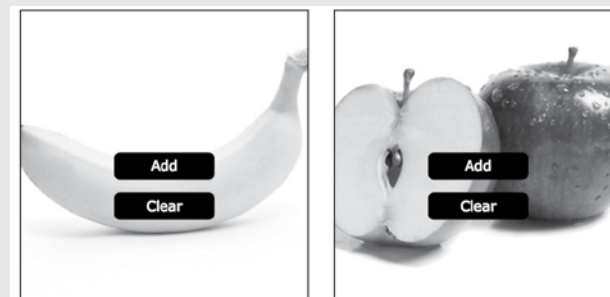
<https://bit.ly/2XsAg2f>

SoundingBoard is a free iOS app for iPhone or iPad (designed by AbleNet) that is used primarily for creating 20 location communication boards. There are a set of boards already included

in the app that can be used as is, but you can also customize the board for your child with your own pictures and voice (highly recommended). Check out a demonstration here: <https://bit.ly/2tHBDws>. The app includes switch access for those individuals that might require alternative access. <https://apple.co/2GOM0aa>

Using an amazing assistive technology tool? Please tell us about it. Contact us at at-emsb.org.

Andrea Prupas and Olivia Colalillo are Assistive Technology Consultants at the EMSB.



An example of a choice board. (Photo, ConnetABILITY.ca)

All Access Life Review

The Xbox Adaptive Controller gets a gold star

By Bradley Heaven and Dan O'Connor

People who were once spectators due to limited mobility are now able to join in on the action and discover the world of gaming, thanks to Microsoft's best piece of assistive technology to date. The company has created a controller designed specifically for people with limited mobility called the Xbox Adaptive Controller. Users can create their own unique setup by attaching their current 3.5-mm jack switches to its 19 programmable ports. Whether it's with head switches, foot pedals or joysticks, the possibilities are endless with this controller, which is compatible with Xbox One and Windows PC.

We ordered the Xbox Adaptive Controller the day it became available, and we've been using it ever since. We decided to make a YouTube video showing just how amazing it is, and this video has had one million views! It's remarkable that an assistive device like this is going mainstream and sparking the curiosity

of everyone. Microsoft even ran a heart-touching ad on this controller during the Super Bowl in February.

On our YouTube channel "All Access Life," we play various games using the controller and we recommend you go check them out to see it in action. The look on Brad's face as we play alongside each other is something you've got to see!

On our website we connect you to new accessible products that are coming out (such as apps) and to general resources. We divide them into eight categories: General accessibility (for everyone), physical disabilities, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, autism, Deaf/Hard-of-hearing, blind/visually impaired and elderly. We do this by constantly updating the site when new resources become available to keep our members up-to-date.

We also have an online forum, where members can join for free to share com-

ments, questions and concerns. The website has links to all of our social media pages, so you can see what we're up to along the way.

The goal of All Access Life is to break the stigma attached to various disabilities, educate people on the life-changing resources out there and build an interactive community that shares information. Become a member today and join us on our journey to make this world more accessible.

Bradley Heaven and Dan O'Connor are the founders of the website All Access



Bradley Heaven and Dan O'Connor give the Xbox Adaptive Controller a great review.

Life, "one-stop-shop" that connects people with accessible resources. Dan has been working as Brad's aide for 10 years now, and they are a one-of-a-kind team. It's taken them two years to build this website. Have a look: www.allaccesslife.org.



Notebook

By Wendy Singer



On February 17, the Université de Montréal's second annual Sharing Smiles Day took place in collaboration with Special Olympics Quebec. The event is spearheaded by Oral Health, Total Health (OHTH), a federal non-profit organization headed up by individual student bodies of Canadian university dental faculties. OHTH aims to increase access, advocate, educate and improve oral health care for people with special needs. The Montreal initiative, led by fourth-year dental stu-

dent **Andee Goldstein**, welcomed over 200 people for a fun and health-oriented day. At the event, 50 dental students performed dental screenings on the Special Olympics athletes, and each participant received an assessment. Over 30 percent of the athletes were in need of a treatment of some sort. Following the screenings, each athlete received their own hygiene kit and practiced their brushing skills. The day was not just all about dental hygiene. Guests had fun between screenings playing basketball and hockey, and competing in track and field, which goes a long way in demystifying the dental experience. It saw two important communities come together to bridge the gap towards more accessible oral health care for those with special needs.



Dental school students and Special Olympics athletes have fun at the Sharing Smiles Day on February 17. (Photo, Amos Goldstein)

The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (MMFA), Autisme sans limites, the Fondation Les Petits Rois, Giant Steps School and the Gold Centre joined forces on April 14 to raise awareness and celebrate Autism Awareness month at their Neurodiversity Awareness Day. Coordinated by **Louise Giroux**, Educational Programs officer at the MMFA, they welcomed over 100 people of all ages who enjoyed a series of creative art initiatives. A quiet area was available to those who needed a calm refuge. MMFA mediators and volunteers from the partner organizations were on hand to support the participants and answer their questions. The day presented an opportunity to encourage the inclusion of people living with autism and emphasize the fact that everyone has a role to play in our society.

On May 5, Wagar Adult Education Centre, Giant Steps School, the Transforming Autism Care Consortium and the Pathways ASD Research Group hosted "Pathways in Developmental Health" at Wagar. This half-day conference was the final event of the Autism Festival, which took place in Montreal from May 1 to 5, and was a part of the International Society for Autism Research conference. The Pathways in Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) study, which includes 421 Canadian families (134 who live in Montreal) and spans over 14 years, focuses on how children with ASD grow and develop. By identifying the child, family, community and services factors that influence child trajectories, the study is generating evidence for more flexible, developmentally appropriate policies and practices across Canada. **Nick Katalifos**, principal of Wagar,



Daniel Granger with athlete Nadia Tardif from the Laurentides delegate on the podium on March 10 in Salaberry-de-Valleyfield during the Special Olympics Quebec Winter Games 2019. (Photo, Steve Blanchette)

The Governor General of Canada, the **Honourable Julie Payette**, issued a news release December 28 on the new nominations to the Order of Canada, which included the Chair of Special Olympics Quebec and Chair of the Presidents' Council, **Daniel Granger**. This is one of our country's highest accolades, honouring people whose service shapes our society; whose innovations ignite our imaginations; and whose compassion unites our communities. Granger will keep us informed on his upcoming induction at Rideau Hall in Ottawa.

Mayada Elsabbagh, co-director of TACC, and **Thomas Henderson**, director general of Giant Steps, welcomed guests to the event. Speakers included Pathway researchers: **Dr. Peter Szatmari**, Chief of the Child and Youth Mental Health Collaborative between the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, the Hospital for Sick Children, and the University of Toronto; **Dr. Pat Mirenda**, professor, Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology and Special Education at the University of British Columbia; **Dr. Wendy Ungar**, professor, University of Toronto's Institute of Health Policy, Management and Evaluation and an affiliate scientist with the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences; and **Dr. Stelios Georgiades**, assistant professor, Department of Psychiatry and Behav-

Autism and Art in the Laurentians (AAL) is responding to the need for services in the areas north of Montreal. In 2017, they received a \$25,000 grant from Autism Speaks Canada, and this year, they received a \$20,000 grant from Unity for Autism. Both Canadian advocacy groups, based in Toronto, award grants across Canada. Co-founder of AAL, **Julie Chou-Lachapelle**, was delighted to receive a visit from Unity for Autism's Executive director **Karen St. Denis** on November 23 at Sainte Agathe Academy. AAL also meets at Laurentian Regional High School in Lachute. Both of these Sir Wilfrid Laurier



AAL artists in action in their clubroom at Laurentian Regional High School on January 30. (Photo, Julie Chou-Lachapelle)

School Board schools have provided AAL with space for their weekly arts program, which brings young adults with autism together with local artists, and friendship clubs with student and community volunteers who meet to play games, engage in art projects or just hang out. AAL is run out of the Community Learning Centre, funded by Heritage Canada, which provides two community development agents. The rest is run by volunteers.



Event organizers from Wagar, Giant Steps, the Transforming Autism Care Consortium and the Pathways ASD researcher group met at Wagar on March 5 for the Pathways in Developmental Health conference.

oural Neurosciences at McMaster University; and study participants, mom **Natalie** and her son **Vince**. The study continues, moving on to its third phase of research.

Notebook



Claudia Ridenti and Vanessa Russo receive their gifts from Plant Love Grow on March 4 at the EMSB.

Inspirations was pleased to partner with **Elaheh Bos**, founder of local publishing house Plant Love Grow, in celebration of our 10th anniversary. In our Fall 2018 / Winter 2019 edition, we ran a quiz that consisted of 10 questions. All of the answers could be found within the pages of the edition. Three prizes were up for grabs - one for a school and two for individual families. All were filled with an abundance of Plant Love Grow books, resources and support tools for parents, teachers



Marina Bulic from REACH School receives her gifts from Plant Love Grow's Elaheh Bos on February 28.

and health professionals on the topic of special needs. Congratulations to **Marina Bulic**, school secretary, who won the school prize for REACH School of the Riverside School Board, and **Claudia Ridenti** and **Vanessa Russo**, both students at BCM College, who won individual family prizes. Thank you to Elaheh for partnering with *Inspirations* and sharing your stories! Read more about Plant Love Grow in our Book Review on p. 26 of this edition.

On May 2, The C.A.R.E. Centre held a fundraising dinner at the Hellenic Community Centre of Greater Montreal to raise funds to support their educational and recreational day program for adults over the age of 21 years with physical disabilities. Master of Ceremonies **Elias Makos**, host of CJAD's morning show, kept the evening rolling, which included a delicious dinner, music by saxophonist **Jennifer Bell**, informative and touching speeches by C.A.R.E.'s executive director **Olivia Quesnel**; **Joanne Charron**, interim board president; **Nick Katalifos**, principal of Wagar Adult Education Centre, where C.A.R.E. is located; and **Panagiota Boussios**, client representative on C.A.R.E.'s board of directors. In addition, **Jennifer Maccarone**, MNA for Westmount-Saint-Louis; and **Emmanuela Lambropoulos**, MP for Saint-Laurent applauded the work of the C.A.R.E. Centre, the only English centre of its kind on the island of Montreal, acknowledging the need for support for this community. **Sylvia Lo Bianco**, commissioner for Ahuntsic, Cartierville, Montreal North; and **Angela Spagnolo**, assistant director, Adult Education and Vocational Services were in attendance representing the English Montreal School Board. A highlight of the event was a "Giving Tree," where guests were invited to purchase a leaf (white be-



C.A.R.E. Centre board of directors Joanne Charron, Nelson Asinowski, Alexandra Black, Joanne Zuckerman, Olivia Quesnel, and in the front, Panagiota Boussios, celebrate at the C.A.R.E. fundraising dinner on May 2.



Angela Spagnolo, Eugenia Carystios, Patrizia Ciccarelli, Joanne Charron, Nick Katalifos and Elias Makos at the dinner.

ing \$25, up to platinum at \$1,000) and allocate their donation to one of the centre's four programs (day program, health and wellness, community outings and respite care). The event raised over \$40,000, 13 of which came from the Giving Tree.

The documentary film *Included* was screened on March 28 at the Wagar Adult Education Centre. The film, a collaboration between filmmaker **Merrill Matthews** and his long-time friend **Sam Benamron**, follows the story of Benamron's initiative to hire three general workers with special



Film participants, panelists and special guests gather following the screening and panel discussion at The Business of Inclusive Hiring at Wagar Adult Education Centre on March 28. (Photo, Sara Bernard)

needs at his occupational therapy and physiotherapy clinics in Montreal. The heartwarming film captures the experiences of all three employees, as well as their parents, other staff members and Benamron himself.

The screening was held in conjunction with Agence Ometz and Wagar, and was followed by a panel discussion on the benefits of inclusive hiring that included the film's participants as well as **Jennifer Campbell**, Sociovocational Integration Services teacher at Wagar; **Alyssa Lautman**, employment specialist

at Ometz; and **Melanie Lallouz**, supported employment specialist at Ometz. The panel was moderated by **Sterling Downey**, city councillor for Verdun and a member of the Montreal Commission on Social Development and Diversity.

Representatives from the English Montreal School Board in attendance included vice-chairman **Joe Ortona**; **Bernard Praw**, commissioner for Hampstead, Côte Saint-Luc; **Angela Spagnolo**, assistant director of Adult and Vocational Services; and **Nick Katalifos**, principal of Wagar.

- Cindy Davis

The McGill Centre for Human Rights and Legal Pluralism hosted its annual Disability and Human Rights conference March 15 on the provocative topic of "Disability: Dignity and Inclusion." This half-day event brought together students and legal professionals working in the fields of disability law and policy. It was a part of the Centre's 2018-2019 Disability and Human Rights initiative.

Disability and dignity were certainly "put on trial" as speakers explored topics such as government funding, access to services, language barriers, prenatal screening, inclusive education and competing philosophies of care. The conference featured a keynote address by **Adam Cureton**, associate professor of philosophy at the University of Tennessee, student paper panels, and closing remarks by **David Lepofsky**, accessibility advocate and, since his retirement from the Ontario Public Service, visiting professor at the Osgoode Hall Law School.

Since starting the conference series in 2012, the Centre has featured an impres-

sive array of practitioners, community organizers and researchers debating what they perceive to be "one of the most pertinent human rights issues confronting all of us." The lively discussion and differing perspectives exemplify the relevance of these issues in academic circles and beyond. It is hoped that – through examining the social and legal aspects of disability, accessibility and the celebration of diversity – further conversations and advancements will occur.

- Randy Pinsky



Adam Cureton speaks at the Disability: Dignity and Inclusion conference at McGill University on March 15. (Photo, Sharon Webb)

Intervenant dans l'âme

Par Sarah Rouleau

Vingt groupes de soutien et d'entraide offerts cet hiver à la Fondation INCA.

Rendez-vous hebdomadaires conviviaux, les groupes de la Fondation INCA permettent aux personnes aveugles ou ayant une vision partielle et à leurs proches de s'adapter à la perte de vision, briser leur isolement et découvrir des ressources et astuces pour mener une vie active, vivre en toute autonomie et poursuivre leurs rêves.

Voici le portrait de Pascal Marcil, animateur bénévole de groupes d'entraide.

Travailleur de rue pendant près de 12 ans, Pascal Marcil a perdu la vue à 30 ans, mais est demeuré intervenant. Malheureusement, des problèmes de santé chroniques l'ont contraint à cesser de travailler il y a environ quatre ans. Depuis, il anime bénévolement deux groupes d'entraide par session pour la Fondation INCA Québec.

Pour cet homme de 42 ans, pas question que sa perte de vision ou ses problèmes de santé l'arrêtent d'aider les autres. Ayant lui-même bénéficié dans le passé des groupes de soutien d'INCA Québec, de conseils technos et de livres sonores, il a voulu redonner au suivant.

La force du groupe

Chaque groupe d'entraide que Pascal anime dure huit semaines. Des séances téléphoniques de 90 minutes ont lieu les mardis ou mercredis durant lesquelles

les participants trouvent du réconfort, s'entraident et échangent sur divers sujets.

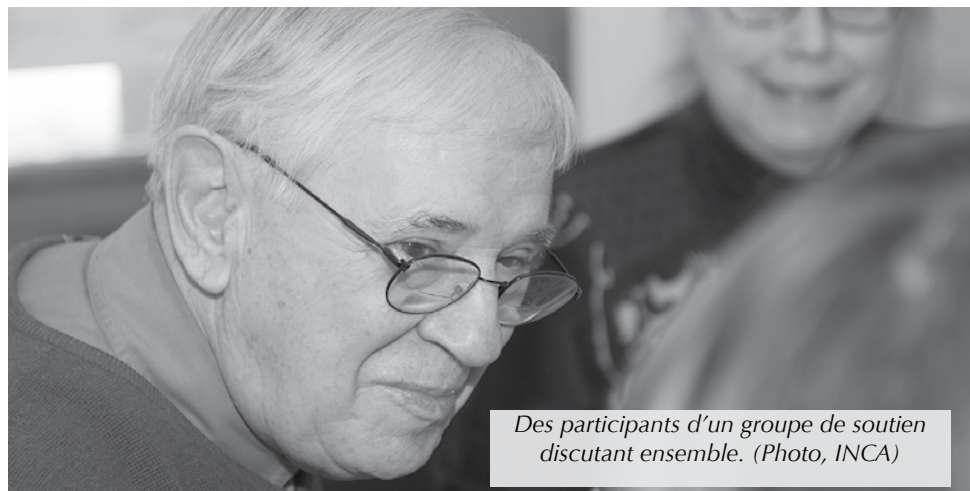
« L'impact des groupes est très grand! Certaines personnes n'ont plus d'espoir et y participer rallume leur flamme », précise M. Marcil. Elles réalisent qu'elles ne sont pas seules. Elles s'encouragent entre elles, partagent des astuces et des ressources pour faciliter leur quotidien et accroître leur autonomie.

Les groupes connectent des personnes aveugles ou ayant une vision partielle, de partout à travers la province. « Pour certains, cet appel est leur seul moment social de la semaine. Plusieurs se font de nouveaux amis avec qui ils continuent d'échanger en dehors des séances », témoigne-t-il.

Un animateur inspirant

Souvent les participants sont surpris de constater que Pascal Marcil s'occupe de groupes d'entraide et utilise un système de conférence téléphonique en étant aveugle. Il leur rappelle alors que « ce n'est pas parce qu'on a un handicap qu'on ne peut pas se permettre d'avoir des tâches, des responsabilités et d'être utile. »

« Toujours prêt à aider, Pascal est passionné par l'intervention et contribue à l'amélioration du service offert à la clientèle. Son parcours d'intervenant lui permet d'apporter un support supplémentaire à ceux qui vivent des moments plus difficiles », affirme Najla Noori, responsable des services psychosociaux chez INCA Québec. « Les participants l'adorent! »



Des participants d'un groupe de soutien discutant ensemble. (Photo, INCA)



Un groupe de soutien. (Photo, INCA)

Doté d'un sens de l'humour, Pascal se réserve toujours un moment pour parler de sujets plus légers, autres que la perte de vision.

Bénéfique pour lui aussi

Il admet que c'est bon pour son estime et qu'il se sent apprécié lorsqu'il voit le bien qu'il fait autour de lui. « Nous avons

des échanges très enrichissants, les gens ont des bagages très variés. Tout le monde a quelque chose à apporter au groupe », conclut l'animateur.

Sarah Rouleau est responsable des communications, du marketing et des événements spéciaux à la Fondation INCA Québec.

New adapted programming **Nouvelle programmation adaptée**

We are now offering adapted programming for children aged 7 to 12. These programs include yoga, music, art and P.L.A.Y. Gymnastics and are structured to provide support for inclusion of children of all abilities.

Nous offrons maintenant de la programmation adaptée pour les enfants de 7 à 12 ans. Ces programmes incluent yoga, musique, art et Gymnastique JOUER et sont structurés afin de favoriser l'inclusion des enfants toutes capacités.

For information about any of these programs, contact

Pour plus d'information sur ces programmes, communiquez avec

Sarah Houle

514-485-6800 x2019

shoule@cotesaintluc.org



Mon fils, l'autisme et moi

Par Emmanuelle Assor

Quand j'ai accouché de mon fils, j'étais tout le temps fatiguée. Mes amies me disaient « Tu devrais dormir quand il dort, nous ça marche »... En fait, je n'avais pas considéré que j'avais peut-être un enfant « différent »...

Un jour, sans raison apparente selon moi, mon fils de 2 ans et demi se fait renvoyer de la garderie. À l'âge de 3 ans, on obtient enfin un diagnostic de TSA (trouble du spectre de l'autisme).

Aujourd'hui il a 9 ans, bien des choses ont changé depuis. Il y a des reportages sur l'autisme, des gens connus parlent de leurs enfants aux « défis spéciaux », on se mobilise pour la cause en faisant des marches et des levées de fonds.

Mais les gens disent encore trop souvent des choses ahurissantes et posent des questions insensibles à des parents comme moi, et je cite :

« Il est beau, il est autiste? Il n'a pas l'air... »

« Est-ce qu'il mord? Le fils de mon amie qui est autiste est très violent et il mord souvent. »

« Est-ce qu'ils vivent longtemps les autistes? »

« On dirait qu'il a des émotions. »

Et ma préférée : « Alors, c'est quoi son talent? »

Il est encore courant que je me fasse prendre à part à l'école, autrefois au CPE, pour me faire dire que mon enfant manipule ses éducateurs, ne veut pas jouer avec les autres, et pire encore, est paresseux!

Il reste beaucoup de chemin à faire au niveau de la sensibilisation et de la prise de conscience de cette fameuse « différence ». Mon enfant est rigide et non capricieux. Il aime la solitude mais aussi la compagnie des autres. Il vit dans son univers magique où il écoute

de la musique classique, joue avec des mobiles, regarde les étoiles et adore les poissons.

Depuis deux ans, il nous parle. À sa façon bien entendu. Mais nous sommes ravis. Parfois il fait encore des crises car les choses ne se passent pas comme prévu. Aux autres parents qui nous jugent en se disant « Encore un enfant roi! », je réponds que nous on se trouve chanceux de pouvoir comprendre ce qu'il vit. Il a fait tant de chemin depuis sa naissance!

Par ailleurs, j'ai appris à me détacher de ce que les gens pensent de nous. Ils ne connaissent pas notre histoire. Ils ne sont pas éduqués au sujet de l'autisme et des troubles de développement. Je leur souhaite simplement de rencontrer et d'apprendre à connaître un enfant autiste. Après je suis certaine que les regards de travers et les questions ridicules cesseront.

Emmanuelle Assor est journaliste pigiste et la fière mère d'un garçon autiste de 9 ans.



Sasha qui admire la vue de Toronto du haut de la Tour CN.

Développer l'autonomie grâce au Programme FU-T

Par Sarah-Elizabeth Meehan

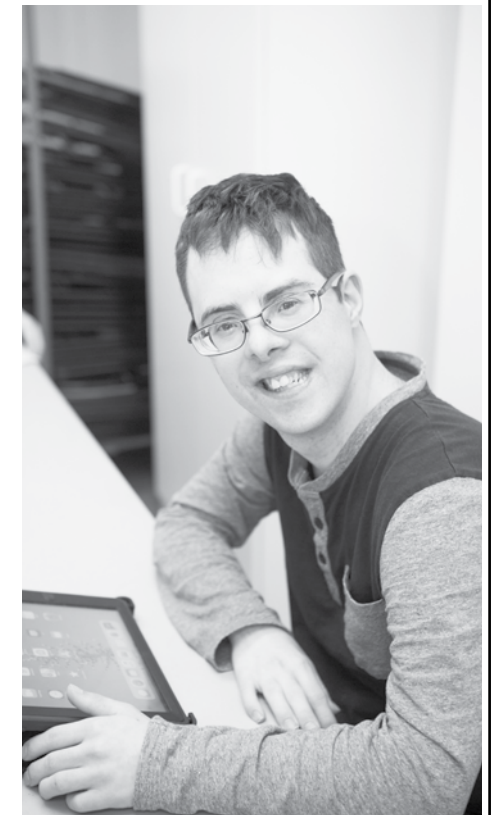
Le manque de ressources pour les jeunes adultes vivant avec la trisomie 21 est flagrant. La transition de l'école à la vie active touche un grand nombre de personnes qui se retrouvent devant plusieurs obstacles. Les milieux de stage et de travail se font rares, et cette situation oblige certaines d'entre elles à rester à la maison. Pour ces jeunes adultes, les impacts sont importants : perte d'acquis, vie sociale inexistante, manque de stimulation, dépression, repli sur soi, diminution de l'estime de soi...

C'est pourquoi, en septembre 2016, le Regroupement pour la Trisomie 21 (RT21) a développé un programme de formation de jour pour adultes : le Programme TASA (technologie au service de l'autonomie). Celui-ci s'adresse aux jeunes ayant la trisomie 21 qui ont terminé leur parcours scolaire. L'objectif principal de ce programme est d'accroître l'autonomie au quotidien grâce à l'apprentissage des technologies numériques. Les participants apprennent différentes fonctions d'aide du iPad et développent de nouvelles connaissances à travers divers ateliers. Chaque activité du programme est adaptée pour que tous les participants puissent développer leur autonomie et leur sens des responsabilités en fonction de leur degré de déficience intellectuelle et selon leurs objectifs personnels.

De septembre 2017 à juin 2018, le Programme TASA a été l'objet d'une recherche-action effectuée en collaboration avec l'Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières (UQTR). Une étudiante du doctorat en psychoéducation est venue à raison de deux fois par semaine au RT21 afin de soutenir les intervenantes dans la réalisation des activités de TASA. L'objectif de la recherche était de créer un programme d'intervention favorisant l'inclusion numérique des participants et d'évaluer les effets du programme sur la trajectoire d'inclusion numérique des participants.

De cette recherche a découlé le Programme FU-T (formation à l'utilisation des technologies). Il s'agit d'un programme contenant 42 fiches d'activités divisées en cinq catégories : bases du iPad, communication, déplacements, divertissement et habitation. Chaque

activité présente des objectifs précis, des critères d'atteinte ainsi qu'un déroulement. La technologie proposée pour le programme est le iPad, mais les activités peuvent facilement être adaptées à d'autres technologies. Le Programme FU-T a été initialement conçu pour



Julien, participant au Programme TASA. (Photo, Constanza Testart Aguirre)

des adultes présentant une déficience intellectuelle, mais il peut néanmoins s'appliquer à d'autres clientèles.

Pour en apprendre plus sur le Programme FU-T, vous êtes invités à la soirée de lancement du programme qui se tiendra le 4 juin 2019. Lieu à déterminer. Merci de nous aviser de votre présence à semeehan@trisomie.qc.ca.

La création du Programme FU-T a été financée par l'Office des personnes handicapées du Québec (OPHQ).

Sarah-Elizabeth Meehan occupe le poste de coordonnatrice aux communications pour le Regroupement pour la Trisomie 21.



A family affair: Brother-sister duo to share story of love, resilience at Autism Speaks Canada's Montreal Walk

By Valentina Basilicata

Elena Jenny Montecalvo knows all too well that a diagnosis of autism in a child impacts the whole family. Her son Giancarlo was diagnosed at three years old, just months after completing a long steroid treatment for nephrotic syndrome (affecting his kidney). Mom and dad were overwhelmed, and baby sister Rosalia was left feeling ignored. But over time, and with help from extended family and specialists, the family has learned to navigate this bumpy road as a team.

"The diagnosis is not something we have to deal with alone," says Montecalvo. "[We want] to show support for families who might otherwise feel isolated and to help spread awareness."

Sharing their story of resilience and devotion, Giancarlo, now seven, and Rosalia, five, stand together proudly as ambassadors for the 2019 Autism Speaks Canada's Montreal Walk. Their team, called GiaGia, will walk at the organization's signature event on Sunday, June 9, at McGill University's Tomlinson Fieldhouse.

"Locally, the walk brings different service providers together to help people connect with each other on a personal level and create a network that wouldn't exist otherwise," explains Montecalvo.

Team GiaGia has set a \$2,000 fundraising goal but are confident they will surpass it. Last year, they collected over \$5,000. "I'm blessed to be surrounded by very generous people," says Montecalvo, adding her strong support system, particularly her mother and husband, make it possible to divide her "time and energy making sure both kids are taken care of." When Rosalia was younger, she didn't always feel like she was getting her fair share of attention. Giancarlo's differences upset her, and she pushed him away. "I had to explain a lot to her about his needs," their mom recounts, "and I find it made her grow up a lot faster."

Since then, Rosalia has worked with special educators to forge a better relationship with her older brother, and her mom regularly schedules mommy-daughter time for her to feel validated. Today, Rosalia lovingly advocates and helps care for Giancarlo. "She



Rosalia and her big brother Giancarlo are the ambassadors for the 2019 Autism Speaks Canada's Montreal Walk. (Photo, Grey Sparrow Photography)

understands her brother better than us!" says Montecalvo, laughing.

Rosalia often plays interpreter for her parents since Giancarlo expresses himself using his own unique language: memorized lines from various videos. A video fanatic, Giancarlo might say his favourite clips are those he records of himself on his most prized-possession – a Samsung tablet. He was one of the recipients through a joint program from Samsung and Autism Speaks Canada, which gifted 500 Galaxy tablets to autism communities.

With the right tools and encouragement from loved ones, Giancarlo continues to make progress at home and at school. There were days when his autism, speech delay, anxiety and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) made it impossible for him to sit in his first-grade classroom. Yet as of January, he has successfully integrated. These small victories represent first steps towards mom and dad's goals for Giancarlo's future: "To be happy, to be independent and self-sufficient – if he can attain that, then I think we will have succeeded [as parents]."

Montecalvo admits, "I went into parenthood thinking that I had it under control, and Giancarlo showed me I had no idea what I was doing. He took me on a different road. We're walking side-by-side instead of me being the one to always guide him."

To register for this year's Autism Speaks Canada's Montreal Walk, or to donate, visit www.ascWalk.ca. Create your own team or join Team Inspirations/EMSB and walk with us!

Mojo Café serves up coffee and important life skills

By Cindy Davis

On Wednesday mornings at John Rennie High School, the students of the independent living class are busy preparing coffee beans, making sure their baked goods are ready and that their cash box has change. When the bell rings for recess, Mojo Café is open for business.

Since November, the students have been selling baked goods and coffee to staff as part of their life skills curriculum. The students are involved in every

element of running the café, says Margo O'donohue Edwards, special education technician in the school's Resource department. Each week, the eight students from Grade 7 to 11 carefully plan the menu, take stock of ingredients they have on hand and purchase food items they need using coupons from flyers that they meticulously scour and clip. They bake everything in advance so that by Wednesday morning, all that is left to do is to prepare the coffee and make the announcement on the school PA system that "Mojo Café is open!" After recess, the students clean up, count their earnings, and decide what portion to use for next week's ingredients. On occasion, proceeds go to charity.

The experience of running the café has taught the students valuable life skills that can help them once they graduate, says O'donohue Edwards. "It's important for the students to learn how to live independently, so they get a lot of life

skills classes. They learn how to cook and clean, and live in an apartment, maybe eventually on their own," she says. "When they go out into the real world, some of them will be able to go into stores and help stack merchandise or eventually work in real coffee shops."

The students work with their aides to pay attention to every detail, from proper hygiene to nutrition. They have even developed their own reward punch card for teachers and staff who would prefer not to pay by cash. "The staff has been supporting this 100 percent," says O'donohue Edwards. "They have been very good about buying the coffee and treats. They can make their own coffee, but they think this is such an awesome idea, they just want to support us."

The program also teaches participating students how to interact with the community at large, and provides the rest of the staff and student body the



Students in the independent living class at John Rennie High School pose next to their Mojo Café on February 10.

opportunity to interact with people with special needs. "To see the high-fives and 'hellos' when they walk through the halls, and that no one is nervous with one another, that alone is a huge success for us," says O'donohue Edwards.

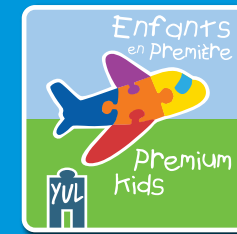


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The Gold Centre is a private, not-for-profit organization supported by the Miriam Foundation.



ENFANTS EN PREMIÈRE

Journée de familiarisation du processus aéroportuaire pour les enfants présentant des troubles du spectre autistique (TSA) ou des limitations fonctionnelles et leur famille.

AVRIL 2020 | EnPremiere@admtl.com

<http://www.admtl.com/fr/adm/collectivites/responsabilite-sociale/implication-sociale>

PREMIUM KIDS

A day for children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) or functional limitations and their families to familiarize themselves with the airport.

APRIL 2020 | EnPremiere@admtl.com

<http://www.admtl.com/en/adm/communities/social-responsibility/community-involvement>



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We reflect and celebrate diversity • *Refléter et souligner la diversité*

Innovation • Innovation

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Respect • Respect

We foster a respectful, nurturing and safe environment • *Favoriser un environnement respectueux, stimulant et sécuritaire.*

Help wanted: Tips to prepare young adults for job hunting

By Laura King and Alice Havel

Parents of adult children with disabilities have more concern about their children's future than those of adult children without disabilities. This is especially true regarding employment, finances and quality of life.

According to 2011 data from Statistics Canada, 49 percent of individuals who reported having a physical or mental disability that limited their activity were employed, compared to 79 percent of those who did not report having a disability. Of course, the employment rate varies depending on the severity of the disability and level of education, amongst other things. The good news is that graduates with disabilities from CEGEP or university have employment rates similar to their non-disabled peers.

As the Adaptech Research Network team, we wanted to find out why some graduates of college or university were able to find jobs, while others were not able to do so. We conducted three studies that shared a common focus: to explore successful strategies for obtaining employment by recent post-secondary graduates with disabilities. We partnered with the Quebec Association for Equity and Inclusion in Post-Secondary Education (AQEIPS) and interviewed people with disabilities who had a job. We also asked our colleagues, who are disability service providers and employment counsellors, if they had any advice. The result includes a

10-point tip sheet, which you can use as inspiration for you and your child to start working on now.

Because schoolwork can take up so much time, parents often encourage their child to focus on their studies. Some parents are also concerned that many part-time jobs are too fast-paced or involve physical labour, thus are not suitable for children who have a disability. Because of this, when their child is ready to enter the job market as an adult, they have a blank CV. There are ways to overcome this. Lots of young people get their first work experience by volunteering. Others create their own jobs by providing some type of service to their neighbours. These experiences help develop confidence, life skills and experience for a CV.

Being able to speak English and French is important in Quebec, and there are more ways to improve language skills outside of the classroom. Consider community recreational activities, summer camp, watching videos or having dinner with friends fluent in French. Remember, the goal for your child is to improve their French, not necessarily to become bilingual.

According to Adaptech findings, successfully employed graduates with disabilities frequently mentioned disclosure of a disability and request for accommodations. This requires self-advocacy skills, which

take time to develop. Involving your child in decision-making activities (such as the preparation of their Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is a great way to encourage autonomy. Helping your child understand their disability and what accommodations they might need will help them to communicate this to others.

Look at the tip sheet, then consider your child's unique situation. Together, you

may come up with other ideas on how to take the first steps down the road to getting a satisfying job.

For information, visit www.adaptech.org.

Laura King and Alice Havel, research associates, prepared this article in collaboration with other members of the Adaptech Research Network.

10 Tips for students with disabilities looking for employment

1. Network to find information and job leads
2. Volunteer and get work experience
3. Practice using both French and English
4. Prepare a CV and keep it updated
5. Develop interview skills
6. Research the company before the interview
7. Consider the advantages of part-time work
8. Decide if or when you want to disclose your disability
9. Remember that most employers can and will provide accommodations if requested
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The Montreal Inclusion Symposium: How will you 'do' inclusion?

By Randy Pinsky

"My name is Mariloue, and I have curly black hair" was how panelist Mariloue Daudier introduced herself at the Montreal Inclusion Symposium on February 28. While a self-description of physical traits is perhaps an unconventional form of introduction, it was a fitting approach to inclusion in action at the culmination of this year's Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance and Inclusion Month.

With the focus being to "Engage; Learn; Co-Create," a panel challenged the audience to commit to inclusion by practicing it beyond the month.

The well-attended event was coordinated by The Friendship Circle; an organization that leads activities for those with special needs. Panelists all agreed that the most meaningful way towards true inclusion is

for those who are most impacted to be included in the conversation.

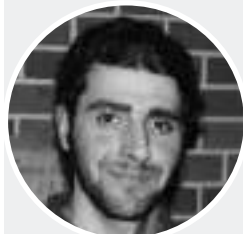
Enrico Quilico, a survivor of a traumatic head injury years ago, spoke about how his work with individuals who suffered from brain injuries reinforced the need to validate and incorporate these voices. Without such consultation, ill-informed assumptions about priorities can be made, causing well-intentioned actions to backfire.

Audience members then broke out into small roundtable discussions, covering topics ranging from social action and sports to education and employment, all through the lens of promoting accessibility and inclusion.

...continued on p. 36



The Montreal Inclusion Symposium on February 28 featured a panel of diverse voices and experiences, which included Enrico Quilico, Steven Abadi, Alelie Ocampo, Mariloue Daudier and Racheli Edelkopf. (Photo, Rocha Studios)



One-on-one with MP Mike Lake: Sharing the struggles and triumphs of autism

By Steven Atme

A few years ago, I was at an Autism Speaks Canada's Montreal Walk. Member of parliament Mike Lake and his son Jaden, who has autism, attended the event as well.

In May 2017, I wrote to Mr. Lake, whose constituency is Edmonton-Wetaskiwin, and included an audio track of one of my piano compositions. A strong advocate for autism, Mr. Lake later replied and kept in touch with me. In the summer of 2018, his office contacted me regarding our communication, and here's what happened next.

Mr. Lake invited me to Ottawa for a roundtable discussion on autism on November 23, 2018. I was happy to bring my father Elie with me for this special occasion, which about 20 people from different fields attended. It was great to have the chance to chat with Mr. Lake before the meeting started.

At the meeting, everyone gave a brief introduction of themselves, and for the next two hours, Mr. Lake led us in a discussion on what the government can do to help provide funding for the special needs community, and ideas on accessibility for schools, healthcare, family support and cooperation.

Many shared questions, statements and, in some cases, their personal stories relevant to each issue. While listening to everyone speak, my father had flashbacks from the difficult times he experienced when I was growing up with autism. Mr. Lake looked at my dad, who was holding his lips tight and sighing heavily, and knew he wanted to say something. My dad said, "With all due respect, we must remind ourselves of one thing. Yes, it's important to have funding, but it's not only about the funds. It's also about finding the right people to reach our children."

My dad shared memories of the struggles he and my mom had before and after my diagnosis. They knew nothing about autism and yet did everything they could to help me become the man I am today. My parents were told by health professionals not to expect much from me. They didn't listen. They pushed me to grow, but it was very hard on them and the rest of my family.

Parents need the right help and support. To further my father's statement, I added, "You'd be surprised of the abilities special people have if you just give them a chance. You must try to reach them. With compassion, patience and faith, the future can be bright. They are inspirations, and everyone could learn from them. Everyone can learn, everyone can grow. By presenting opportunities to grow, you could make a major difference in the lives of special people. Help them fulfill their goals as people in school and at work."



Steven Atme, Mike Lake and Elie Atme at a roundtable discussion on autism in Ottawa on November 23. (Photo, Francesca Desaulniers)

Everything is possible. I was speechless when Mr. Lake replied in the end, "I like that. What you said was spot on and is something many of us need to understand. I like that."

It was truly an honour and privilege being heard at such an incredible event. Thank you, Mr. Lake.

Steven Atme is a pianist and composer, gives private piano lessons and is a public speaker, enlightening on his experience growing up and living with autism.



Perspectives on being proud of your children

By Jay Jones-Doyle

Growing up with a disability is a unique experience to say the least. One experience shared by most, though, is the never-ending procession of medical appointments. These are endured with varying degrees of patience and cooperation – a fact usually correlated with the extent to which we are poked and prodded during any given visit. When growing up, as with most things, we focus on our own experiences and don't usually put an enormous amount of thought to the effect those experiences have on our parents or guardians. This can be accentuated during emergencies.

Conversely, as parents, we never want to see our children suffering and when those fateful moments occur we all handle them differently. In January, my 14-year-old son Benjamin was at his Bantam AA hockey practice when a

teammate accidentally fell into his leg against the boards and broke his femur. The femur is the largest and strongest bone in the body, and so unsurprisingly the doctor asked us if we were sure that this happened at hockey and not in a car accident!

Benjamin was exceptionally brave throughout the whole process. He underwent a six-hour surgery and was in the hospital for nine days. His mother and I (and others) alternated sleeping at the hospital each night. On the second day it hit me: this was a complete reversal of roles. I realized that I was walking in my parents' shoes.

When I was younger I had three major operations: the first in Grade 4, the second in Grade 5, and the last one in Grade 9. My parents stayed at the hospital with me during those experiences, and must have

gone through the gamut of emotions that I went through with my own son years later. It was a really sobering moment for me. I'm not sure that I ever really considered what it was like for my parents while I was recovering – the balancing act they had to do combined with the emotional stress of seeing their child in pain. But now I knew exactly what it was like. Sort of.

Throughout his entire experience, Benjamin was focused on making the episode as positive as possible for everyone around him. He was constantly joking with the medical staff, even during messy procedures, and was regularly checking in with his family about how they were doing. He tried his best to ensure that those who supported him knew that their efforts were appreciated. Above his obvious bravery, it was this that I was most proud of. It's not intuitive to focus on others when you're the center of attention, and I feel that it shows a level of emotional maturity that eludes most 14-year-old boys.

In those moments I saw further proof that Benjamin has it together far more



Benjamin, centre, received a visit from former Montreal Alouette Jesse Joseph, right. (Photo, Sara Dubuc)

than I did at his age, and that he's going to keep surpassing me as the years go on. And you know what? I couldn't be prouder.

Jay Jones-Doyle is the co-founder and president of Legal Lighthouse Inc., the president of Confidence Driven Coaching, the CFO of the Centre for International Sustainable Development Law, and previously worked at the UN's Business and Biodiversity program. He is a motivational speaker, and has cerebral palsy.

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Self-contained classrooms give students the chance to succeed

By Wendy Singer



Special Education Teacher Oscar Casallas, students Matthew Zangwill and Mark Bauj, and Integration Aid Amanda Theocossiadis show their morning meeting board in the ASD class at Roslyn elementary school on April 16.

The English Montreal School Board (EMSB) began offering self-contained classrooms to students nearly 10 years ago. It began with the "Welcoming Class" - a two-year program for students aged four to six with autism or awaiting a diagnosis, which features a small class size and teaching focused on play, social skills development and mastering the prerequisites for the first year of elementary school. The goal in all self-contained classrooms is to prepare the students for a mainstream classroom in a regular school environment.

Julie René de Cotret, assistant director of Student Services at the EMSB, describes the self-contained classroom as a model where students with similar needs are grouped together in a class of six to eight students, and are provided a high level of services from their teacher, aides and specialists (occupational therapists, psychologists, special education consultants and speech language pathologists) as needed. "This is a service to better answer the needs of the students so they can flourish to the best of their ability," says René de Cotret.

These classes provide support to students with learning disabilities, behavioural, social, communication or language challenges, and autism. They also give teachers the opportunity to provide students with tailored attention.

The EMSB's Special Needs Network has since grown to include a variety of specialized classes in multiple schools at the elementary and high school levels. These are explained on the EMSB website. Examples include: Supporting the Educational and Emotional Development of Students (SEEDS), catering to students aged five to 11 with severe behavioural and social difficulties; Early Stimulation Classes for students aged four and five with severe special needs; and Reaching Optimal Opportunities to Succeed (ROOTS) for students aged six to 11 with moderate to severe intellectual disabilities, with or without a related disability.

René De Cotret fondly remembers receiving a letter from a student who attended a SEEDS class at St. Gabriel elementary school due to behavioural issues. On completing Grade 6, she wrote that she could read and write, and was proud to be moving on to high school. "She said SEEDS was the best thing for her!"

The EMSB's Special Needs Network is malleable, changing with the student population.

For example, Pierre Elliot Trudeau elementary school had two SEEDS classes last year. Due to successfully integrating a group of these students, they only needed one class this year. A ROOTS class at Dalkeith elementary school was created due to the request of parents



Inspirations at 10 years: A mirror of our lives

By Joanne Charron

Since its inception 10 years ago, *Inspirations* has reflected our lives as parents of children with special needs, and has inadvertently documented our journeys from isolation to creating a community where we live, love and grow.

Inspirations has given us a platform where we can showcase our trials and tribulations, share information and find comfort in a community of support and comradery.

Back when I was starting out as parent of a child with special needs over two decades ago, it was a daunting, tireless task to find any information regarding any aspect of our lives with our special needs child. *Inspirations* began to address these issues by first seeing the need for a publication, and then, edition by edition, exploring these issues one by one, making the lives of those who follow us easier. This resource is clearing the path for us to see the road.

Inspirations saw the importance of celebrating and giving exposure to our special needs community and garnering support from outside it. It also led to the expansion of the list of contributors, endorsers and sponsors. In turn, we witnessed our world emerging from the invisible to the visible and "mainstream."

As our lives expanded, so did *Inspirations*. The size of the editions grew as did the circulation. There was, and continues to be, more and more material to reflect on and to report. It has also led to the

in the east end of Montreal for a local school for their most vulnerable children. It is the intent of the EMSB's Student Services Department to have a long-term plan so these students can go to school in their area for their entire school career.

"Each year we look at the students we have and figure out how to best meet their needs," says René de Cotret. "We try to bring our students to as high a level as possible. The goal is always full integra-



Joanne Charron, Wendy Singer, Linda Mahler, Freda Solman, Cindy Davis and Donna Tenenbaum at Inspirations' Fun For All Fair on April 14, 2018.

creation of the English Montreal School Board's Special Needs Resources Database, which is now the "go-to" resource and is used by the general community and professionals alike. *Inspirations* also began hosting events to provide much needed resources and information to families who are desperately in need. In doing so, the newspaper connected a disconnected community which created friendships, fellowships and partnerships.

Inspirations gives us a platform to show the importance of programs, dilemmas and realities of our community. The publication has found its way onto the desks of policy makers and lends itself to opening the conversations for change, equality and dignity for our community.

Thank you, *Inspirations*, and happy 10th anniversary! I am excited to see what the next 10 years will bring, and I'm looking forward to growing old with you.

Joanne Charron is a special advisor to *Inspirations*.

tion in the regular classroom when and if they are ready."

For information, visit <https://www.emsb.qc.ca/services/special-needs/programs> or contact the EMSB Student Services Department at 514-483-7200, local 7295. You will be directed to a special education consultant who will be able to answer your questions based on where you live.



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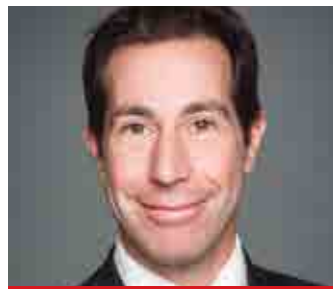
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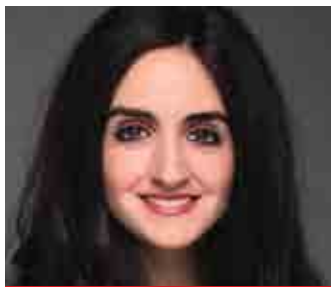
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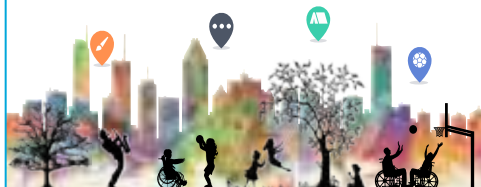


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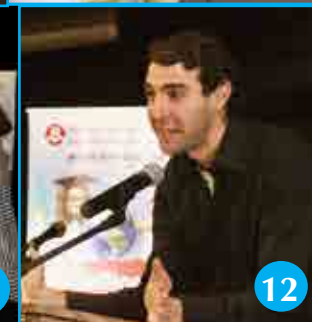
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Celebrating inclusive communities

INSPIRATIONS

Célébrons nos communautés inclusives



- 1 The Inspirations team cuts the cake at the 10th anniversary celebration at the Mackay Centre and Philip E. Layton schools on February 22. From left to right: Wendy Singer, Fay Schipper, Cindy Davis, Mike Cohen, EMSB Mascot Bumble, Nur Erdem, Carole Gagnon, Rikee Madoff, Mona Kamel, Linda Mahler. (Photos, Ross White)
- 2 Herman Erdogmus, Risa Plotnick, Thomas Henderson.
- 3 Joe Ortona, Pela Nickoletopoulos, Mike Cohen, David Birnbaum and Elisabeth Prass.
- 4 Line Riendeau, Nick Katalifos, and France Legeault prepared the Wagar vernissage, and are seen holding floral arrangements prepared by Tecc Flora.
- 5 The TECC Bistro team ready to serve! With Herman Erdogmus (second to the left, back row), JJ Heffring (second to the right) and Willow Stewart (first on the right).
- 6 A crew of volunteers from RBC were on hand to help out, and did a terrific job.
- 7 Part of the Mackay Centre School choir that sang with Martha Wainwright.
- 8 Martha Wainwright sings "Memories" with her son.
- 9 Ada Masciarelli, Michele Matthews, Mitchell Newman, Alexis Gerin-Lajoie, and Tricia Bartley from I Can Dream Theatre.
- 10 Lorne Picard prepares "cupcake" candles at Light A Dream for gift bags. (Photo courtesy of Light A Dream)
- 11 Patrizia Ciccarelli welcomes guests to the Mackay Centre and Philip E. Layton schools.
- 12 Steven Atme was an entertaining Master of Ceremonies.
- 13 Art created by Wagar SIS students on display at the event.
- 14 JEM Workshop packaged the gift bags which included hand-made products by organizations that provide vocational training to students and adults with special needs.

Partners pitch in to celebrate *Inspirations* at 10 years

By Wendy Singer

On the afternoon of February 22, *Inspirations* welcomed friends, colleagues and supporters to the Mackay Centre and Philip E. Layton (PEL) Schools in NDG to celebrate 10 years of service to our special needs community. All guests had one mission in common – working together to unite the community, break down barriers, promote inclusion, and better the lives of people with special needs and their families.

In planning the 10th anniversary celebration, the *Inspirations* team adopted one policy: to involve the special needs community in all aspects of the event. It would be a celebration of *Inspirations* and partners that have grown with us. It would provide an opportunity for vocational experience to students and adults with special needs. It would showcase the talents of our community and share their work with a greater audience.

This mandate proved easy to fulfil, as one need not look far to find organizations that are doing outstanding work within our community.

VIPs in attendance were **David Birnbaum**, MNA for D'Arcy McGee, and **Pauline Ginez** representing the office of **Pierre Arcand**, MNA for Mont-Royal-Outremont. In attendance from the English Montreal School Board (EMSB) were: **Joe Ortona**, vice-chairman; **Joseph Lalla**, commissioner for Montreal West/NDG; **Nathalie Lauzière**, secretary general; and **Pela Nickoletopoulos**, regional director, West Sector. Partners from key organizations included: **Herman Erdogmus**, director general of Summit School; **Thomas Henderson**, director general of Giant Steps School and Resource Centre; **Sherilyn Ami**, director of educational services at École Peter Hall; **Risa Plotnick**, director of School and Rehabilitation Services at the Donald Berman Yaldei Developmental Centre; and **Adrian** and **Nathalie Bercovici**, founders of Generations Foundations.

The event began on the second floor of the school with a magnificent vernissage of paintings and sculptures created by the Wagar Adult Education Centre's Social Integration Services (SIS) students. Guests

mingled while munching on hors d'oeuvre provided by Summit School's **TECC Bistro** and watching a video showing our event partner organizations in action. The vernissage was curated by Wagar art teacher **France Legault**, **Philippe Tyl**, liaison case worker with the West Montreal Readaptation Centre, and psychoeducator and a SIS teacher **Line Riendeau**, with the support of Wagar principal **Nick Katalifos**. The vernissage and video were conceived and coordinated seamlessly by **Linda Mahler**, one of our event organizers.

Lunch was served in the gym-turned-dining room, where guests enjoyed an enticing buffet catered by **TECC Bistro**. The menu included a variety of hummus, "tartine style" open-faced sandwiches, salads and desserts. Approximately 40 students were involved in the food preparation and service under the direction of chefs **JJ Heffring** and **Willow Stewart**.

Floral arrangements created by Summit School's **Tecc Flora** program brought a touch of elegance to the dining room. Students participate in this vocational program under the guidance of florist **Vicki Surplice**.

Patrizia Ciccarelli, principal of the Mackay Centre and PEL Schools, welcomed guests to the new campus, which opened last fall, and Master of Ceremonies **Steven Atme** to the stage. Atme is a long-time partner to *Inspirations*, and is now a columnist for the paper. He speaks at many EMSB schools about living with special needs, and has his own music school called Creaversity. Other speakers included Ortona, who welcomed guests

Thank you to our volunteers

Marisa Volpe and her team of volunteers from the RBC branches of Côte St. Luc and Coronation, and Cavendish and Kildare.

Anthony Tonin and his students from the Work-Orientation Training Path program at John F. Kennedy High School.

on behalf of the EMSB, and *Inspirations'* editorial and managing members including Founder and Editor **Mike Cohen**.

Erdogmus shared touching thoughts on behalf of the community: "*Inspirations* is not just a great place to read about what is going on in the special needs community, but it helps create that community. It gives staff, students, parents and teachers a way to find each other, find resources, and find inspiration. I can tell you firsthand how thrilled our students (and staff) are when they see themselves in a photograph or article. It builds their pride. You can see the students in the hallways showing their friends and teachers. It's a special feeling."

A high note was a heartwarming performance by renowned recording artist **Martha Wainwright**, who sang two songs accompanied by the Mackay Centre School choir, which consists of 10 Grade 4 students, one of which is her son. They wowed the audience with their rendition of Wainwright's late mother **Kate McGarrigle's** song "Prosperina." For the grand finale, Wainwright and her son sang a duet of "Memories." There was not a dry eye in the room!

The event concluded with a short video clip of I Can Dream Theatre's (ICDT) remake of Abbott and Costello's "Who's on first" routine, played by **Alexis Gerin-Lajoie** (Abbott) and **Mitchell Newman** (Costello). This excerpt from ICDT's 2018 show, "Dead...on the orient express," had our guests in stitches. When the video ended, Gerin-Lajoie and Newman surprised guests by appearing live on stage, where they took a bow.

Dessert and tours of the new campus concluded the event. Guests left with a bag of gifts, new memories and connections... and feeling inspired!

The event was a success on many levels. The *Inspirations* team celebrated with friends that have led us to where we are today. Community members networked and reconnected, organizations were showcased, and *Inspirations* marked its 10th anniversary in fulfillment of its initial goal. Our partner organizations shone, and in turn, they have received

Thank you to our sponsors

We extend special thanks to:

- ✓ The EMSB for their support and sponsorship.
- ✓ **Marisa Volpe**, branch manager of RBC's Côte St. Luc and Coronation branch, for sponsoring our lunch.
- ✓ **Jean-Benoit Gauthier**, district manager of Provigo Saint-Jacques for the sponsorship, and the delicious 10th anniversary cake.
- ✓ Mackay Centre and PEL Schools principal **Patrizia Ciccarelli** and her team for their collaboration and hospitality.

Gift bags made with love

Guests left with a special goody bag filled with hand-made products crafted by local special needs vocational programs and businesses. They included: Hand-crafted soap from the **School of Sudz at Galileo Adult Education Centre** made by the SIS students (see story, p. 6); "cupcake" candles from **Light a Dream**, made by individuals living with intellectual disabilities and/or autism, who work out of their Pointe Claire storefront; 10th anniversary notepads from **Summit School's TECC Copy Centre**, a dynamic "learn to work" environment involving students in all stages of production in the printing process. The gifts were packaged by the workers at **JEM Workshop** - a safe and caring workplace for individuals with physical, emotional and intellectual disabilities. JEM worker **Lisa Kessler** contributed a handcrafted greeting card to each gift bag!

On each dining table, guests discovered a zoo of unique, cheerful animal figurines handmade by young artist **Benjamin Lachapelle**. Benjamin is part of Autism and Arts in the Laurentians (see story, p. 10).

The gift bag project was spearheaded by **Cindy Davis**, *Inspirations'* assistant managing editor, who was delighted to meet all of our suppliers and showcase their products.

new requests for their services. We look forward to celebrating all of your successes as we continue to grow together.



Arts & Entertainment

Colours for All is a non-profit outreach initiative that strives to remove the stigma surrounding disability. It aims to offer play opportunities to children with disabilities in the Montreal area through inclusive forms of art, toys and media in a very unique way.

Colours for All was founded by five McGill students, Thun-Carl Sieu, Saara Khan, Alexa Cirillo, Melanie Haffar and Anastasia Katsolis, who are pursuing their studies in occupational and physical therapy.

With the underrepresentation of children with disabilities in toys, Colours for All came about as an effort to portray individuals of all abilities through the most fundamental forms of play: toys and art. With the mandate of offering inclusive forms of art for children with disabilities and increasing the representation of such children who are far too often underrepresented in children's toys and media, this initiative aims to allow every child to see a reflection of themselves in their toys and art.

This project began with the creation of inclusive storybooks, which were donated to a variety of schools across Montreal. Through the depiction of characters with a range of visible and invisible disabilities, the short story called *Hunt Day* offered the children the opportunity to colour each page how they wanted. The storybooks were used during class time to allow the children to foster their artistic skills, as well as learn about acceptance and friendship. The main purpose of this storybook was to emphasize that every individual is unique in his or her own way.

Inclusive and adaptive workshops are currently being hosted on a monthly basis with classes at Peter Hall elementary school, where each student is given the opportunity to explore a new form of art, science, etc. The workshops take on a range of forms from applied arts to music and performing arts, as well as science.

In fact, through these workshops, each child is not only able to express their imagination, but also develop their tactile, fine motor and collaboration skills in a fun and creative way.

With the support of the staff

at Peter Hall and all of our donors, this initiative was able to flourish and bring smiles to the children's faces as they identified themselves and their abilities. The entire team at Colours for All hopes to pursue this initiative and continue to advocate for more inclusive environments for individuals of all abilities.

Including all through play and art

By Saara Khan, Thun-Carl Sieu and Anastasia Katsolis



Colours for All logo display created by Thun-Carl Sieu.

For information, visit the Colours for All Facebook page @coloursforall.cfa.

Saara Khan, Thun-Carl Sieu, Anastasia Katsolis, Alexa Cirillo, Melanie Haffar and are OT and PT students at McGill University and founders of Colours for All.

Inspirational book review



Elahé Bos, founding owner of the company Plant Love Grow, believes "Every child is born to bloom." Her positive attitude is reflected in myriad print and online books, resources and tools to assist parents, teachers and health professionals approach children dealing with emotional and developmental issues.

Bos illustrates everything herself, writes most of the books but not all, plus co-writes and confers with specialists in respective fields.

Bos's training in applied human science, combined with her inherent creative skills and perceptive nature, en-

abled her to nurture her brainchild, www.plantlovegrow.com. She is a devoted mother of two daughters, 11 and 13. Bos had noticed her eldest daughter experiencing anxiety issues at the age of five. When the child was out of her comfort zone, she would clam up and be at a loss for words. Bos remembers being affected with a similar issue in childhood. "With time, I overcame it and so has my eldest," she said in a phone interview. Bos decided to create a multi-faceted, colourful book featuring a story that would "talk" to her daughter.

Lola's Words Disappeared is about a little girl who is affected by selective mutism. Anxiety is the culprit but Lola discovers ways to deal with it step by step, and makes remarkable progress. Bos gives special thanks to Dr. Tamara Soles, a psychologist specializing in early childhood education, for sharing her experience. Bos also wrote a book for boys based on the same topic.

"After hearing the story, my daughter turned to me and said, 'Mom, that's me,'" relates Bos, who in turn was inspired to help other children facing different challenges and special needs.

Plant Love Grow books address diverse areas of developmental and special needs

By Elaine Cohen

Among the topics addressed are Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), anxiety, anger management and sound sensitivity.

Billy Can't Slow Down! by Bos and licensed clinical psychologist Stephanie Margolese offers a positive approach to dealing with ADHD. Billy, the rabbit, is nurtured and praised with each of his achievements on the road to success. Bos's artwork brings the whimsical creature to life. Whether it's preschoolers gazing at the illustrations or young readers following the text, the message is bound to make an impact. Through guidance, perseverance and professional help, Billy is able to put his nervous energy to productive use. Margolese provides resources and guides for children and their parents.

Age knows no bounds when it comes to gratitude, and Bos covers the territory well in *100 Days of Gratitude*. Readers have an opportunity to add their own notes expressing gratitude. Attractive artwork and catchy captions are sure to make an impression.

So loud, it hurts! by Bos and Margolese originated in response to a father's request.

He shared his son's distress due to sound sensitivity. It interfered with the youngster's quality of life. Bos's story includes an endearing protagonist. He loves birthday party preparations and the goodies but is sensitive to noise that erupts at the gatherings. Bos notes the book may also help children with autism.

Unlike goldfish and other placid creatures, tigers roar when pent up with anger. Bos's way with words lets us feel it in *The Tiger in my chest*. Margolese presents practical strategies to tame the volatility. In addition, she lets youngsters know they are not alone; anger is a normal feeling when we're troubled.

Bos is constantly brainstorming, creating new stories and tools. She also gives presentations at schools and centres, and welcomes the opportunity to gather feedback from her fans, especially the wee ones.

For information, visit www.plantlovegrow.com.

Arts & Entertainment

By Elaine Cohen

John N. "Jack" Cole, founder of the Montreal-based Cole Foundation in 1980 was primarily intent on lending support to pediatric oncology and medical research. Many scientists, teaching hospitals and research institutes have benefited from his foundation's grants.

When Barry Cole assumed the mantle of President and Chairman of the Board after his uncle's death, he expanded the Cole Foundation funding platform with a theatre grant programme to encourage intercultural dialogue through live theatre in Montreal. Barry Cole's extensive background in management of the performing arts enhanced the Foundation's mandate as an effective means of promoting understanding and interaction within Quebec's cultural mosaic.

Cole cites recommendations from the Bouchard-Taylor Commission (2008) as the catalyst for the Intercultural Conversations-Conversations Interculturelles (IC-CI) initiative. Gérard Bouchard, one of two commissioners appointed to investigate the issue of "reasonable accommodation" in Quebec, noted the

Cole Foundation expands intercultural granting program to include disability and LGBTQ communities

"responsibility of integration and intercultural relations is shared by all Quebecers and not by one group or the other."

This year the IC-CI program awarded \$490,400 in grants to 31 theatre companies. The Foundation's work has boosted the quality and quantity of productions focused on diversity. "The emotional impact of seeing how people react on stage is highly refined," observes Cole, who chairs a 12-member board. "Good theatre shows how people react and endure intimacies."

The IC-CI program extended its 2019 theatre grants to embrace stories about people with disabilities and communities such as LGBTQ. Among those commissioned grants are Théâtre Surreal SoReal and Geordie Productions.

Théâtre Surreal SoReal will be adapting the story of *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* by Richard Bach for the stage, using movement and text, and a unique cast of actors who are both living with disabilities and able-bodied, and French and English, from all over Canada. The story relates the way society views physi-

cal limitation, such as a person missing a limb or someone of a smaller stature. The protagonist in the book struggles against what he regards as his own physical limitations. "Our bilingual company is committed to presenting shows that give artistic authority to those who may not always be given a voice, opening up new depths in the work we explore," said Artistic Director Jon Lachlan Stewart.

Geordie Productions' *From You To Us To You* by Alexis Diamond has undergone many iterations throughout the company's history, and has proven a memorable experience for students as they witness tales told through theatre created in their own words. In the early days of Geordie Theatre, founding Artistic Director Elsa Bolam created a show featuring stories/interviews written by elementary school children and documented by professional artists. The play was developed using these stories and showcases a theme that resonated with youth at the time.

A jury of professional theatre people - actors, directors and translators in Montreal - review applications. "The jury looks at the significance of the story and



President Barry Cole of the Cole Foundation. (Photo, Steve Gerrard)

if it provides a realistic picture of a different culture," shares Cole. The jury forwards recommendations to the Foundation's board, which considers financial allocations. The Cole Foundation is the only private foundation in Montreal with an intercultural grant program that lends support to not-for-profit theatre companies presenting professional calibre plays in French and/or English and performed in Montreal.

For information, visit www.colefoundation.ca.

JFK Adult Education Centre students create their own cave paintings

By Anna Persichilli

You don't have to fly to the Lascaux caves in France to visit cave paintings. During the month of February, John F. Kennedy Adult Education Centre (JFKAEC) provided a cave painting experience right here in Montreal!



The SIS students from the Plateau des arts CRDITED program created cave paintings that they shared with the JFKAEC community.

The JFKAEC Social Integration Services (SIS) students of the Plateau des arts (CRDITED program) are talented artists living with intellectual disabilities. They create various works of art, participate in annual exhibitions and show their works of art in galleries and cafés.

An art history lesson on the Paleolithic era earlier this year inspired the JFKAEC SIS team to create a life-sized, makeshift cave in the theatre room so their students could experience for themselves what it would feel like to enter a cave. The cave paintings, which they also created, offered them a different perspective in creating artwork. Not only did they create in an unconventional space, they painted the ceiling of the cave, giving them a

chance to present their work in a non-traditional way.

This cave became an interactive work of art for the whole JFKAEC community to enter and enjoy. In addition, students from the Academic and Literacy program were invited to receive a short art history lesson, and navigate the cave and view the paintings using their phone flashlights. Sound effects depicting cave noises also added an auditory experience.

The Academic and Literacy students were then invited into the Plateau des arts classroom to see the SIS students at work and view their many projects. Students were inspired and amazed at the talent they witnessed. A few students expressed interest in volunteering with the SIS students and participating in future art projects.



A group of JFKAEC literacy students were inspired by the SIS students from the Plateau de arts CRDITED program's cave paintings.

This experience is an example of how the arts can be used as an opportunity to foster integration and belonging in the English Montreal School Board SIS community.

Anna Persichilli is a Social Integration Services teacher at John F. Kennedy Adult Education Centre.



Mental health tip #4: Building problem-solving skills

By Despina Vassiliou

One of the key skills our children need to learn is what to do in the face of a challenge, whether academic or socio-emotional. Problem-solving skills need to be taught and nurtured in order for our children to learn how to overcome challenges, including conflicts with peers, in their day-to-day lives.

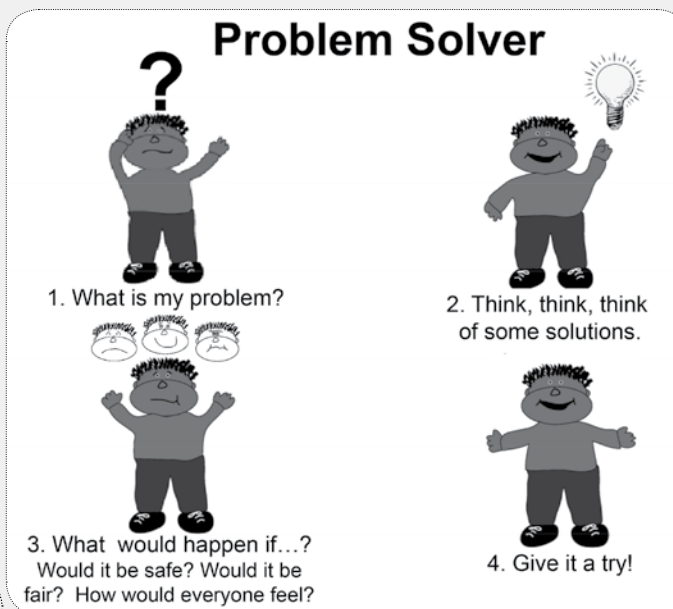
1 Step 1: Identify the problem.

Have the child describe the situation that is challenging them. Ask your child:

- ✓ About him or herself:
 - * How did he or she feel during the situation?
 - * What did he or she do exactly?
- ✓ About the others involved:
 - * What were their reactions/responses?
 - * What could be the reason for their behaviour?
 - * How would that person describe it to their parents?
 - * What were their feelings?

2 Step 2: Look for possible solutions.

Brainstorm all possible solutions without judgement. It may help to write these down.



Despina Vassiliou, Ph. D., is a school psychologist with the English Montreal School Board.

3 Step 3: What would happen if...?

Now is the time to examine more closely each of the solutions you brainstormed together to explore the possible outcomes. Some questions you may ask:

- * What do you think would happen if you tried that?
- * How do you think the other child would feel if you did this?
- * What do you think they would do?
- * List the pros and cons of each possible solution.
- * Choose the one most likely to be successful.

4 Step 4: Try the solution.

You may try role-playing the solution before the child actually carries it out. You may also discuss with the child what to do in case things do not go the way they anticipated. They may have to restart the process again.

Reinforce that by working on the problem they will likely come to a solution, but most of all, that your child is supported by the adults in his or her life.

The most important role for parents in this process is to nurture their child to do these steps on their own and with their guidance. The rule of thumb is that the child should do more talking than the parents. Step by step and with practice these skills will develop and blossom.

Navigating the grieving process with your child or teen

By Stephanie Paquette

Grieving is a universal human experience that occurs in response to a loss. It can be defined as an internal response to an external event, and can lead us to confront our own mortality and the mortality of others. Each person's grieving experience is unique and will vary depending upon their relationship with the deceased and the person's developmental stage at the time the death occurred.

According to the TAPS Institute for Hope and Healing, a child's grief manifests itself in various ways, including emotional, physical and spiritual. Emotional reactions may include tantrums, wanting to be held more, feeling fretful or anxious and an increase in irritability. Physical responses can include an increase or a decrease in appetite, real or psychosomatic illness and disrupted sleep patterns. Bereaved

children may also ask questions or want to have conversations that evoke spiritual understandings of loss and what this represents for them based on cultural, familial and societal values.

In school and social service contexts, I have observed and engaged with children who participate in "magical thinking." These children believe that if they wish hard enough, the person they have lost will return. I have also worked with grieving youth who are struggling to understand their feelings following the death of someone they love and who have been told to "be strong." This message can seriously hinder the teenager's ability to mourn the loss of a loved one because it invalidates the emotional turbulence and pain that they are experiencing.

In order to heal from their pain, bereaved children and youth require emotional validation and honest answers from

supportive adults. Children are naturally inquisitive and will ask questions about the death because it allows them to better understand the meaning and permanency of the loss. Being honest requires keeping the age of the child in mind with respect to what is shared. Validating that their questions, emotions and experience are unique and okay is also crucial. If we sacrifice honesty because we think that the child cannot handle it or if we are uncomfortable talking about death, we may break the relationship that we have with the young person.

When information regarding death is shared with a child, this information can be broken down into small pieces. This allows us to check in with the child, get feedback and evaluate their level of understanding. For example, we can ask the child, "Does what I said make sense?" or "What do you think you might need from me?" or "Do you have any

questions about what I shared?" Since children and adolescents may not yet have acquired the emotional intelligence or the vocabulary to accurately describe their grief, using tools of expression can provide young people with an outlet to creatively process their grief. Some examples include: a photo board, art, playing with the child, physical activity or music.

Children and youth must be given permission to grieve and be acknowledged as grievers. People respond differently to grief; therefore, they need personal space to express their emotions. Regardless of the grief experience, it is essential that the focus be on the person who is in pain.

Stephanie Paquette is a behaviour management specialist and Project Harbour coordinator with the English Montreal School Board.



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Giant Steps School wins grant to create cyber safety tool kit

By Nick Katalifos

Most people would agree that the rapid development of the Internet and web-based activities has produced a multitude of benefits we all rely upon daily – from basic communications to entertainment and even advanced research. Of course, most would also agree that these very same benefits are accompanied by specific concerns regarding cyber security, a reality that is important when one considers the vulnerability of children and adolescents. Parents, educators, other professionals and autism advocates have voiced concerns that individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) can be particularly vulnerable online, therefore, specific resources must be developed to provide targeted information to those who need it most.

As a result, the Giant Steps School and Resource Centre, in partnership with Canadian eLearning Network and Leading English Education and Resource Network (LEARN), submitted a very interesting project proposal to Autism Speaks Canada (ASC) for their community grant program. At the annual Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorder Alliance conference in Ottawa on April 2 and 3, ASC announced that the collaborating organizations have received a \$40,000 grant to create a free, interactive, bilingual web-based tool kit for teaching cyber safety to people with autism. The kit, called ASD Cyber Safe: A Dynamic and Interactive E-Learning Resource, will include components adapted to different ages/levels and will teach skills needed to deal with issues such as cyber bullying, phishing, confidentiality, social media and gaming, etc., all from the perspective of someone with autism. The site

will also offer downloadable educational resources, lesson plans, materials and case studies while offering cyber security webinars for youth on the spectrum, as well as professionals and caregivers.

The project's developers believe it will not only improve the online safety of people on the spectrum but will allow users of the site freer access to the community at large. Indeed, research clearly indicates that many autistic individuals report a preference for using online sources for learning, as well as actual employment. Well-conceived online resources are even more important when one considers that a significant proportion of autistic people are at risk of exclusion in social communities. One of the main objectives is to promote proper cyber skills as an effective - and safe - means of communication, creating social networking opportunities. These networks will also include those living in remote communities.

The toolkit will add to existing guidelines for youth with autism while improving safety and promoting participation in online autism communities. Its developers hope that it will also help raise awareness of autism online due to the direct participation of the ASD community.

Ultimately, the goal of the project's very practical tools and e-learning modules is to empower people with autism to understand and navigate online risks through training and knowledge. Partners hope to launch the site, which will be available to all Canadians, in the fall of 2019.

Nick Katalifos is centre principal at the Wagar Adult Education Centre, Chairman of Giant Steps School and Resource Centre, and parent ambassador to TACC.

How the new budget makes the RDSP the vehicle of choice

By Nathan Leibowitz

The RDSP, implemented in 2008, has had a slow pickup rate and still, 10 years later, the plan still has not had a huge rate of success. Previously, it was difficult to set up a plan for an adult child without capacity to open one themselves. Moreover, there was the issue of not having the ability to make retroactive contributions. These have subsequently been solved by new government policies. This left the unanswered question still looming to families uncertain about the long-term of their disabled family member to continue to qualify for the disability tax credit (DTC). The

current policy requires the plan to be collapsed in the following year and all government grants and bonds deposited in the previous 10 years to be repaid. This, coupled with the fact that it is becoming increasingly difficult to requalify for the DTC, caused many parents to take a pass.

Budget 2019 seems to partially alleviate these concerns. Under current legislation, when a beneficiary of an RDSP ceases to be eligible for the DTC, no contributions may be made, and no grants or bonds will be paid into the plan. The RDSP must be closed by the end of the year following the year the beneficiary is not eligible for the DTC. The plan may remain open but only with the certification of a medical practitioner that the beneficiary is likely to be eligible for the DTC within the next five years.

The proposal is to allow an individual who loses the DTC to not have to close the plan. For years which the beneficiary is ineligible for the DTC and prior to age 51, any withdraw-

al will trigger the repayment of government contributions deposited in the last 10 years. Once the beneficiary turns 51, that amount will be gradually reduced over 10 years. Meaning, once the beneficiary is age 60, no monies will have to ever be repaid.

Over the recent years, the government has been looking at the issues affecting RDSP's seriously and making adjustments to ensure that those that can benefit from the RDSP can do so. This does not clear all the hurdles but is a good start so that those that have not yet set up a plan, should definitely consider it now.

Nathan Leibowitz, MBA, CIM, FCSI, Senior Investment Advisor, Manulife Securities Incorporated has been consulting with families with special needs for over a decade. His experience and team have helped families carefully carve out and plan the future of their special needs children and adults. He can be reached at Nathan.leibowitz@manulifesecurities.ca or 514-798-0470.



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EMSB's first Early Childhood Transitions Forum focuses on children with special needs

By Victoria Della Cioppa and Candice Madden

A successful first transition to school relies on secure and respectful relationships between family, school and community. Relationships that are holistic and have a child's best interest at heart provide a strong foundation for a sense of belonging and continued development. The Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur suggests that the transition to kindergarten is a 16-month process, beginning the year before the child starts school and continuing through the first months of the school year. During this period, both the children and the adult(s) who support them adjust to a new school environment. This definition is particularly relevant for children with special needs, who may experience more difficulties with



Children with special needs were at the heart of the EMSB's first Early Childhood Transitions Forum. From left to right: Frédéric Dufresne, Kathy Roach, Victoria Della Cioppa and Candice Madden. (Photo, Nicole Spence)

the first transition to school, compared with their typically developing peers.

The Early Childhood Transition Forum took place on March 22 at the Gelber Conference Centre. Organized by Victoria Della Cioppa and Candice Madden from the Student Services department at the English Montreal School Board (EMSB) in collaboration with the Table de Concertation 0-5 ans – Cavendish and the CIUSSS du Centre-Ouest-de-l'Île-de-Montréal, the forum brought together school staff, board professionals, the health and social services sector and community partners in the Cavendish area. The purpose of the forum was to exchange ideas concerning children with special needs' first transition to school.

The morning kicked-off with a keynote address from Dr. Joanne Lehrer, professor in the Department of Educational Science at the Université du Québec en Outaouais, who spoke about defining school transitions and building partnerships. Next, panellists representing various sectors shared their experiences creating a welcoming environment for families of children with special needs. Finally, guests worked in multidisciplinary teams to solve problems and work on chal-

lenges that arise during the transition to school. What emerged was an insightful discussion about strategies that each sector uses to reach vulnerable families and defuse parent and child anxiety.

The forum gave guests an opportunity to network in the hope of facilitating partnerships between school and community. "La collaboration avec la CSEM est très précieuse, car elle nous permet de joindre plusieurs écoles simultanément. Nos relations ont porté fruit avec la tenue de l'événement, et nous espérons continuer à développer des projets pour que chaque enfant et sa famille puissent bénéficier d'une transition de qualité," said Frédéric Dufresne, project manager for the Table de Concertation 0-5 ans Cavendish.

The Student Services Department plans to replicate this forum next year with East sector schools and continue the tradition with West sector schools.

Victoria Della Cioppa is the Healthy and Safe Schools Consultant, and Candice Madden is a Kindergarten Transition Agent, both working at the EMSB.

B.A.S.E. Daycare's engineering program wows students at Parkdale elementary

By Jodi Schwartz

On an extremely cold winter morning in February, Parkdale elementary school's B.A.S.E. daycare students from pre-Kindergarten through Grade 6, including those with autism and special needs, created a motorized crane as part of the Engineering for Everyone program.

In this new program for the students of Parkdale's before-and-after school program, children have begun exploring examples of engineering. They are looking at solar-powered vehicles, structure and stability, marble mazes, a roller coaster of recyclables and even a ping pong ball pathway. They will design, build and invent structures – as well as machines – in a collaborative environment. The main goal is to allow their creativity and designing skills to flourish through fun and educational activities, while encouraging students to work with their peers on projects that allow them to explore how things work from an engineering perspective.

Through engineering projects, children acquire important life skills, express themselves through open-ended activities and work as a team, fostering their thirst for knowledge. Students develop mechanical skills, learn about how structures are designed and built and learn about famous structures. By the end of 10 weeks, the children are more informed about the engineering basics needed to better understand the world around them. The project began with a lesson about cranes and how they use motors and heavy machinery to move objects on construction sites that are too heavy or large for people to lift unaided. They were excited to hear that together, the class would build and decorate their own functional crane by attaching a mini-motor along with a solar panel in such a way that the string would be able to move and lift small objects.

Much collaboration and compromise was involved in the crane's creation.

The children were given recyclable supplies such as paper towel rolls, egg cartons, cardboard, popsicle sticks of all sizes, string, scissors, glue and crayons. Using their imaginations, they developed an innovative way to use regular materials.

After building was complete, each child had a chance to hold and use the lamp (housing an incandescent bulb) to mimic the sun's rays to channel electricity through the solar panel into the mini motor. As the motor rotated, the attached string wound itself around the peg of the motor and coiled, thereby lifting a pink pipe cleaner (symbolizing a crane's basket) at the end of the arm of the crane. As the string rose, children squealed with delight as they saw the crane at work.

The engineering concepts involved in building and testing inventions resonated so positively that the chil-

dren, with and without special needs, were able to absorb such concepts as "winch" and "solar power." They will be able to use those concepts in future endeavours. When given the opportunity, children's creativity is limitless! Mini-engineers, keep designing and build on!

Jodi Schwartz is an animator with the EMSB's Before and After School Enriched Daycare Program (B.A.S.E.). Engineering for Everyone is a new program that she has put together for B.A.S.E.



Parkdale B.A.S.E. Daycare students embrace their engineering program.

Job fair opens corporate doors for candidates with autism

By Wendy Singer

Spectrum Works is hacking the traditional hiring process and bringing potential employees and employers together under one roof, for one afternoon, to meet, mingle and match.

The job fair event was developed by Xavier Pinto and Neil Forester, founders of the non-profit Substance Cares. After two successful job fairs in Toronto, they felt it was time to make this a national affair. This year on April 8, events were held simultaneously in Montreal, Vancouver and Toronto, making an impact in the lives of people with autism across the country.

This free event cuts through the regular job application process and gets right down to the interview. All candidates have to do is register, choose which employers they would like to meet, bring copies of their CV and participate in three-minute interviews. The process lessens challenges that people with autism might encounter in a traditional interview, like social skills and commu-

nication. It provides the candidates with interviewing experience, résumé preparation and insight into the job market.

In Montreal, Human Resources executives from the six corporations in attendance (HSBC, RBC, Bell, Rogers, Apple and auticonsult) were situated in one room at the Sheraton Centre Montreal Hotel, while in a separate room, local autism community partners were on hand to support the candidates and follow up with them after the fair.

Staffing the Rogers station was Gabriel Pillozzi, who has been working with their customer service and retention department for six months. An English Montreal School Board alumni, he attended Pierre de Coubertin elementary school and Laurier MacDonald high school.

Pillozzi, who considers himself a “geek” when it comes to cellphones, has always wanted to help others and give back. Working the 1 to 9 p.m. shift at

Rogers’ Place Bonaventure location, he and his team have found a good work balance. “They understand my situation. When I need a break for five or 10 minutes, my colleagues are sensitive to that,” he said. “And once I’ve done that, I get back on my horse ready to gallop.”

Virginie Lebrun, recruitment consultant at Rogers, describes Pillozzi as dedicated and passionate about his work - the best employee. She explains that they try to adapt office space to their employees’ needs and focus on internal development goals to help them achieve their career goals.

Pillozzi has been a quick study in figuring out how to keep customers happy. “The key to good client services is to create a bond with the client. At the end of the day, it doesn’t feel morally right if you don’t,” he added.

Inclusive hiring is becoming a part of the Canadian workforce landscape, with many corporations creating diver-



Gabriel Pillozzi, and Rogers Recruitment Consultants Virginie Lebrun and Marie Lavallée interview potential employees at the Spectrum Works job fair at the Sheraton Centre Montreal Hotel on April 8.

sity and inclusion policies and departments. Saman Aujla, Montreal coordinator for Spectrum Works, was pleased that 200 individuals came out to the fair. “This was a good turnout, similar to our first event in Toronto two years ago. This year, 600 people attended in Toronto,” she said. “Not everyone will get a job today. It is a step towards employment. The Canadian job market is now progressing towards inclusive employment for people with disabilities. It is changing, and the little things we do are a step forward.”

For information on Spectrum Works, visit www.spectrumworks.ca.

Global Autism Project knows no borders when it comes to autism

By Lisa Levy

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 70 million people worldwide have autism. Approximately 85 percent of these individuals live in developing countries where access to evidence-based services may be minimal or lacking. The summons to raise global responsiveness, shape sustainable human resources and promote community mobilization to support those with autism were made clear in the WHO’s 2014 resolution. The Global Autism Project (GAP) is a pioneer of such services, and has been dispatching Skillscorps® teams at international partner sites since 2003. Upon discovering the mammoth undertaking of this non-profit organization, I applied to support this cause, and qualified to join the team in Bangalore, India, this coming July.

GAP founder and CEO Molly Ola Pinney’s vision is to provide culturally

relevant, sustainable practices to community partners in developing countries that are interested in the service. GAP is committed to empowering local capacity in partner sites, and then steps aside, providing administrative clinical support between Skillscorps team field trainings. Qualified, volunteer applicants are vetted for each mission, and Skillscorps members must raise \$5,000 (US) to cover orientation, security and accommodations, and also raise funds to cover the cost of airfare.

Naively, I thought that my over 20 years of experience working with youth in organizations and schools, and the CRDI Miriam, had provided me with the academic and professional insights and understanding of the obstacles to inclusion and support. I have worked with many families with culturally diverse credos dealing with developmental disorders.

Nevertheless, the exponential difficulties that are shown in the international statistics found me utterly dumbfounded. Millions of families around the world require clinical support and hope.

I feel humbled by this opportunity to help build awareness and bridge gaps beyond my tiny corner of the world. My experience in Bangalore will undoubtedly provide me with meaningful experience that I can share, and use to inspire and empower children and their families here at home, in our multicultural mosaic of Canada.

If you would like to contribute to GAP, please visit <https://fundraise.globlautismproject.org/o/en/campaign/skillcorps-india-bangalore-july-2019/> LisaMel. Together, Montrealers can



Académie Sainte-Anne WE Team students Romy Chatelain, Anastasia Kalushny, Thomas Frédette, and Flavio Triunfo-Loviselli help Lisa Levy prepare for World Autism Awareness Day 2019 on February 27 at Académie Sainte-Anne in Dorval. (Photo, France Labelle)

advocate for global acceptance and inclusion; 70 million families need our consciousness.

Lisa Levy is the behaviour success advisor for Académie Sainte-Anne and can be reached at lisa-melanie@hotmail.com.



Sports

With Sports Editor *Daniel Smajovits*

La danse pour tous

Par *Ralph-Bonet Sanon*



Une danseuse debout tient la main d'une danseuse assise dans un fauteuil roulant, un bras en l'air. (Photo, Marie-Ève Heer, Au Nom de la Danse [France])

Plusieurs organismes œuvrent à favoriser l'inclusion des personnes ayant une limitation fonctionnelle par le biais de la danse intégrée.

« De plus en plus, des études prouvent que la danse est une activité complète qui offre [...] des bienfaits sur les plans physique, cognitif, social, etc., en plus de laisser un sourire sur le visage des participants et de leur permettre de s'exprimer à travers ses mouvements », fait valoir Marie-Joanie Raymond, directrice fondatrice d'Au nom de la danse-Québec (AND-Qc).

La danse intégrée est un style de danse contemporaine réunissant des danseurs avec et sans limitation fonctionnelle.

« Ce qu'elle a d'extraordinaire, c'est qu'elle s'exerce à partir du profil de chaque participant, l'idée étant d'adapter les propositions afin d'inclure le plus grand nombre de personnes dans les ateliers et les projets spéciaux avec la communauté », explique la pionnière québécoise France Geoffroy, cofondatrice, ainsi que directrice artistique et générale de Corpuscule Danse.

Bien implantée

La danse intégrée se pratique depuis longtemps. Au Québec, France Geoffroy a fait ses débuts comme danseuse tétraplégique en 1994, avant

de devenir enseignante en 2002. « Lorsque j'ai commencé, rien n'existait en danse intégrée », se souvient-elle.

Depuis ses débuts, M^{me} Geoffroy centre sa démarche artistique sur l'esthétique et les possibilités de mouvance du corps atypique. Elle utilise les contraintes physiques comme donnée de départ. « Chez Corpuscule, la danse se veut sans compétition ni jugement. On prend les gens comme ils sont, avec leurs capacités et on les fait rayonner par la poésie et la beauté qui émanent naturellement de leur physicalité », mentionne-t-elle.

En novembre dernier, AND-Qc a remporté le prix *Création Mon rêve*, offert par AlterGo, en collaboration avec la Ville de Montréal et la Troupe des artistes handicapés de Chine. Le même mois, la directrice fondatrice d'AND-Qc et un danseur en fauteuil roulant ont décroché la 3^e place de leur catégorie au concours organisé par l'OBNL Québec en scène.

« L'aspect humain de la danse me motive à aller plus loin, car je reçois une dose d'amour et de reconnaissance énorme à chaque cours. Dans le contexte sociétal actuel, il peut être rare que quelqu'un s'intéresse et offre un cours de danse de loisir adapté aux personnes handicapées. C'est gratifiant d'être cette personne qui prend le temps de s'intéresser à elles », commente M^{me} Raymond.

M^{me} Geoffroy aussi a reçu une distinction en novembre dernier : le prix Envol, du Conseil des arts de Montréal, pour sa contribution à l'essor de sa discipline inclusive comme pédagogue et artiste professionnelle. Cette distinction s'ajoute à plusieurs autres, dont la médaille du Gouverneur général, reçue en mai 2017. « Je suis touchée d'une telle reconnaissance de la part des milieux de la danse contemporaine professionnelle et des personnes handicapées, et de mon pays », exprime-t-elle.



Volet professionnel de Corpuscule Danse. (Photo, Michaël Theimer)

Faire bouger les choses et les gens

Partenaire de danse de Joanie Raymond au Concours Québec en scène, Michel Goulet est membre de l'Association d'entraide des personnes handicapées physiques de Montréal (ALPHA-Montréal). Cet organisme tente notamment de briser l'isolement des personnes ayant une limitation fonctionnelle grâce à des activités de loisirs.

C'est d'ailleurs à l'une de ces activités que M. Goulet a rencontré sa future partenaire de danse. « Ce que j'aime dans la danse, c'est le fait de bouger. C'est accessible à tous et c'est un beau moyen d'expression pour rester actif, moi qui était sportif avant de devoir éviter les chocs liés aux sports d'équipe », confie M. Goulet.

À retenir

Au nom de la danse-Québec offre divers services, dont des cours de danse adaptée, des ateliers de sensibilisation et des formations pour les danseurs ou intervenants qui souhaitent utiliser la danse avec une clientèle en situation de handicap. L'organisme planifie un spectacle-bénéfice en octobre 2019. Pour informations, visitez la page Facebook de l'organisme.



Marie-Joanie Raymond et Michel Goulet exécutent un numéro de danse intégrée. (Photo, Vicky Métayer)

Corpuscule Danse, qui compte un volet professionnel ainsi qu'un autre amateur, propose des cours aux gens de 5 à 75 ans et monte des spectacles. La compagnie présentera *Quadriptyque* (www.quadriptyque.com) à l'Agora de la danse de Montréal du 8 au 11 mai 2019 et à la Maison de la culture Mont-Royal les 16 et 23 mai. Pour informations ou pour faire un don, visitez le site web de l'organisme.

ALPHA Montréal recourt à des activités de loisirs pour briser l'isolement des personnes ayant une limitation fonctionnelle. Elle fait aussi valoir leurs droits, les réfère vers des services et valorise leurs participations sociale et professionnelle. Pour informations ou pour faire un don, visitez le site web ou la page Facebook de l'organisme.

Ralph-Bonet Sanon est chargé de communication chez AlterGo.

Sports

With Sports Editor *Daniel Smajovits*



A homerun for adapted gameplay with Challenger Baseball

By *Valentina Basilicata*

“Let me root, root, root for the home team. If they don’t win it’s a shame. For it’s one, two, three strikes you’re out at the old ball game.”

Ah, the old ball game – a summer tradition for thousands of Quebec kids. According to Baseball Québec statistics, more than 30,000 able-bodied people signed up to play the sport in 2018, and that number has been steadily on the rise since 2005.

What’s more, for the last five years in Laval, the Challenger Baseball Québec program has given children with cognitive and physical disabilities an opportunity to play baseball in a safe environment in a division adapted to their particular needs, explains provincial coordinator of the Challenger Baseball Québec program, Richard St-Amour.

Laval was the first city to offer an adapted bat-and-ball game through Baseball Québec half a decade ago. As of today, 10 cities have been added to the province’s roster, including Trois-Rivières, Quebec



A young baseball athlete prepares to hit a ball during a game at the 34th Défi sportif AlterGo, at the Complexe sportif Claude-Robillard, in Montreal. (Photo, Pierre Paradis/Défi sportif AlterGo)

City, Brossard and Boisbriand. For the first time since its launch, Challenger Baseball will also be offered this season in Montreal and Vaudreuil. In 2018, 223 special needs children played through the Challenger program across Quebec. St-Amour expects a 10 to 20 percent increase in enrollment this season.

“There’s only one rule in Challenger Baseball: have fun!” he says. “We’re not keeping score. There are no umpires. Baseball is the pretext to get these kids together to make friends and develop their social network...and at least to empower them and [help them] gain confidence.”

Able-bodied “buddies” – usually family and friends – are paired with players to help with things like pushing wheelchairs around the bases, holding the bat or even providing protection from a stray ball. All players are outfitted in uniforms (jerseys and caps) and play their games at local baseball parks. Teams meet once a week for anywhere

between 60 and 75 minutes to learn game skills, practice and play friendly matches.

“We want them to be able to play like any other typical kid,” adds St-Amour.

The cost to register for the program is minimal, averaging \$40 per child for the season, and players only need to supply their own baseball glove. All other equipment is provided onsite by organizers. The season runs from May until August. The Challenger Baseball program is offered in all 10 Canadian provinces thanks to an agreement between Baseball Canada and Little League Baseball Canada.

For more information on playing on a Challenger team or to volunteer, visit www.baseballquebec.com.

Valentina Basilicata is a professional wordsmith with over 15 years of experience as a communications specialist and freelance journalist/editor.

Canadian Special Olympics athletes win big in Abu Dhabi



Canada was well represented at the recent Special Olympics World Games in Abu Dhabi, a celebration of athletic abilities, not disabilities. In all, 109 Canadians, nine of which were from Quebec, joined more than 7,000 athletes from 192 countries to compete in 24 different sports. When the dust settled on the competition, Team Canada walked away with 155 medals, 90 of which were gold. Athletes from Quebec brought home 20 medals. Picture here is Sara Jane Daigle from Dollard-des-Ormeaux on March 20. She won three gold medals in the pool in Abu Dhabi. (Photo, Special Olympics Canada)

Habs foster MIRA service dog Flambo

Montreal’s beloved Habs had a new four-legged teammate this season. Flambo, a Saint-Pierre Labernese puppy, is being fostered by the organization for a year before beginning his training with the MIRA Foundation as a service dog. MIRA is a non-profit organization that offers free guide dogs and service dogs to individuals with visual impairments and physical disabilities, as well as to youth with autism. While the Habs’ season may have ended prematurely, Flambo developed quite a fan base of his own, making appearances at games and hanging out with the players. He even has his own Instagram account with 16,000 followers! We have no doubt that this furry fan will make a great service dog one day.



The Habs foster MIRA dog Flambo. (Photo, Club de hockey Canadien inc.)



Sports

Physical literacy helps students with special needs thrive

By Tania Piperni

Physical literacy is a journey upon which students can develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes they



Parkdale student benefits from a winter outdoor physical education activity. (Photos, Diana Piazza)

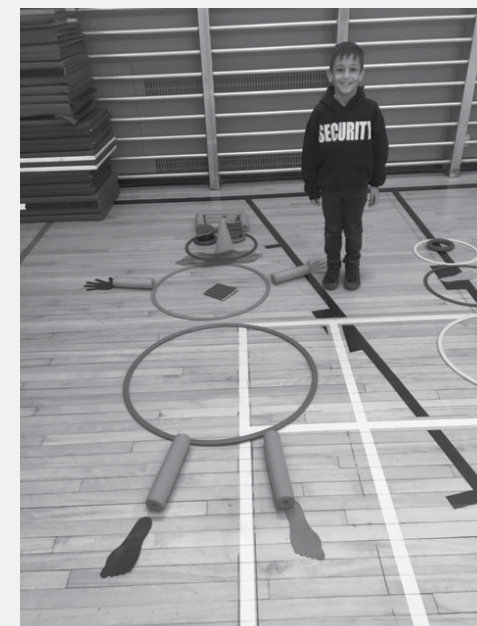
need to participate in a wide variety of physical activities. Physical Education (PE) teachers at the English Montreal School Board (EMSB) have been doing this for years as a way of encouraging students to be more physically active while teaching life-long skills.

Diana Piazza, PE teacher at Parkdale elementary school in St. Laurent, explains how students are taught basic throwing and catching skills that can then be used to play team sports such as basketball and baseball. Practicing on an indoor climbing wall in the gym allows students to become interested in hiking later on. It's a literacy skills, similar to the concept of learning how to add during math class so that one can learn to manage a budget in the future. Piazza explains, "We teach students fundamental skills that they can use throughout their life in order to be more physically active and more confident."

At Parkdale, there are many students with special needs, especially autism, who are

integrated into PE classes. Physical literacy allows for differentiation for these students' needs. While some students can focus on the complexities of a team sport such as soccer, another group of students can focus on ball work until they master their skills. Piazza has also included weekly outdoor PE classes. This allows her to include different movement activities such as snowshoeing, sliding and playing in the snow in a fun and safe environment within the enclosed schoolyard. The students "seem calmer and soothed, maybe due to the fresh air, being in nature or being in a larger space." They also go for walks so students can learn about safety signs, traffic lights and be exposed to the surroundings in proximity to the school. As you can see, physical literacy moves beyond the gym walls and into the community.

Piazza and her PE partner Matthew Guy meet regularly to brainstorm and plan for all these activities. They have also added a class where students can have free time and choose a movement activity of their choice. Students can transfer their newly learned skills to equipment such as a trampoline, the balance beam, slides etc. Students get over their fears of certain activities by having teacher support and free exploration of a variety of activities.



Parkdale student gains physical literacy during gym class.

Physical literacy allows the PE program to be tailored so students can develop their competence, confidence and enjoyment of physical activity regardless of their ability.

Tania Piperni, M.Ed, is an Autism Spectrum Disorder Consultant at the EMSB.

Montreal Inclusion Symposium

...continued from p. 18

In the focus group on accommodation in the workplace, representatives from Agence Ometz, a charitable organization that offers services (including employment) to help people fulfil their potential, described how integrating modifications can in fact be very simple yet have a lasting impact. Something as seemingly effortless as adjusting phone volumes or rearranging desk setups for those with anxiety can create a more conducive work environment.

Alelie Ocampo, representing the Royal Bank of Canada's cross-national diversity recruitment team, is committed to promoting more diverse and inclusive workplaces. "Meaningful inclusion will only be brought about by a cultural revolution of sensitization, however,"

said Ocampo. "Without any structure, standards or expectations, there is little incentive for change, creating what is the most formidable challenge to meaningful inclusion."

As reinforced by Racheli Edelkopf, head of family support and development at The Friendship Circle, the key is to see people as complete individuals, rather than being defined by their disabilities.

When acceptance of diversity is genuinely put into place, incredible outcomes can come about – singer Steven Aabadi being a meaningful case in point. It was through having his musical talents recognized at summer camp that he was able to overcome the social limitations of Asperger syndrome, even recently competing in the popular vocal competition *La Voix!* After thrilling the crowd at the event with a stirring

rendition of "You Raise Me Up," he reinforced, "Never let your disability define you. Find your passion and pursue it."

The event ended with participants lining up to post their action plans, tangibly

demonstrating their commitment to make an impact.

We now challenge you to follow suit. How will you 'do' inclusion? Let us know at info@inspirationsnews.com.

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Project Phoenix holds first art workshop at Mackay Rehabilitation Centre

By Pelinsu Arslan

Enactus is an international non-profit organization that aims to improve communities as well as the environment by working on projects, guided by leaders in business and higher education. The Enactus network of global business, academic and student leaders are unified by the vision to create a better, more sustainable world. Their 72,000 students are entrepreneurial, value-driven social innovators across 1,730 campuses in 36 countries, and they are positively impacting the lives of 1.3 million people each year.

How does Enactus work? Under the direction of mentors, teams of students conduct needs assessments in their community, identify potential solutions to complex issues and implement community impact projects.

With the support of mentor Cassandra Fedele, manager at the global Enactus office, Enactus McGill is working hard on their project titled "Phoenix," which has two main goals: encouraging the sustainable development of the environment by



Participants Laura Paolillo, hearing ASL student; Jack Volpe, Deaf ASL instructor; and Jeannette John, Deaf Anglo Literacy Centre member enjoy creating with Enactus McGill on March 28 at the Mackay Rehabilitation Centre.

using up-cycled material, and empowering the Deaf and Hard-of-hearing community to feel more socially engaged and explore their talents and abilities. The project focuses on turning material waste into art objects which are then sold, with

profits returning to people with special needs who collaborated on the project.

Project Phoenix held its first art workshop for the Deaf and Hard-of-hearing community at the Mackay Rehabilitation Centre

in Montreal on March 28. During this workshop, budding artists, which included participants from the Deaf Anglo Literacy Centre and Seeing Voices Montréal, freely explored their creativity.

The purpose of these workshops is to generate space for individuals so that they can develop artsy skills and empower themselves by simply experiencing the feeling of creating art. We welcome individuals interested in joining us on our journey of breaking down barriers! Through this workshop, you will not only be able to feel the empowerment, but also help us up-cycle material waste for a better environment, hence a better future. The material we use is collected before the workshop. The only thing you need to do is create and have fun!

For information, visit enactus.org/who-we-are/our-story/. To participate or host a workshop at your centre, email pelinsu.arslan@mail.mcgill.ca.

Pelinsu Arslan is the project coordinator for Project Phoenix, Enactus McGill.

CDC Vimont Sock Drive benefits homeless

By Eileen Simms

On January 12, I went to Place des Arts to take pictures. When I arrived by metro, I saw many homeless people sitting around. I approached many of them, asked their names and if I could take their photograph. What really struck me was that a lot of the people I met had special needs.

I shared these pictures with my students (who also have special needs), and talked about how any one of us could be homeless if we didn't have the support systems we have in place. One of the photographs I didn't share with my students was of a man named Richard, sitting on the floor with his socks and boots off. One of his toes was about to fall off due to frostbite caused by the cold weather and not having access to dry socks. I explained to them that most homeless people own

only one pair of socks and because of this, many suffer from frostbite and foot rot.

As a group, we discussed what we could do to help. We came up with the idea of having a sock drive. We would ask local merchants to donate items that we could raffle off to raise money or collect socks. The raffle tickets were five dollars or one ticket for every pair of socks donated. We also sold coffee and snacks to raise money. We ran the fundraiser from January 21 to January 31. In this short period of time, we collected 1,551 pairs of socks. We then organized a field trip to visit Accueil Bonneau, where we donated the socks.

This was a wonderful experience for my students as they realized they could make a big difference in other peoples' lives. They put into practice many of the fields of



Students from the Social Integration Services (SIS) program at CDC Vimont proudly show off over 1,500 pairs of socks they collected as part of their sock drive for Accueil Bonneau. (Photo, Despina Ioanidis)

skills in our program, and came away with a stronger bond between each other and a sense of confidence.

Eileen Simms is a Social Integration Services teacher at CDC Vimont School of the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board.



Las Vegas

Adapted Travel

By Alexandra Cohen

One magical week in Las Vegas

I recently returned from a week in Las Vegas (<https://www.visitlasvegas.com/ca>), where one member of our family had mobility issues. She began the trip using a cane, but early on had to switch to a wheelchair. I discovered that Las Vegas is a very accessible city – from the hotel we stayed at to the clubs and restaurants, and the taxi drivers who went out of their way to assist us.

Las Vegas has more accessible guest rooms than any other city in the United States. Hotels have rooms with roll-in showers, transfer showers, tubs with built-in seat and tubs with portable seats. However, it is of course recommended you speak with the reservation desk about your specific requirements. If you need additional details, ask for the hotel's Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) coordinator. For an overview of room availability, call the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority Reservations Center: Voice/TTY - 1-800-884-2592.

Most hotels have assistive listening devices, available at the showroom or lounge entrance, for those who are hearing-impaired. Wheelchair seating is also available in most restaurants, lounges and showrooms. Call ahead for details.

All hotels have accessible slot machines and many have sit-down table games. Many hotels also have accommodations for wheelchair users to play craps. Gaming personnel are well-trained in assisting

vision and hearing-impaired people to play table games. If you need a sign-language interpreter for the gaming schools offered at many of the casinos, just ask in advance. Most bingo rooms have Braille cards and large-print cards. A few larger rooms have electronic bingo, enabling visually impaired players or persons with hand-dexterity problems to play up to 100 cards at once.

All taxi companies in Las Vegas have lift-equipped vans accommodating one wheelchair. Call from your room, use any dedicated taxi phone or just ask the doorman at your hotel for an accessible taxi van.

WHERE TO STAY: We stayed at the gorgeous Vdara Hotel & Spa (<https://www.vdara.com>), a luxury boutique property located at CityCenter.

An all-suite hotel and spa designed for those who love the excitement of Vegas but prefer to enjoy it in a smaller and more exclusive, non-gaming, smoke-free environment, Vdara is physically connected to the Bellagio and directly adjacent to the Aria Resort & Casino, offering access to all of the amenities and energy of CityCenter while also providing a nearby retreat from the hustle and bustle of the strip.

The Vdara made its big debut in December 2009. Internationally-inspired, the chic boutique resort offers a holistic spa, luxurious pool, intimate meeting space and the sophisticated and convenient Vice Versa Patio & Lounge and Market Café Vdara, both located in their small and easy-to-navigate lobby.

Featuring 10,000 square feet of contemporary conference space, Vdara has become the premier choice in Las Vegas for customized executive meetings, corporate, social and banquet functions for up to 400 guests. The Pool & Lounge, a beautiful getaway that we had the chance to experience firsthand, also features 19 lux-



The Vdara Hotel & Spa.

urious cabanas, including six spa cabanas.

While at the Vdara people have the opportunity to experience what is surely a first in many of their lives: snacks and coffee delivered to their rooms by two relay robots by the names of Fetch and Jett. These talented bots work alongside their human colleagues to transport an array of frequently forgotten and requested amenities including shaving and dental kits as well as tasty bites and drinks from Market Café. We were pleased to see that our corner suite offered us a lovely view of some of the hotels on the Strip. Other similar suites offer picturesque views of the Bellagio Fountains and surrounding mountains. The in-suite tablet sits right beside the king-sized bed. From this tablet, you can order room service or snacks to be delivered by Fetch and Jett, and also book your next spa appointment.

The kitchenette features a two-burner stove and a full-sized refrigerator, while the living area offers a dining table fit for four. You can end the day by soaking in the spa-like tub sitting in the room's expansive bathroom. There are 42-inch, flat-screen and high-definition televisions with media hubs for MP3 players, cameras, DVD players and game consoles as well as a work desk with a multi-line telephone in each of these suites. We also had access to large

closets with plush robes and slippers, an ironing board and clothes steamer and a washing machine. The in-suite, laptop-sized electronic safes were also very convenient.

The hotel has a fully equipped 2,000-square-foot fitness center, with cardio, exercise machines and free weights, as well as personal trainers available for private or group instruction. A smoothie bar offers a selection of smoothies, nutritious snacks and juices.

Wheelchairs and scooters are available at all MGM Resort hotels for a fee. At the Vdara, manual wheelchairs are available for rent free of charge. To guarantee a wheelchair or scooter, contacting the Bell Desk ahead of time is recommended.

For more information and reservations, log on to www.vdara.com, call toll free at 866-745-7767 or 702-590-2111. Follow Vdara on Facebook and Twitter at Vdara Las Vegas and VdaraLV.

BAVETTE AND THE PARK MGM: The former Monte Carlo Hotel officially shed its name recently for a new identity – Park MGM (<https://www.parkmgm.com/en.html>). The project comprises two new distinct experiences: Park MGM and a Las Vegas version of the renowned NoMad, a stand-alone 292-room hotel encompassing the tower's top four floors.

We got a nice look at this new hotel when we recently dined at Bavette's Steakhouse (www.bavettessteakhouse.com). Like its beloved Chicago sibling, the new Bavette's represents an outstanding dining experience. With the restaurant's glowing chandeliers, red banquettes and vintage art and murals, guests are transported to an intimate space as they eat.

Bavette's offers fantastic takes on some time-honored steakhouse traditions, such as multi-tiered seafood towers, dry-aged bone-in ribeyes and lamb chops. In addition to some of the classics, we also enjoyed a traditional filet mignon, a large baked crab cake and side orders of wild mushrooms and buttery mashed potatoes, all beautifully served. Desserts leaned toward decadent. We enjoyed the chocolate cream pie with an Oreo crust, as well as their classic lemon-meringue pie. Bavette's



The Vdara features beautiful suites.

Adapted Travel Las Vegas

is open 5 p.m. to 11 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 5 p.m. to midnight Friday and Saturday, and 5 p.m. to 10 pm on Sunday. Reservations can be made by calling 702-730-6700.

Before or after dinner at Bavette's, explore the stylish Juniper Cocktail Lounge next door, a truly unique drinking experience that I very much enjoyed. The mixology destination challenges the status quo of mainstay drinks while staying true to the foundation of what makes a great cocktail. Whimsical elements like fortune-telling Gin & Tonics come to life through house-made juices and syrups, a premium selection of spirits, and an intense dedication to the craft.

JABBAWOCKEEZ ON THE VEGAS STRIP: We were thrilled to see Jabba-wockeez (<https://www.jbwkz.com>) for the first time after their energizing 70-minute show. The Jabba-wockeez first caught the nation's eye when they competed on "America's Got Talent" in 2006, before ultimately winning the grand prize on the first season of the MTV reality show "America's Best Dance Crew," produced by Randy Jackson.

Their live show at the recently renovated Jabba-wockeez Theater at the MGM Grand Hotel & Casino (www.mgmgrand.com) on the Vegas Strip is absolutely fantastic!

Their show, JREAMZ, takes audiences on a journey of mesmerizing sights and sounds, entertaining audiences with a dynamic mix of choreography, music, videos, characterization and special effects. The imaginative production finds a way to seamlessly combine dance, drama and a surprisingly effective amount of comedy.

Featuring the signature white masks and intricate dance moves that have positioned

the group as the world's most influential dance crew, Jabba-wockeez is cutting-edge entertainment at its best. JREAMZ has been voted the "Best Family Show" and "Best All Ages Show" in Las Vegas for three consecutive years.

Jabba-wockeez perform Thursday through Monday at both 7 p.m. and 9:30 p.m. Tickets are available for purchase at any MGM Resorts box office, by phone at 702-531-3826 or 866-740-7711 and online at mgmgrand.com or ticketmaster.com. The MGM Hotel and Casino is very wheelchair accessible, with lots of elevators and ramps available throughout.

THE CIRQUE'S MICHAEL JACKSON ONE: When in Vegas, experiencing at least one Cirque de Soleil production is a must. As proud Montrealers, we did just that and chose the Cirque's incredible Michael Jackson ONE (<http://www.cirquedusoleil.com/en/shows/michael-jackson-one/show/about.aspx>), an awe-inspiring show that fuses acrobatics, dance, storytelling and visuals, taking the audience on an immersive journey through the music and spirit of Michael Jackson. Shows take place at the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino from Fridays to Tuesdays at both 7 and 9:30 p.m. Driven by the late King of Pop's powerful, multi-layered music – heard like never before in a riveting, state-of-the-art surround-sound environment – ONE takes the audience through a series of seamless visual and musical tableaux.

The talented cast of 63 dancers and performers quickly reel you in, taking over the stage and at times even the audience with their infectious energy and brilliant tricks. You will repeatedly find yourself gasping in disbelief at the magic taking place on stage. This show captures the essence, soul and inspiration of the King of Pop, celebrating a legacy that continues to transcend generations. You will surely be captivated by the aerial acrobatics and special effects during this unforgettable performance, while trying not to sing along to Jackson's most popular songs, from "Smooth Criminal" to "Thriller" (a particular highlight).

This show, in its technical and energized



The famous spiked lemon dessert at Spago.

glory, truly is not something that you want to miss. For ticket information, call 877-632-7400 or 800-745-3000 or visit www.cirquedusoleil.com/mjone or www.mandalaybay.com. Cirque du Soleil strives to make it as easy as possible to purchase accessible seating tickets for venues across the country. Availability and the type of accessible seating will vary based on each venue's policies and/or the type of event taking place.

LUNCH AT SPAGO: We had a delicious lunch at Wolfgang Puck's legendary flagship restaurant Spago (<https://wolfgangpuck.com/dining/spago-lv>), located at the Bellagio (<https://www.bellagio.com/en/hotel.html>). Puck's revolutionary restaurant debuted in this location last summer with an entirely new look and menu and the exceptional level of service for which the restaurant is best known.

The restaurant is beautifully situated in front of the Bellagio Fountains for a fantastic view while you eat. Spago's re-imagined menu features Puck's signature California fare paired with modern technique and inspiration from his chef's weekly trips to the Santa Monica Farmer's Market. At lunch and dinner, the market-driven menus feature handmade pastas, wood-oven pizzas, fresh seafood, all-natural meats and prime steaks, alongside handcrafted cocktails and a robust wine list.

From popular Spago dishes to new dishes offered only at Bellagio, guests have a wealth of options to choose from for lunch or dinner. The chef brings his own signature to the Las Vegas steak dinner, allowing guests to indulge in prime meats, such as wagyu and Japanese ribeye carved tableside. In addition to trying one of their delicious cuts of American wagyu, complete

with white truffles, we also indulged in their smoked salmon pizza with caviar, a true highlight on their menu. We enjoyed a fresh strawberry cocktail as we sat on the patio enjoying the fountains, along with a dessert that I can only describe as outstanding: their spiked lemon. Words cannot do this dessert any justice, but you need only take to the internet to see it for yourself, as our waiter described as their menu's "most hash tagged item" due to its astonishing appearance, complete with flakes of gold.

Similar to the menu, the wine list will be seasonally inspired, starting the summer months with a strong selection of rosé wines. In addition, the list features nearly one dozen wines from Wolfgang Puck's private label, a collection of food-friendly wines that celebrate the spirit of food and life for which the chef is known.

ON TO FINE ARTS: After lunch we visited the beautiful Bellagio Gallery of Fine Art (BGFA). BGFA is committed to presenting intimate exhibitions featuring works by some of the world's most compelling artists. Since opening in 1998, the gallery has presented exhibitions of artworks and objects drawn from internationally acclaimed museums and private collections. For groups of 10 or more, the gallery offers special pricing of \$11 per person. For additional information, call 702-693-7871 or 877-957-9777.

CATCH THIS GREAT MEAL: Last fall, the Aria Resort & Casino (<https://www.aria.com/en.html>) welcomed Catch (<https://catchrestaurants.com>), the go-to dining destination for celebrities from Los Angeles to New York City. Known for attracting A-listers from around the world, this restaurant, with its Asian influence, debuted on The Strip, bringing with it a

...continued on p. 42



Jabba-wockeez in action.



The spectacular entrance at Catch.



Adapted Travel Las Vegas

...continued from p. 41

something-for-everyone dining experience.

Just arriving at Catch is a true experience. The entryway is a truly picturesque 80-foot-long tunnel, filled with brightly colored flowers organized into beautiful patterns. It feels like stepping into a secret garden or even a hidden world.

On the menu, you will find a host of seafood sharables. Guests can dive in with an assortment of bright appetizers. The Catch ceviche infuses the bold flavors of mango and blood orange ponzu with Alaskan King Crab, Maine Lobster, shrimp and scallops. The decadent truffle sashimi allows guests to indulge in both tuna and hamachi paired with chili ponzu, caviar and rich black truffle purée.

In addition to their Vegas-specific sushi rolls, Catch also offers its famed signatures. The vegan veggie king roll is made with king oyster mushrooms, cashew and spicy miso. For a unique and delicious flavor profile, guests can opt for the hellfire roll,

which uses spicy tuna in two ways with Asian pear and balsamic.

We also enjoyed other shared starters, including the crispy shrimp, the rice cakes and an order of their mushroom spaghetti, which was truly delicious. For our main course: roasted branzino, a restaurant highlight, alongside a side of spaghetti squash. Prefer meat? Catch offers options like the 25-day dry-aged Tomahawk: 36-ounces of all natural, grass-fed beef with caramelized onion wagyu butter.

Their over-the-top desserts celebrate indulgence, featuring treats like the "Hit Me" chocolate cake that encourages guests to smash the liquid "Klondike" bar perched atop a brownie, devil's food cake and roasted white chocolate ice cream.

Catch is located within the main lobby of the Aria Resort & Casino. It is open for dinner Monday through Sunday from 5:30 p.m. to 11:30 p.m. The lounge is open Thursday through Saturday from 10 p.m. to 3 a.m. To make reservations, call the Aria Concierge at 702-590-5757 or visit OpenTable.

Finding information made easy in EMSB's own database of special needs resources

By Fay Schipper

We live in a world today where information is at our fingertips via the internet - including databases pertaining to services and programs for the Montreal special needs communities. *Inspirations'* own custom-made database is accurate, up-to-date and extensive. It's designed to help the user navigate the maze of information by dividing it into 13 well thought-out categories. In reviewing each section one by one, they have become richer and more inclusive, with the aim of becoming even more informative for our readers.

Section 10, which lists camps and respite care, will soon become popular with summer just around the corner. Parents and caregivers searching for the best camps and respite programs for their children will find it helpful that this section is divided into day camps and sleep-away camps in this wealth of camp postings. The day

camp section has 34 listings, sleep-away 20, and there are 34 programs offering respite care.

Financial programs and subsidies, found in Section 12, feature information that is difficult to find by browsing the web on your own. The *Inspirations* database presents the information in easy-to-understand language with each section following in sequence. Before it was posted, this section was reviewed by a financial expert to ensure all the facts were presented accurately, and he made no red marks with corrections!

Access the database on our website at www.inspirationsnews.com. Enjoy the database, and send any comments or new resource postings to info@inspirationsnews.com.

Fay Schipper is Inspirations' volunteer database consultant.

Make it Matter supports Fun 15 with Friends at Edward Murphy

By Olivia Sheehy-Gennarelli

Make it Matter (MIM) is currently supporting the Fun 15 with Friends initiative at Edward Murphy elementary school. Fun 15 focuses on inclusion for all, and heightening awareness about autism all year round. Through social, fun and interactive activities, the program fosters friendships between students with autism and their peers.

Fun 15 was started by special education teacher Alana Goodings last year during Autism Awareness Month. Goodings approached MIM for funding as she wanted to run activities all year and not just during the month of April. MIM was excited to be part of this initiative and quickly agreed to fund their activities. Now, friendships are being made throughout the school year.

Goodings and her colleague, Marita Romberg, are co-captains of this year's *Inspirations/EMSB Autism Speaks Canada* - Montreal walk team. It takes place Sunday, June 9 at McGill University's Tomlinson Fieldhouse.

Make it Matter has been in operation for two years, funding educational initiatives that would otherwise fall under the radar. The team is expanding and is constantly learning about the Montreal community and its current needs. Make it Matter is planning its next gala. Stay tuned by bookmarking www.makeitmattertoday.org or follow it on Instagram and Facebook at [Makeitmattertoday](https://www.facebook.com/Makeitmattertoday).

The organization is always looking for ways to support families to ensure that all children have equal access to the resources needed to succeed.

Reach out by email to Deborah@makeitmattertoday.org.

For more information on the Montreal walk, visit www.ascWalk.ca.

Olivia Sheehy-Gennarelli is a co-founder of Make it Matter.



Edward Murphy students having fun at Fun 15 with Friends on March 25. (Photo, Alana Goodings)

We are proud to support
Inspirations, which is
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in our community!



Nous sommes fiers d'appuyer
Inspirations qui joue
un rôle important dans
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