

A fine performance enriched by a life of struggle

BY SUSAN PURCELL

LARGE NUMBERS of volunteers, residents and friends listened with rapt attention and warmly applauded L'Abri resident **Luc Belleau**, at the piano in a solo concert in April at the Unitarian Church of Montreal. Special thanks go to volunteer **Joan Esar** (pictured below with *Luc*) for organizing the event.

Embellishing Luc's performance was his instrument, the church's famous Alfred Laliberté Steinway piano, created in 1897 with its cabinet of 16 exotic woods inlaid into curly walnut, once played by musical greats including Sergei Rachmaninoff.

"Bravo!" shouted the crowd, as Luc modestly bowed after playing selections from Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schumann and Brahms.

Music has been a passion for Luc, 61, since he was a boy of eight. He first heard his father play piano and immediately

LUC TRIES NOT TO DWELL ON RELATIONSHIPS LOST OR DAMAGE DONE

knew he wanted to learn. He convinced his mother to register him for lessons at École de musique Vincent-d'Indy, which he continued

throughout his schooling. In the face of a difficult family situation, Luc says his music was "like a life raft."

In 1980, he received his Bachelor of Music degree from McGill University, with Honours in piano performance. "I used to dream of being a concert pianist," Luc says. But when he saw this was not to happen, he turned to his other childhood passion—medicine. After many years of study he received an MD, and in 1990 at age 33, began work as a general practitioner, his career for the next 22 years.

Luc never put the piano behind him, regularly meeting with a group of physicians in those years to play chamber music. A highlight was performing with I Medici di McGill Orchestra



FOR LUC BELLEAU, MUSIC WAS "LIKE A LIFE RAFT" THROUGH DIFFICULT CHILDHOOD YEARS. BELOW, LUC TAKES A BOW TO CRIES OF "BRAVO" FROM AN APPRECIATIVE AUDIENCE.

of the Faculty of Medicine. But a worsening struggle with depression played havoc with his work and close relationships, and eventually he had to abandon his medical career.

After several difficult years living on his own, Luc came to L'Abri three years ago. He regularly plays a keyboard in his room at the Bessborough apartment, enjoys visits to a local café and keeps in touch with his brother and friends of long standing, meeting them or chatting on his cell phone. With apartment volunteer **Jim Cullen**, Luc swims at the local NDG pool three times a week.

Luc tries not to dwell on relationships lost or damage done, and is glad to be around friendly people at L'Abri, saying "I wouldn't be doing this well if I was still on my own." The L'Abri community is likewise grateful to have in their midst such a remarkable talent. 



NOTES FROM THE OFFICE

Staff keep busy, kitchen awaits its new role

BY CHERYL LAFFERTY



CHERYL LAFFERTY



WE MADE IT through the winter, but our cold, snowy and icy conditions were a challenge! Despite the inclement weather our house visits carried on as well as our regular L'Abri activities, providing a welcome relief to those feeling isolated at home.

Come the New Year, we were at full capacity with 30 residents. Some of the apartment computers needed repairs and Aaron from UP House was happy to help us out. One of L'Abri's new volunteers, **Kelly Walsh**, had been teaching residents of the Benny apartment computer skills. She enjoyed it so much that she offered to visit other apartments whose residents request this type of help.

In April, coordinator **Star Gale** represented L'Abri at McGill's Institute for Health and Social Policy's Dragon's Den event, a weeklong workshop on contemporary social issues. Star spoke about the L'Abri model and service provision for older adults diagnosed with mental illness.

In mid-June, Star returns to Victoria BC to complete another two-week residency for her Master's program in community development. A summer coordinator, social work graduate **Michelle Mills**, has been hired under the Canada Summer Jobs program.

Exciting things have been brewing in our offices as we prepare to launch a kitchen project allowing residents to cook meals together and take them home. Star (*far left*) and Michelle (*right*) have been sorting out incoming donations of kitchen supplies.

In our spare time we will be preparing for a planning session for board members and staff in September, with a focus on staff, board and volunteer succession. [A](#)

CHERYL IS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF L'ABRI EN VILLE.

FUNDRAISING IN THE FOOTLIGHTS

By SUSAN PURCELL



CHERYL LAFFERTY

IT WAS A NEW WAY for us to raise funds, and it turned out to be a most enjoyable one. In March, L'Abri partnered with Snowglobe Theatre for a gala performance of the award-winning play, *Proof*.

The link that brought us together was **Sandra d'Angelo**, general manager and co-founder of Snowglobe, founded in 2017 to promote a love of English-language theatre in Montreal, and to provide opportunities for emerging local artists. Her company was looking for organizations to collaborate with, and when someone mentioned L'Abri en Ville, she immediately envisioned the boxes of oranges and grapefruits her parents had been buying from us for years!

When Sandra got in touch, we found her proposal enticing: sell tickets, bring refreshments and share in the proceeds. We managed to sell 45 tickets at \$50 each, attracting a good crowd of volunteers, residents and friends to the MainLine Theatre on boulevard Saint-Laurent. The evening included a silent auction with our board Past President **Campbell Stuart** (*left*) as emcee. L'Abri took home over \$2,000 from the evening.

Proof is **David Auburn's** 2001 Pulitzer-Prize winning play about a young woman hoping not to follow in her brilliant father's shaky mental footsteps. With our partnership, Snowglobe and L'Abri aimed to raise awareness around mental illness. [A](#)

20 YEARS OF CITRUS

A milestone in community-building

By SANDRA BAINES and STAR GALE

IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE 20 years have passed since a well-known fundraising campaign became the responsibility of L'Abri en Ville. The annual sale of Florida citrus fruit was passed on to us in 1998 by the Palliative Care Unit of the Royal Victoria Hospital (RVH), along with all their customer lists and some of their volunteer agents.

Now our primary fundraising event, the citrus sale has raised over \$240,000 since we began. But it has also been a great community builder. All members of the L'Abri family pitch in: residents, volunteers, board members, social work students and staff. It has also built a community that extends beyond L'Abri. Mountainside United Church has hosted and supported us all these years. Members of the Concordia Stingers hockey team have rallied each year to unload the hundreds of pounds of oranges

and grapefruit. True competitors on and off the ice, they keep records of the time it takes to do the unloading, keen to break the previous year's record — which helps it all happen fast! Not to be outdone, students from both Loyola and Selwyn House volunteer their time after school, working well into the evenings loading boxes into customers' cars.

Widening the circle of support we have our community of customers, a loyal and diverse group. We enjoy greeting them every year, seeing their smiles and hearing their news, as they bustle in to pick up their orders.

Pat Hamilton, an apartment volunteer and former board member, played an important role in the transition from RVH to L'Abri, and remains active in our campaign. She notes that although early Decembers can be tricky weather-wise, we have never had to

change the pickup date — but that's not to say freezing rain and snow haven't challenged our helpers and customers!

Marianne Metrakos, our retired coordinator, has been a key organizer of pickup days since the beginning. She says working through challenges as a team has always been fun.

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For this year's fundraiser the citrus committee will be recruiting new members and working to attract new agents, so stay tuned for more news on that. Our doors are open to enthusiastic newcomers ready to help make our campaign a success. 



SAM BEITEL



A CALM IN THE STORM: VOLUNTEERS (TOP, LEFT TO RIGHT) SANDRA BAINES AND SUZANNE HERSCOVITCH, WITH COORDINATOR STAR GALE, REST BEFORE ANOTHER INFLUX. FORMER COORDINATOR MARIANNE METRAKOS (ABOVE, LEFT) WORKS FLAT OUT TO MAKE DISTRIBUTION DAYS A SUCCESS.

OUR HELPERS
RANGE FROM
STUDENTS
TO RESIDENTS
~ EACH ONE
READY TO MEET
THE CHALLENGE

SANDRA IS ON OUR EXECUTIVE COUNCIL.
STAR IS A COORDINATOR AT L'ABRI.

FAMILY ALBUM



STAR GALE

IN PREPARATION for our annual citrus fundraiser, a group of residents met at the office in late November to package greeting cards for sale. Job done, they set to decorating a newly-donated Christmas tree while listening to seasonal music.

TREE-TRIMMING, CARD-PACKING



THE ATMOSPHERE was celebratory and the food plentiful and delicious at our December Holiday Party at the Unitarian Church. Past President **Campbell Stuart** and coordinator **Star Gale** (above) led the holiday singing. Volunteer **Suzanne Herscovitch** and resident **Shmoal Loterman** of the Crescent apartment shared a good laugh opening their gifts (at right).



JOYOUS EVENING WITH OUR BIG FAMILY

SAM BETTEL



 FAMILY ALBUM



RESIDENTS' THANKS TO VOLUNTEERS ARE PERSONAL

FOLLOWING our Annual General Meeting in March (see photo of new board, P. 8), L'Abri hosted a special evening to honour our volunteers. After appetizers and a hearty dinner made by everyone's favourite chef, Giovanni Monti, a resident from each of our ten apartments stood up to offer a personal tribute to members of their volunteer team. Among them were, Terryann O'Neill (above) and Christian Nielsen (below).



SAM BEITEL



LIVELY TIME IN THE MAPLE WOODS

STAR GALE

SPRING was definitely not in the air, but the mood was jolly in March when we visited a cabane à sucre in Mont-Saint-Grégoire. Dashing through the snow by sleigh (above, left to right) were Sandra Baines, Eleanor Beatty and Anna Drienovsky. Karen Bassett and Shmoal Loterman (top) donned a habitant look to lighten things up. Some fed the farm animals, while others walked in the woods to work off a maple-drenched lunch (below).



CHERYL LAFFERTY

Live orchestral music ~ a gift that calms and heals

BY SUSAN PURCELL



COURTESY OF PEPITA CAPRIOLO

RESIDENT EVELYN MCADAM (CENTRE) AT PLACE DES ARTS FOR THE CONCERT WITH VOLUNTEERS PEPITA CAPRIOLO (LEFT) AND JULIE FAULKNER.

RESIDENTS of L'Abri en Ville recently had the pleasure of attending performances of the Montreal Symphony Orchestra, thanks to the MSO's generous donation of several tickets to five concerts from February to May. This came about through the initiative of volunteer **Pepita Capriolo**. Residents from several apartments have benefited.

After a quick dinner in Chinatown, Pepita herself attended the April concert with fellow Bahama apartment volunteer **Julie Faulkner** and resident **Evelyn McAdam**.

"The orchestra was in fine form, the evening was delightful," said Pepita. "The performance was absolutely riveting," Evelyn added. The direction of **Bernard Labadie**

left all three enthralled. "I've got a new favourite interpretation of Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 21," commented Julie. "[French pianist]

Alexandre Tharaud played with a sensitivity, confidence and delicious precision that held the audience spellbound."

The letter requesting tickets noted that "music is a universal language that has enormous... emotional impact. For individuals with severe mental illness... participation in the rich Montreal cultural community is one of the ways... integration can best succeed."

Since most of our residents depend on social assistance, access to tickets would normally be impossible. The concert-goers among them would surely join with Julie in saying, "I'm so grateful we had the opportunity to enjoy such a spectacular event together." 

UNSEEN HANDS

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2018 Annual Report



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Community art show now an annual event

BY CECILY LAWSON



RESIDENT KAREN BASSETT (LEFT) AND FORMER RESIDENT RENÉE DROUIN SHARE A LOVE OF ART.

FOR THE SECOND YEAR in a row, L'Abri residents have been featured in a downtown community art exhibit called Project Imagination. Organized by McGill students and the community food hub Santropol Roulant, the show launched last year with the aim of reducing the stigma associated with mental illness through art, self-expression and community.

Last year's exhibit focused on the architectural drawings of our **George Harris**. It was so well-received that organizers decided to make it an annual event, and the second edition took place in April 2019. It featured the works of L'Abri residents **Karen Bassett** and **Wanda McRae**, and former resident **Renée Drouin**.

The event, held at Santropol's headquarters, drew a large crowd including members of the L'Abri community, Santropol staff and McGill students. Two McGill musicians played violin sonatas, creating a lovely ambiance while appetizers and drinks were generously supplied by Santropol Roulant.

A highlight of the evening was a panel discussion on mental health and artistic expression. Renée talked about how her art has helped her to survive her struggles with mental illness, as well as a cancer diagnosis. L'Abri co-ordinator **Star Gale** noted that sometimes people

need to get past what she termed "the stigma of being an artist"—the stereotype that links creativity and mental illness—and simply enjoy art for art's sake. She pointed out how the world of art provides a common ground for so many of the L'Abri community. Several of our volunteers are artists, and share this interest with many residents. This expresses itself in many ways, from holding art workshops to attending exhibits together at Montreal's museums, to celebrating events such as Project Imagination. 

art common ground for
volunteers & residents

SAM BEITEL



Eduardo's expert advice frees residents to enjoy their art

BY CECILY LAWSON



EDUARDO FERNANDES (STANDING) IS READY TO OFFER HELP AS (FROM LEFT) KAREN BASSETT, EILEEN KELLY AND RICK OTTONI WORK ON THEIR CREATIONS.

EDUARDO FERNANDES has always loved art. His passion developed at an early age, and even as he pursued a career in architecture and graphic design in his native Brazil, his sketch pad was always close at hand. Eduardo and his wife **Juliana** left Recife and immigrated to Canada in 2011. Last year, fellow expat Brazilian and L'Abri volunteer, **Nora Burnier**, suggested that he use his talents as an artist and a teacher to help L'Abri residents, and he readily agreed.

Workshops for residents started in November, and take place every two weeks at the L'Abri office. The participants all have some experience as artists and Eduardo helps them with the use of materials and with technique. "To me, art is a very great source of joy," says Eduardo, "and if people are not struggling with the process, they can derive a lot of pleasure from making art. My main goal is for them to have fun."

Outside L'Abri, Eduardo has a studio and teaches art classes to adults. His own work he describes as figurative and his preferred subject is people, though he also loves working outdoors and painting landscapes.

Asked about attitudes towards mental illness in Brazil, he noted that there is still a fair amount of stigma as there is in Canada. This is changing though, and the younger generation and those who have had access to a good education are more likely to understand what mental illness is and how it can be treated. 

CHERYL LAFFERTY

CECILY IS NEW PRESIDENT OF L'ABRI EN VILLE'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

Governance 2019-20: Board of Directors

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*NEW MEMBERS

MEMBERS of L'Abri en Ville's Board of Directors for the 2019-20 term were introduced on 11 March 2019, at our Annual General Meeting, held at the Unitarian Church of Montreal.



KELLY MACKAY

Our board team (*above, left to right*): Afric Eustace, Campbell Stuart, Susan Purcell, Carolyne Harrison, Suzanne Herscovitch, Sandra Baines, Sam Beitel, Cecily Lawson, Eric Widdicombe, Sheila McCarthy, Karen Mitchell (replaced by Shmoal Loterman), Dale MacDonald and Evelyn McAdam.

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