



News en Ville

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A newsletter published for and by the residents,
staff, volunteers and supporters of L'Abri en Ville
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Gardening as therapy... and fun! By Cecily Lawson

Most gardeners will tell you that spending time among their plants is a great antidote to stress and a surefire recipe for improving their mood. It's not surprising then that gardening and all that it entails – from preparing the soil to planting and weeding, pruning and watering, and finally harvesting – is considered to be very effective therapy for people coping with mental health challenges.

It was with this in mind that L'Abri en Ville embarked on a project with Action Communterre, an established NDG nonprofit, to involve some of our residents in a horticulture therapy program. Thanks to generous funding from the Echo Foundation, a group of L'Abri residents met every Wednesday morning during the summer at one of Action Communterre's eight collective gardens, this one located at the NDG YMCA.



Cheryl Lafferty and Cathy DeChambeau (left, centre), L'Abri coordinators, with Jerome, Karen and Hanna Gradulewski of Action Communterre

Bessborough apartment resident Jerome Kierans was one of the participants. "I loved it," he reported one late September afternoon. "This morning we harvested celery galore. Do you know how good fresh celery smells? We've had tomatoes, lettuce, garlic, zucchini and more beans than you can possibly imagine." Apart from the plentiful harvest, Jerome enthused about being introduced to new foods – like garlic scapes and yellow raspberries – as well as learning new things, like how to compost or make horseradish sauce.

Jerome's flat mate Nancy Grundy also participated in the program as did Park apartment residents Eileen Kelly and Karen Bassett. Chris Nielsen of Lafayette apartment



A sample of Jerome's fall harvest

worked in another of Communterre's gardens.

Hanna Gradulewski, a community worker with experience in facilitating horticulture therapy, coordinated the program and was there every week. She was assisted by skilled animators including students doing placements over the summer. In a testament to how a therapeutic program can become an outreach opportunity, one of the students who worked with L'Abri residents in the garden accompanied them on the Walk for Mental Health in October.

Action Communterre's purpose is to build community through collective gardening. In addition to bringing people together to learn about food and to grow it, they also distribute part of the harvest to the larger NDG community through the NDG Food Depot. It's the ultimate win-win program – healthy pleasant surroundings, great food, excellent therapy and the opportunity to help other people by providing them with produce. With the help of the Echo Foundation, L'Abri hopes to participate in Action Communterre's collective gardening project again next summer.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Citrus Fundraiser Pickup

Monday, December 2 and Tuesday, December 3 from 2-8 pm

Holiday Party

Monday, December 9, at 6 pm

Annual General Meeting

Monday, March 17th at 6 pm at Unitarian Church

President's Message The Magic of Community

At L'Abri en Ville we talk a lot about our community, and the generosity, reciprocity and love that animates and illuminates it. Here are some stories about how this light shines out to the larger community, and how it reflects back on us.

Every year at our Citrus Sale the Concordia Stingers heave boxes in relay when the big trucks arrive from Florida. Then students from Selwyn House and Loyola take over, slinging those self-same boxes for us all when we come in for our fruit. If you've ever been to the sale, you'll appreciate just how much heavy lifting is involved.

It happened again when we moved the Wellington apartment. The decision had to be made quickly. Fortunately we had just signed the lease for the new Jolicoeur apartment. We seized upon the solution of moving Wellington there, but we only had one weekend to find the trucks and volunteers to make it happen.

But the angels were with us – I happened to find



The cake magically appeared!

By Campbell Stuart

myself at a meeting of the Sierra Club Quebec on Sunday and, when I asked for help, six SCQ directors immediately signed up for the move the very next morning – Canada Day. With two pickups loaned by friends and two other vehicles belonging to the Sierra Club volunteers, the whole move was over just after lunchtime.

All of our volunteers were once outsiders looking in, seduced by what they saw. They came once and never left. Who makes the trips to Bishop's University happen? Who makes Camp Weredale the success it always is? Who plays cards, makes cards, goes to movies, outings and art galleries? Who surprised me with a delicious cake on my birthday, the day of the Jolicoeur housewarming? And who – most especially – cooks and bakes and sets up and takes down for the Holiday Party?

Why do the Concordia, Loyola and Selwyn House students and the Sierra Club execs do all this? Why do our long-serving volunteers do this? Personally, I think it's magic. No one can resist the spell of the L'Abri story. Please enjoy this newsletter, and pass it on to others. It is dusted with inspiration.

Making jam with the Hélène residents



Anna, Amina, Audrey and Nithya sort grapes in Ellen's garden



Audrey, Ellen and Hélène residents preparing the jam



All ready for some hot bread!

Snug in their cozy new home

By Sue Purcell

On Canada Day this year a team of helpers materialized on short notice to help residents pack up a L'Abri apartment and move it to another location. The result is a huge improvement in the quality of life for the former residents of Wellington, now comfortably settled in a cozy bright home in Ville Emard.



Welcome to our new home

Bronko and Pierre were a bit shocked in late June when they found out they would be moving – in four days! The third-floor walk-up in Verdun they had inhabited since 1999 had been plagued for some time by structural problems and water leakage. Meanwhile L'Abri had signed a lease for a lovely upper duplex we intended for three new male residents. Instead, an eleventh-hour decision was made to move the Wellington men to the new space.

Wellington volunteer Campbell Stuart sprang into action as the point man, enlisting help from friends and volunteers who helped him complete the job in a few hours.

The Jolicoeur apartment, as it's called, is only blocks away from the metro station of the same name. Set on a quiet street amid carefully-kept homes, it has an arbor-like entrance with hanging plants. Every room in its second-floor space is filled with light, with activity centering on a large modern kitchen. An adjoining porch overlooks a big backyard.

To celebrate their good fortune the men opened their doors in late September for a *cinqu'à sept*, attended by over 20 people. Even their landlord came, bearing a lovely housewarming gift. Campbell brought bread and salt – an old tradition – and thanks to fellow volunteer Richard Tobin, was feted with a cake, as it happened to be his birthday!

Since the third resident, Charlie, left shortly after the move, the men have been joined by Stefan, who Bronko and Pierre knew from Amitié-Friendship, where they volunteer. Stefan has decorated his bedroom in vivid reds and golds; he is pleased to have found a good place to live, among friends.

"I feel like I'm in the country", says Pierre, comparing his new home to the old one, located on a busy street where



Bronko, Stefan and Campbell smile as Pierre puts housewarming gift of bread to novel use

honking and shouting was the norm. "I used to need to drive up to the cottage on weekends to get some peace. Now I'm just happy to stay here."



Cathy and David enjoy party fare

Unseen hands

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Resident Life

Walk for Mental Health



Ready to hit the streets at October's annual fundraising walk: Nancy (front), David, Bronko, Audrey, Anna, Eileen, Sandra, Nancy Grayson, Jerome, Gael.



Left: Purveen from Our Harbour (left) gets campers' heart rates up with a lively Zumba lesson at Camp Weredale

Another great camp weekend



Bronko, Warren, Eileen and Cheryl brave the crisp air



Marianne and Armand enjoying the view of the lake



Cathy, Terryann and Cheryl out for a walk



The holidays are coming up and I'm a bit wary of socializing with my family. I'm used to living quietly in my L'Abri apartment, and I'm nervous about family tensions. Any advice on dealing with that?

Though we're supposed to feel jolly and loving during the holidays, things don't always turn out that way. We may be doing well in our lives, but when we're thrown together with parents, sisters and brothers, aunts and uncles we see only occasionally, the result can be rocky. Family members can fall

Just Wondering... By Sue Purcell

back into the old dysfunctional roles, inadequacies and resentments can resurface, and the fun can fizzle out.

The commercialization of holiday cheer doesn't help either. Feeling you should be spending a lot of money to buy gifts that may or may not be appreciated increases the stress. Here are a few thoughts on how to go into the celebrations with a ready mind.

First, don't agree to spend more time than you can handle. If you're staying in town to see family, remember you're the boss when it comes to scheduling your time. Be on time, bring a small gift for the hostess, and offer to help with meal preparation or cleanup if that feels comfortable for you. Plan ahead for how you'll return home, even bring-

ing the phone number for a taxi if that helps.

If an out-of-town visit is involved, and you're staying with family over a few days, you should feel free to go off to your room when you need to. Even if you're only there for dinner you can take a time-out if you find the talk is going in an awkward direction. Find a quiet space to briefly recharge, before returning to the festivities.

When conversation lags, ask people about themselves, and tell them what you've been doing. People may not ask but they'll likely be pleased to know more about you. And don't take annoying comments personally. Remember you're not just a child or a person with mental illness. You're an interesting adult with your own thoughts and insights. Happy holidays!!

Chihuly: les bienfaits de l'art Raymonde Hachey

Plusieurs d'entre nous, bénévoles et résidants, ont visité récemment l'exposition de Chihuly au Musée des Beaux Arts. Voici ce que des résidants ont ressenti et perçu lors de leur visite.

Pour l'une, c'est la splendeur des couleurs, les multiples formes, la brillance et la lumière. C'est aussi le sentiment de liberté. Pour une autre résidante, l'énergie ressentie lui donnait des ailes et elle se sentait inspirée pour son propre travail. De plus, l'ingéniosité et le reflet de la lumière s'intériorisaient au sein de sa propre personne.

Un autre résidant trouve



chaque œuvre belle en soi mais aurait préféré pouvoir regarder une sculpture à la fois et possiblement ne pas se sentir envahi par le tout. Selon lui, l'ensemble des sculptures l'empêchait d'apprécier chacune d'entre elle à sa juste valeur. Le fait que les formes et les couleurs reviennent constamment dans les œuvres, diminuait son intérêt pour l'ensemble.

Un des aspects de la vie de Chihuly peut se relier à nous. Durant les années 70, Chihuly a perdu l'usage de l'un de ses yeux et a subi une sérieuse blessure à l'épaule ce qui l'a forcé à abandonner son travail en tant que souffleur de verre. Il a, par la suite, formé sa propre équipe d'artisans qui ont produit un ensemble d'œuvres des plus remarquables par leur taille et leur diversité.

Que pouvons-nous retirer de cet événement? Nous pouvons croire que sa passion artistique n'a pas été ébranlée par ce fâcheux accident. Alors, si dans votre quotidien, vous éprouvez du plaisir face à une activité,



ne vous laissez surtout pas envahir par des circonstances physique, émotive ou sociale qui pourraient vous empêcher de poursuivre votre ferveur face à cette activité.

L'art peut vous détendre, vous accorder un moment de pause ou encore être une escapade de plaisir. Un musée peut être une oasis ou être un facteur de socialisation; il n'en dépend que de vous. Profitez des bienfaits ressentis lorsque vous êtes en présence de beauté.

The Legroves

Hail to a generous and delightful couple By Cecily Lawson

When Frank Legrove retired from the trucking business in the late 1990's, he decided that he wanted to become involved in the community. He and his wife Gerry had raised six children, and Gerry had retired from pastoral services at St. Mary's Hospital. At church one Sunday, they heard a presentation on L'Abri en Ville by volunteer Richard Tobin, and that was it – soon afterwards they were on board.

Gerry and Frank became part of the team supporting the Americana apartment. (This apartment closed recently after each of its residents moved on, but it was active for 16 years.) Their involvement was inspiring. They helped the residents with meal planning and with meals. They were there to encourage them in house cleaning and they took them shopping for clothes. Perhaps most importantly, they were there at the end of the phone when help was needed.

“They have been a steady presence for all three residents,” says fellow member of the Americana team Sandra Baines. “Apart from being loyal

and committed to each of the men, they are completely non-judgmental.”

The Legroves are warm and charming people. Their generosity was evident in the Christmas potluck dinner



Gerry and Frank at home

they hosted almost every year at their home for the entire Americana group, with turkey and all the trimmings. Birthdays were also special occasions and Gerry took the trouble to bake a cake for each resident's birthday and to

find a restaurant that was amenable to the group bringing their own cake to a birthday celebration.

Harkening back to the early days of their involvement with the apartment and its residents, Gerry recalled that the most important thing was to build trust with each of the residents. “We did whatever they needed. They were really intelligent men. Each had his own life, but they really cared for each other,” she said.

Over the years, the Legroves have become an integral part of the L'Abri community, working at the citrus sale and attending Christmas parties and annual meetings. They are also committed volunteers for their local CLSC, helping with flu clinics, grocery shopping and taking people for walks.

Keen travellers, they spend the summers in Maine and large chunks of time in California, but retain their commitment to L'Abri. “We get much more out of it than we put in,” says Frank in a comment that is typical of the generous attitude of this delightful couple.

Long-time L'Abri resident will be missed

We were all sad to learn of the sudden death in July of Dennis Vossos, a long-time resident of the Americana apartment, shortly after he moved to a group home. Dennis played McGill Redmen football in university, and was a pianist. He was well-liked at L'Abri as well as at the NDG Community Council, where he volunteered for many years.

Dennis had lived at L'Abri almost 15 years, and for 13 of those years Noah Friedland was his roommate, until Noah too moved to a group home. Just over a week before Dennis



died, he and Noah met with all the Americana volunteers to celebrate Dennis's birthday. “We all felt that both Noah and Dennis were doing

very well,” said Sandra Baines.

Noah, an accomplished cellist, spoke with emotion of his friend at a funeral home gathering attended by members of the L'Abri community. He said he would like to dedicate his next recital to Dennis. – S.P.

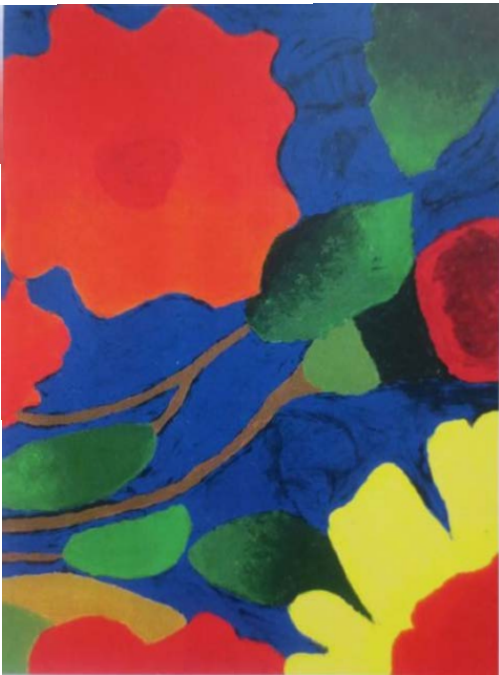
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Coordinators' Corner

By Cheryl Lafferty, Cathy DeChambeau, Loraine Jacmain

It was a busy summer at the L'Abri office, and there is no sign the pace will slow down any time soon.

It began in early July when we rolled up our sleeves to help the Wellington apartment men move. New residents arrived: Stefan became a new roommate for Pierre and Bronko, and we bid good-bye to Elise and Carolyn, who with support and encouragement, felt ready to move into separate apartments of their own. A new resident, Marie-Josée, was welcomed into the Brasilia apartment from Pavillon Patricia MacKenzie, part of the Old Brewery Mission. We are working on finding a new woman resident soon for our last empty room, at the Bahama apartment.



We also welcomed new volunteers. Many thanks to Amber Bellemare, Suzanne Colet, Nancy Montgomery (welcome back!), Marietta Haas-Lubelsky, and Petronella Beron for joining the L'Abri community.

During July and August, two picnics were attended by many residents and volunteers, and a group visited the Chihuly exhibit at the MMFA. As you see in this issue, the collective garden project involving Action Communiterre and L'Abri reaped a successful harvest. We are lucky to have the Echo Foundation helping us with this initiative, and hope to expand it next summer to include more residents and gardens.

Our camp weekend early in September initiated Cathy and Cheryl to kitchen duties and campfires. Everyone who attended enjoyed the wonderful food and



fantastic views. An energetic Zumba class, a couple of hikes and a dip in the cold water by the bravest ones, helped everyone sleep well. A huge thank you to Marianne for masterful organizing, and to all of our volunteers – drivers, cooks and organizers – who helped make Camp Weredale 2013 a success.

Fall has been filled with preparations for resident card sales (see samples on this page), the citrus drive, Montreal Walks for Mental Health, the newsletter and the Holiday Party. Residents are enjoying Centaur plays, opera and Concordia hockey games. Our first Games Night since spring was attended by many in October, and the Lafayette residents hosted a Hallowe'en party for all apartments.

With so much going on, it's no wonder all three of us continue to participate in lunch-hour yoga, to help us keep up but slow down!



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